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**AFRODESCENDANT
RESISTANCE TO
DERACINATION
IN COLOMBIA**

Massacre at
Bellavista-Bojayá-Chocó

Aurora Vergara-Figueroa



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*To my loving mother Maria Teresa Figueroa Rojas
To the Women of Bellavista
Afro-Colombian Women Warriors
For their strength, courage, love and wisdom*

PREFACE

This is the hardest story I ever told. I have been doing research at Bellavista for over a decade. I feel that this story needs to be told by those who suffered in this awful event, but because of barriers, that is not possible. I write this book with the utmost respect for the lives, stories and memories of those who allowed me to compose this account of the massacre of Bellavista-Bojayá. On May 2, 2017, fifteen years after this heinous crime, the Bellavista community held a commemoration. Hence, this book pays tribute to those who lost their lives on the morning of May 2, of 2002 and honors the journey of the survivors.

My writing carries out the wishes of the communities' victims of deracination. My reflections would have not been possible if I had not taken dangerous trips to the regions assaulted by violence. Furthermore, I am committed to telling their stories as they wanted them delivered to the world. My commitment will end only when their anguish ends.

Cali, Colombia

Aurora Vergara-Figueroa

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This book is the result of a decade of research at Bellavista-Bojayá-Chocó-Colombia. It is an attempt to deepen my understanding of the historic basis that can explain contemporary economic, political, and social inequalities in Colombia, mainly around the questions of death, dispossession, and resistance.

Since May of 2006 I have engaged in several periods of research at the Atrato region. My greatest debt goes to Father Vicente, “Mayito,” “Coca” and “Lucero,” who allowed me to navigate the community of Bellavista. They helped me to comprehend the struggles for autonomy, ancestral self-determination, identity, freedom, dignity, collective entitlement of the land, non-violence, solidarity, participation, dialogue, and justice for people of African descent in Colombia. In so doing, they helped me to understand my own history, and I am forever indebted to them.

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CONTENTS

1	Beyond Sociology of Forced Migration	1
2	The Region: Emptied Spaces and Geographies of Death in Colombia	27
3	They Kill Us, Therefore We Exist?	53
4	Suffering While Black. Resistance Amid Deracination	69
5	Final Remarks: For an Afrodiasporic Feminist Sociology of Land Dispossession	81
	References	91
	Index	119

LIST OF FIGURES, MAPS AND PHOTOS

Map 1.1	Map of the global dimensions of forced displacements. IDMC—International Displacement Monitoring Centre. “Global Overview” (Interactive map). <i>International Displacement: Global Overview of trends of development in 2009</i> . http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/ (Consulted January 2010), May 2010	11
Map 1.2	State Fragility Index 2009	12
Fig. 2.1	Preliminary schema of historical events of deracination at the Bojayá region 1500–2002	40
Photo 3.1	Image of the Mutilated Christ of Bojayá, May 2, 2008. A symbol of resistance to rebuild life in the New Bellavista	56
Photo 4.1	Group of alabadoras	71

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1	Types of forced migrants and internally displaced persons	6
Table 2.1	Summary of key events of deracination in the Bojayá Region 1500–2002	30

INTRODUCTION

TERRORIALIZATION, DERACINATION, AND RESISTANCE AT THE COLOMBIAN ATRATO RIVER

On the morning of the of May 2, 2002, 119¹ people were massacred in the Catholic community church of Bellavista-Bojayá-Chocó-Colombia. Approximately 1744 families had to abandon the territory to escape the atrocity of this event. After May 2, 2002 the people who made it out alive and left the community entered into the category of Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs). Through the media, the president and the leaders of the army blamed the illegal armed forces, principally the guerrillas for the deaths, and avoided taking any responsibility for what happened. Nonetheless, a report by the Administrative Court of Quibdó-Chocó, six years after the massacre, declared the nation administratively responsible for the devastating event.² Like the population of Bellavista, more than 65.3 million people in 54 countries have lost their territories, and are also considered as displaced people.³ Among the countries with the largest internally displaced populations are Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Colombia, and Sudan.⁴

This book is an extended case-based study of this massacre.⁵ I present the lessons learned in a decade of research in the Bojayá region. The massacre at Bellavista is a case of paradigmatic significance with which to comprehend contemporary patterns of violence in Colombia, current practices of land dispossession, and a new cycle of diasporization of the Afrodescendent population. The event raised challenging questions

about the nature of what the politicians of the time called “acts of terrorism,”⁶ the abandonment of the state, the corruption in the state of Chocó, racism, marginalization, and the question of deracination.⁷ Fifteen years later, the major questions of what happened, and the goals to repair the damages suffered by the inhabitants still remain unanswered and unmet. This community is still demanding two basic things: first, proper identification of those who were killed so that their burial sites can be marked, and second, to provide adequate health care to those wounded who still have pieces of shrapnel in their bodies.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL SILENCING

In the state of Chocó 82.7% of the population (454,030 inhabitants) self-identified as Afrodescendent in the 2005 census. This state is also known as the Africa of Colombia, which carries with it the implicit blackness, poverty, and marginality of the region. In 2008 this state was declared politically unviable due to the internal corruption and its supposed geographical isolation. One may argue that the statements made to explain the declared crisis condense most of the generalized representations of Chocó, which are historical formations of a marginal/isolated/ignorant otherness within the modern/colonial capitalist world-system. These representations and widespread beliefs erase a long history of colonization and oppression that has taken place in this territory. Therefore, it should not be a major surprise that a significant percentage of the so-called “displaced” population comes from this region, and that the major massacre of the beginning of the twenty-first century occurred there: *the massacre at Bellavista*.⁸

Indeed, this region has been represented as a space of darkness where it is impossible to live, and as a space of extreme poverty and ignorance, which is unable to administrate its own resources. On the other hand, this region is seen as having potential for territorial expansion, as an area open for exploration, and continuing colonialization. Accordingly, these colonial, geopolitical, economic, ideological, and historical representations are commonly used to explain the variety of problems of the state. As a consequence, the impact of what is called forced displacement, mitigated by the government, has not yet been radically eradicated. The legal ownership of the land of those forced to abandon their territories has been, for all practical purposes, almost abolished following the massacre at Bellavista. The history producing the spaces where the massacre took

place is undermined by the epistemological construction of this phenomenon. In this book, I argue that the imagery representing the state of Chocó—that of a wild, isolated territory—plays a significant role in how the rest of the nation perceives the region.

Consequently, this book addresses the question of how the context of place-based ethno-territorial resistance and violence in the territories of the state of Chocó enlighten alternative ways to comprehend experiences of “forced displacement/migration,” and new cycles of diaspora of Afrodescendent populations. Working to disentangle the conceptual, socio-historical, and geographical dimensions of deracination based on an ethnography post-massacre at the community of Bellavista-Bojayá-Chocó-Colombia, the book sets its foundation on one working hypothesis—the constellation of the historical process, which lies behind acts of land dispossession, is revealed in the limitation of concepts associated with forced displacement/migration. The usefulness of these concepts as analytical categories of liberation/transformation is limited due to their lack of historicity and to their ability to reinforce racialization and marginalization.

Building on the proposed case, this book considers that the ideas of marginality and isolation attached to the history of the state of Chocó are foundational to make legitimate the stealing of the territories of Indigenous and Afrodescendent communities and the systematic killing of their populations.

I use the notion of *historical-emptied-spaces* and *the routinization of erasure* as working concepts to explore fundamental questions such as how the epistemic, geopolitical, and historical production of the state of Chocó as a marginal territory lies behind the contemporary deracination of the Chocoan population. Hence, I critically outline some of the sources of production of the ideas of isolation and marginality that have justified the deracination of the population in the Atrato River in Colombia, specifically those of Bojayá. It reveals narratives and practices, which have created the basis for the formation of spaces considered as “blank” or “empty,” where the power of colonialism (violence/extermination/genocide/ethnic cleansing/deracination) takes place. At the same time, it considers the process of mobilization, claiming autonomy, self-determination, justice and reparation as struggles for liberation and decolonization confronting this new cycle of diasporization.

In 2017, the Afro-Colombian community celebrates, approximately, 165 years of the abolition of slavery in Colombia, and 24 years of the law

70 1993 or Law of Black communities. This piece of law legalizes the right that Afro-Colombians have to own the land they have worked since the colonial period, and for which they fought to gain their freedom and have lived freely on for the last two hundred years.

Several articles and books have been published on the political gains that this law produced as well as criticism of its limitations, and to describe its role in current acts of violence and the processes of deracination that these communities are living. It means, that in addition to the killings, kidnappings and disappearances, the Afrodescendent communities of the Colombian Pacific, as victims of a violent practice of land appropriation, ultimately lose the debate of who owns the disputed land.

In the last decade, a massive land dispossession called the attention of the Afrodescendent movements: The Cerro Careperro, Suarez, Jiguamiandó, Curvaradó, Belén de Bajirá, and Bellavista are salient cases. After centuries of portraying the state of Chocó as dark, isolated, extremely difficult to “penetrate,” mysterious, and marginal etc., various countries, several agents of the current Colombian government, foreign oil companies, and NGOs, among others are now clamoring to claim the land where these communities are located as their own. These agents arrive at these communities with the “proper” documentation, and a highly legitimized developmentalist narrative, which they use to claim these lands. Studying the case of Bellavista will surely place more light on the importance of how people fight back against this ongoing colonization and defend their property and autonomy, even in the cases in which they do not have “the proper documentation,” but have lived and worked there for generations.

Therefore, describing, or at least outlining the histories behind the representations of the state of Chocó, suggests an epistemic decolonial turn⁹ needed to disentangle colonial continuities of domination, such as deracination, which it faces today. Accordingly, this book aims to develop an alternative epistemology to comprehend how this state came to be what it is today, and how this history informs its contemporary struggles. This question requires us to identify what we know about this phenomenon. Primarily, what is the capacity of the established concepts to allow social scientists to know how the affected territories came to be and how people started claiming, acquitting, and making the land stolen. These are the major questions I explore in this book.

To this end, I collected, catalogued, and substantively reviewed the major documents about Bellavista to comprehend this phenomenon.

By doing so, I mark the tensions and silences that are preventing the advancement of a more complex understanding of this problem and its implication in today's realities.¹⁰ I also formulate general arguments regarding the implications of *epistemological silence* as analytics for an epistemic and ethical-political project of mobilization in the region today. Following this path, this writing explores some fundamental questions to develop an Afrodiasporic feminist decolonial perspective of deracination. I suggest that there is an insightful analytical and political contribution in: (a) revisiting the main agreements around the sociological study of forced displacement in Colombia, and forced migration as characterized in a more international context, its emergent trends and concepts; (b) differentiating processes of deracination from other sociopolitical and categories within the epistemologies and politics of dislocation such as forced displacement, forced migration, exile, exodus, banishment and extermination; (c) considering contemporary processes of deracination more than just another effect of the armed conflict in Colombia as a continuum in the historical, racial and spatial formations of the nation; and (d) the impact of the colonial narratives and representations of the department of Chocó on today's radiography of its reality, and the lack of historical sense that lie behind the arguments that claim the current problems of this state constitutes another face of its alleged marginal, isolated, and corrupted "nature." Hence, I argue that the Chocó has been converted into a laboratory of death.

ON THE METHODOLOGY: ENGAGED ETHNOGRAPHY

Ethnography, in contexts of violence, is collaborative, requires the development of long-term relationships, is reflexive, audacious, chameleonic and peremptory. My scrutiny of the massacre and compilation of information on this heinous crime began in May of 2002, when the killings occurred. The first field trip to the community was undertaken in May of 2006. Subsequent ethnographic trips were carried out in December of 2006, May of 2007, May of 2008, September of 2011, and seven field trips in 2016. Every year, in May, I gathered new data produced during the commemoration of the massacre: videos, discourses, declarations, and requests to the government. Using five family interviews (condensing 14 individual voices), 45 translated songs (out of 130), and three of my own journal entries of three different visits to Bellavista, I tell a collective story (see Chap. 3).

The interviews from which I write this book were open conversations on the biographies of the interviewees. Most stories cover a time frame between the 1940s and 2010, wherein 1996, 2000, and 2002 are turning points in all of the stories. The last two years correspond with paramilitary or guerilla incursions in the community. The year 1996 marks the beginning of a cycle of violence in the region of the Bajo Atrato. The interviews took place at secret and safe spaces for the security of both the interviewees and the interviewer: a room in the community parish, or in the church; or a park very close to a group of policemen. These spaces had to be either very visible to the police, so that they could feel they were in control of the situation, or hidden spaces in the cases of community leaders whose lives were in jeopardy. When interviewees were elderly women, I offered to help cook dinner or joined them for a cup of coffee in the front of their houses to talk about life. Most interviews had the structure of a focus group. Anyone in the household started a conversation about the situation of violence in the region and the rest of the members of the family present integrated their thoughts. The conversations were therefore constructed organically.

I found that paramilitary and guerrilla incursions, the army's take over, massacres and massive temporary displacements of the communities served as temporal markers in the history of these communities. As a consequence, they are present in every day conversations. From time to time, I referred to these events as an excuse to prompt people to elaborate on them, what they meant, and how they have shaped life in the community. To create an alternative account of the massacre, and for security reasons, 80% of the interviewees were women between 15 and 86 years old. The men I interviewed were priests, teenagers, members of the community parish groups; and elderly men I was entirely sure had no linkages with any of the armed groups in the area.

Ethnographies in Contexts of Violence: Developing a Chameleonic Persona

Previous to 2016, security restrictions limited my options to conduct a long-term ethnography. To challenge these limitations, I decided to develop a "chameleonic persona" as an ethnographer to protect the interviewees and myself. My visits to Bellavista were under the label of a Catholic missionary (2006), as a peregrine to the commemoration of the mutilated Christ (2008), as a member of the coordinator council of the community fiestas patronales to the Virgen del Carmen (2010), and the last visit as professor and director of the Afro-diasporic Research Center of Icesi University.

I did random visits to places and talked to different people in the community. I talked to the policemen and the military, which had threatened to take me to the police station for investigation during my third visit to the community. By doing so, I felt I could get to know their version of the situation. During my different visits, I was also accompanied—all the time—by professors, priests, and leaders of the community—who made my presence less suspicious to the authorities (legal or illegal). I am deeply thankful to the women and men that were always with me. To overcome these limitations, I used photography and mass songs to capture realities I was forbidden to reveal and, therefore, unable to describe in detail.

Parish and Family Archives: Mass Songs

In my search for alternative sources to learn the stories of the families I was unable to interview, I observed how domination cannot exist without contestation. I looked for sources that would allow me to tell the most compelling story of this community. In the search, I found the song books used in the everyday mass at the parish of Bellavista, and in the houses of the families where I stayed. After reading more than 250 lyrics I discovered that the song books they used were not the traditional books I had seen in other parishes. The songs I read talked about offering to God the “bread of a harsh history” and the “wine of oppression.” The songs asked God for autonomy and self-determination. There were other key words such as black people’s liberation, black bible, marginalization, silenced history, hope, transformation, justice, liberty, and managing the land of the community. I understood that these songs disclose the voice of a community organized to defend their lives and their territory. I realized I could rely on this source as much as I did on the interviews. These songs were collectively written by women in the parish group. These women are housewives, nurses, school teachers, lawyers, accountants, dentists, among others. In 2006, they meet weekly to read the bible, to discuss the needs of the community, to prepare masses, and write songs according to the occasion. Based on these sources, I present different social and historical dimensions of the Atrato River region that constitute milestones to comprehend the complexity of land dispossession in Colombia. Finally, I produced a database of 400 news articles about the municipality of Bojayá, from May 2, 2002 and ending on December 31, 2016 to analyze patterns of violence and resistance in the region.¹¹

A WORKING HYPOTHESIS

A ‘D-T-D²’ cycle: Historicizing the massacre of Bellavista and New Afrodescendant Diasporas

Building on this evidence I propose a working hypothesis to support my argument that the concepts of forced migration and forced displacement are limited in their ability to explain the complexity of the world-historical realities they are expected to capture. Their analytical scope is too narrow to make sense of the isolated facts and observations that were summarized in Table 2.1.

Critical sociological theory will not be possible in the absence of analytical categories capable of comprehending how and why these events are related. They are insufficient to explain how countries and populations with similar histories of racialization, conquest, and domination are the targets of ‘old’ and ‘new’ forms of dislocation, and diasporic deracination. Hence, in this monograph I propose a ‘D-T-D²’ cycle—‘Diaspora-Territorialization-Deracination/Diaspora²’—as a working hypothesis. Historicizing the massacre of Bellavista is a significant analytical tool, allowing comprehension of what could be theorized as a new cycle of Diaspora of the Afrodescendants in Colombia. Such a proposal requires me to unveil how the massacre of Bellavista and the deracination of its population appears in the history of the region.

With this in mind, I historicize the massacre of Bellavista as an event of deracination by conceptualizing and politicizing experiences of deracination as one of the foundations of the contemporary Afrocolombian diaspora. These, along with a long list of violent events, are opening the path towards a new cycle of Afrodescendent diasporas. Hence, I expect that the collected evidence illustrates how this phenomenon ranges from the micro level of agency and interaction to the macro level of systems and social structures, from the local and regional history to the world-history, from the local time, to the world time. By doing this, I locate contemporary forms of deracination in a chain of historical processes: Transatlantic trade, African diaspora, territorial settlement in the Colombian Pacific (territorialization), twenty-first century deracination, a new cycle of diaspora and new territorial settlements. How it occurs, and the nature of socio-historical, epistemological and political importance of this process are the major tasks of this monograph.

The implications drawn from this study both conceptually and historically can be schematically presented as follows (Figs. 1 and 2).

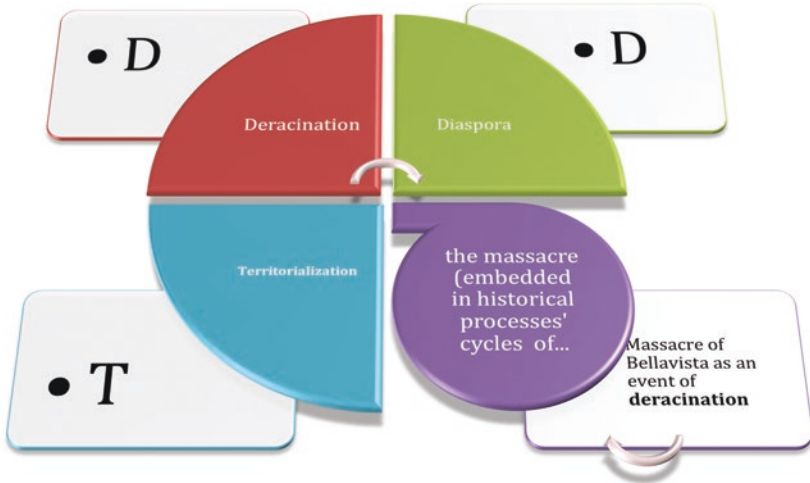


Fig. 1 ‘D-T-D²’ cycle: A working conceptual cycle matrix

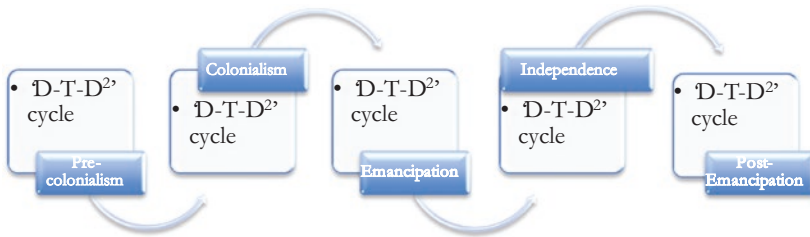


Fig. 2 ‘D-T-D²’ cycle: a working process matrix

Fully aware that history is not a linear process, I aim to graphically represent my argument with this process matrix to suggest that in the progression, moving the transitions from one moment in history to the other, diasporic deracination plays a central role in the socio-economic configuration of states, nations, and empires. I explore how regions such as the Bajo Atrato River area, in which Bellavista is located, appear in the geographies of capitalist exploitation in every historical period. My guiding question is how do the spaces in which land dispossession occurs come into being? My working argument is that conjunctures of world-historical capitalist accumulation could be related to these processes,

which I have assessed in this book. A preliminary conceptual principle I will follow is D. Harvey's argument of accumulation by dispossession.¹² If dispossession is underneath of accumulation then every moment/cycle/conjuncture needs to create the spaces to extract the necessary resources.

D. Harvey says:

Put in language of contemporary postmodern political theory, we must say that capitalism necessarily and always creates its own 'other'.¹³ As in the case of labour supply, capitalism always requires a fund of assets outside of itself if it is to confront and circumvent pressures of over accumulation. If those assets, such as empty land or new raw materials sources, do not lie to hand, then capitalism must somehow produce them.¹⁴

With these elements, I aim to write an alternative account of the massacre of Bellavista.

BOOK STRUCTURE

This book has five chapters. In Chap. 1, *Beyond Sociology of Forced Migration*, I examine the rationales in which the concepts of forced displacement and forced migration are founded and the contributions of their analytics, as well as their shortcomings. With the lenses of the current analytical framework, I study the case of Bellavista to evaluate its effect and pertinence to the region. I discuss how the concepts of forced migration and forced displacement are limited in explaining the complexity of the world-historical realities they are expected to capture. To think through this matter conceptually, I propose a D-T-D² formula (Diaspora, Territorialization-Deracination-Diaspora) as a methodological and conceptual tool of historical and sociological analysis, social mobilization, and policy making to unthink the concept of forced migration in context. In this chapter, I suggest that labeling the victims of Bellavista as IDPs or forced migrants prevents: (a) scholars from comprehending a long history of dispossession preceding the event; (b) the government from understanding how this event deepens their class, gender, racial and regional inequality; and (c) the community members from fully presenting their claims and what they believe about their situation after having been historically uprooted/deracinated over the long term. I build on I. Wallerstein's proposal of unthinking nineteenth-century social sciences.

This theoretical and philosophical strategy, along with the deconstructive scheme of Anibal Quijano's concept of the coloniality of power, and K. Crenshaw's and P. Hill Collins's understanding of intersectionality, constitute the first major set of analytics I aim to follow to propose an Afrodiasporic decolonial critique of the field of forced migration. A second segment of the debate undertaken in this book is founded on the voices of the women of Bellavista narrating their experiences, the concepts of deracination of Afro-Colombian historian Santiago Arboleda, and the concept of diaspora of Puerto Rican sociologist Agustin Lao-Montes, evoked to expose the roots of the history of land dispossession in the Colombian Pacific. In Chap. 2, *The Region: Emptied Spaces and Geographies of Death in Colombia*, I explore the questions that the prevailing models leave under-theorized. As a consequence, I locate the massacre of 2002 in a larger historical context of four centuries of the local history of Bellavista with attempts to link the events from every period with major economic and political processes in other regions of the world-system. As a result, I highlight the need of a geo-historical analysis of deracination. Such analysis requires us to use deracination and diaspora as categories of analysis, implying that previous to an event of land dispossession there is a long process of land acquisition and territory making. I present evidence of events of deracination, similar to the massacre at Bellavista, which uprooted the inhabitants of the territory of contemporary Bellavista in 1996, 1952, 1810, and 1566 to analyze the role of race and colonial exploitation in contemporary processes of deracination and the linkages between contemporary deracinated people and their ancestors. Based on an extended case analysis of the massacre at Bellavista, I look for evidence of the limitations of this concept on the history, social composition, and land tenure changes of the Atrato River region. Thus, one could be able to socio-geo-historically connect the previous events that explain the upsurge of violence and deracination of the period 1996–2010 in the region studied. Hence, this book contributes to the literature on this topic, going beyond the pattern of describing processes of land dispossession—mostly local—not connected to the major historical, political, and economical processes of the region affected, the nation, and the world-system. In Chap. 3, *They Kill Us, Therefore We Exist?* I created a collective voice with the 25 interviews that I conducted to tell an alternative narrative of the event in a post-massacre context. In this story, I link different scenarios and actors that were left out in previous accounts of the massacre. In Chap. 4, *Suffering*

While Black: Resistance amid Displacement, I present how, in the municipality of Bojayá, songs are used as a means of resistance and to channel what seems an impossible mourning. I call this *the politics of spirituality*. This form of resistance placed Bojayá at the center of the peace agreement signed between the Colombian government and FARC. In this process, begun in 2012 and finished in 2016—when forgiveness appeared in the process—was an important factor. The victims of Bojayá became the symbol of reconciliation in their country, even though their demands have not yet been fulfilled. In Chap. 5, *Final Remarks: For an Afrodiasporic Feminist Sociology of Land Dispossession*, I conclude with my reflections on the need for an analytical framework for Afrodiasporic feminist sociology of land dispossession to historicize processes of deracination based on the case study of the 2002 massacre at Bellavista-Bojayá-Chocó-Colombia. I expect to develop this framework in a subsequent book currently under preparation. The deriving analytics of this study suggest a path to overcome the limitation of the prevailing intellectual, legal, and political framework of forced migration. This book is an initiating attempt to demonstrate the need to unthink and deconstruct a conceptual framework that is limited, dubious, and narrow-minded. Such limitations are dangerous in the sense that they contribute to the legitimization of renovated discourses and practices of domination and dispossession.

ON GIVING BACK

When the book was done, I went back to the community with the purpose of socializing and giving back what I had written. I went to each one of their houses. Reading the book with the interviewees was a very powerful experience. They laughed at the sound of their words in English and demanded the translated version as soon as possible. We cried together remembering how much pained they have endured and talked extensively on how much a book can contribute to their well-being. They authorized me to publish their stories and made lots of corrections on my interpretations. I appreciate their willingness to listen to what I had to say about them and for teaching me about the complexity of deracination.

Notes

1. The final number of casualties is still disputed between the community and the Colombian government. After May 2nd of 2017 the victims at the mass grave will be exhumed with the intention of identifying properly each victim and decide the final number of fatal victims.
2. The nation responsible for the massacre of Bojayá: <http://www.semana.com/on-line/articulo/la-nacion-responsable-masacre-bojaya/92973-3>.
3. For further reading consult <https://s3.amazonaws.com/unhcrsharedmedia/2016/2016-06-20-global-trends/2016-06-14-Global-Trends-2015.pdf>.
4. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/unhcrsharedmedia/2016/2016-06-20-global-trends/2016-06-14-Global-Trends-2015.pdf>, page 5.
5. Burawoy, M. (1998). The Extended Case Method. *Sociological Theory*, 16(1), 4–33. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/202212>.
6. See <http://www.periodismosinfronteras.org/la-tragedia-de-bojaya-un-simple-accidente.html>.
7. I am using deracination as a category to name a set of economic, social, political, cultural and ideological process, which involves the violent dispersing of the inhabitants of a territory. It undertakes the effacement of the population and the appropriation of their lands. Many of those stolen territories are owned collectively, those have been worked, fought and politicized (i.e. Colombia) It implicates a break/fracture of the benchmarks with the territory, the community, and the landscape. The conceptual debate around the notion will be addressed in Chap. 1 of this book.
8. This event was popularized as the massacre of Bojayá, which is the municipality. But, where the event occurred was in the capital, Bellavista.
9. See Quijano, Aníbal. 2000. «Colonialidad del poder y clasificación social». *Journal of World-Systems Research* XI, no. 2:342–86. Accesible en <http://jwsr.ucr.edu>.; Quijano, Aníbal. 1997. «Colonialidad del poder, cultura y conocimiento en América Latina». *Anuario Mariateguiano* 9: 113–21, Lao-Montes, Agustín. For an Analytics of the Coloniality of Power. Unpublished manuscript; Maldonado-Torres, Nelson.—Post-continental Philosophy and the Decolonial Turn:

Introduction to Conference Mapping the Decolonial Turn: Post/Trans -Continental Interventions in Philosophy, Theory, and Critique, University of California at Berkeley.

10. It implies to question why in more than 150 years of scholarly research this field has not been able to produce a complete inventory of the existent sources to write a comprehensive history of the state of Chocó, and the explanations for not being able to fully integrate its history to the history of the Colombian society, in what it pertains to land acquisition and territorial settlement. It is necessary to build up a preliminary set of notes to develop a historiography that compiles the major sources of inquiry on the initiating practices of land acquisition and territory-making in the state of Chocó since its origins. I argue that there is a need to look into the achievements, tensions and possibilities of the written history of the territorial settlement and practices of land acquisition of the state of Chocó because it serves as a keystone for a critical analytics of contemporary processes of deracination. The arguments which state that the actual problems of this state constitute another face of its—inherently marginal, isolated, and corrupted—nature.
11. I thank Lina Mosquera, Daniela Gómez and Éricka Paredes for their invaluable work to compile the information required to create this database.
12. (Marx, 1867–1990) (Amin, 1974).
13. D. Harvey 2003. p. 141.
14. *Ibid.*, 143.

Beyond Sociology of Forced Migration

Abstract In this chapter Vergara-Figueroa reviews the sociological literature on forced displacement, forced migration, land dispossession and exclusion. She describes the attack at Bellavista-Bojayá-Chocó, and outlines the analytics used in research to develop the main arguments of the book. The author calls for alternative conceptual frameworks to comprehend land dispossession using a world-historical perspective.

Keywords Massacre at Bellavista · Bojayá · Chocó · Forced migration
Forced displacement · Deracination

WHY?

Scholarship on Refugee Studies and Forced Migration Studies reveals the need for a theoretical reflection about what constitutes a refugee, a forced migrant, or a forced displaced person (Arboleda 2007; Black 2001; Chimni 1998, 2009; Jacobsen and Landau 2003; Marfleet 2007; Rodgers 2004; Turton 2003). Critics argue that there is a practice with a long pedigree of relatively uncritical use of policy-based definitions of refugees (Black 2001: 63). Others argue that forced displacement and forced migration are euphemisms for more historically complex processes such as *destierro*, which translates as uprooting, deracination, exile, exodus, and banishment¹ (Arboleda 2007).

The centrality of historical analysis consists of an attempt to comprehend the phenomena of forced migration, especially as its history ‘has always been notable by its absence’ (Marfleet 2007: 136). Due to the lack of historicity underneath the concept of forced migration, I argue that this field of social research, intellectual and political intervention needs to be revised, and radically reconsidered on a case-by-case basis.

Critical ethno-historical research should contribute to the emergence of alternative categories, theoretical frameworks, and methodological principles to move beyond the notion of forced migration, which is looking increasingly inadequate (Turton 2003: 14). I would go further to suggest that it is a notion that has proven dubious, narrow-minded, constrictive, and dangerous.

Consequently, in this book I take an extended case study approach to the concept of forced migration, in light of the 2002 massacre at Bellavista-Chocó-Colombia.² I study this massacre to untangle the conceptual and socio-geo-historical dimensions silenced in the prevailing intellectual frameworks of what social scientists and politicians today refer to as forced migration. I explore the importance of ethno-historical case studies to offer a more nuanced analysis of the realities of deracinated populations condemned to be ignored, either because they are considered ‘hard to quantify’ (Castles 2003: 15) or because the complex causes are not easily captured in the prevailing labels (Black 1998), and are therefore left out of the mainstream debate.

Hence, this inquiry dwells on the limitation of current epistemic and political-legal frameworks to comprehensively answer and radically transform the realities of those forced to deracinate from their land. Their deracination was mainly induced by elements related to class, race, gender, political and economic violence, or the result of environmental disasters. Current frameworks are neither fair in theorizing the histories of the people being abused, raped, taken away from their property, and killed systematically; nor have they designed effective policy prescriptions to repair the damage such experiences have produced. Furthermore, current epistemic and legal frameworks do little to contribute to the respect and dignity of the people affected. Therefore we need new and enhanced categories and theories to comprehend multiple dislocations that will embrace the *long durée*, in Braudel’s style.

This inquiry depicts, first, the global dimensions of this phenomenon *vis-à-vis* a critical interpretation of the conceptual dimensions of the categories used to comprehend it. I examine the need to identify

the silenced conceptual, geographical, and historical layers of meaning to assess the pertinence of prevailing intellectual frameworks. Second, I highlight the need to move beyond both the sociology of forced migration and the core theoretical framework of migration studies as a whole by considering the sociological importance of contextual categories such as deracination and diaspora.

The use of journalism, sociology, anthropology, psychology, and political science to study this event contributed to reaffirm that the massacre is an effect of the growing armed conflict in the country. The history of the region is constantly overlooked. Little is said about the historical continuities and discontinuities of colonial capitalism, racialized colonialization, class, racial, sexual, gender, and generational exploitation this case reveals³ (Almario 2004; Arboleda 2004, 2007; Escobar 2004; Oslender 2004). It is as if the history of colonialization and racialization of the Atrato River⁴ region and of the state of Chocó itself—and its significance for the world political economy—is invisible to most social scientists devoted to the case of Bellavista, and the analogous cases in different regions of world. Research on Bellavista for over a decade has isolated the event from the history of the region in which it occurred. The same pattern could be found in cases with similar characteristics all over Latin America, South Asia, and Africa (Marfleet 2007:136).

Therefore, this case enlightens current debates on the need for a theoretical reflection about what constitutes a refugee, a forced migrant, or a forced displaced person. In addition, it serves as a gateway to continue crafting a theory of Afrodescendent and Indigenous Diasporas in Colombia (Almario 2004; Arboleda 2007; Lao-Montes 2008).

How?

The concept of forced migration and related subject, needs to be unthought, both epistemically and politically, from a Black feminist perspective.⁵ Haitian Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot states the importance of the production of history as a fruit of power and the necessity of exposing its roots to challenge its invisibility. He writes, “history is the fruit of power, but power is never itself so transparent that its analysis becomes superfluous. The ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility, the ultimate challenge, the exposition of its roots.” (Trouillot 1995, xix). His claim raises this major question for activists, scholars, and policy makers working with populations historically victims of land

dispossession, or any other kind of social force inducing people's violent dislocation. Building on this statement, I aim to outline the theoretical infirmity in the concepts underlying the research and policies produced in the field of forced migration. My initial suspicion is that the main rationales in which this concept is founded can contribute to the continued exploitation and pillage of the populations it meant to protect.⁶ Exposing the historical roots of this phenomenon serves as an opening to unveil the constellation of knowledge and power dynamics shaping the emergence and constitution of this field of research. In the case of Bellavista, revealing the roots of the history of land dispossession in the Bajo Atrato River region offers historical patterns of colonial capitalism and racial exploitation, as well as social mobilization for decolonialization, to help comprehend current violent events such as massacres, massive evictions, and claims of land ownership by foreigners with false documentation.

Numerous scholars argue that these events have led and continue lead to 'forced displacements' and 'forced migration' of survivors. However, historicizing these events will help us understand their significance in a more complex socio-economic, political, legal, historical, and cultural context. Describing violent events, such as massacres in isolation—as new incidents—obscures or limits the possibility of critical historical sociological theorizing. It also obscures the possibility of producing alternative discourses for social mobilization and social transformation. From this perspective, new debates, and a new range of strategies to transform realities of death into dignified existence could be opened. In this book, I argue that it is necessary to situate events of violence in the history of the territory in which they take place.

I am interested in developing an analytical schema to substantiate the sociological significance of exposing dubious and narrow-minded approaches in the dominant perspective of the field of forced migration. This exposure must be accompanied by a proposal to generate critical categories of socio-historical analysis. This case asks for a critical thought about the disconnection between the advance in the literature and the empirical proliferation of the phenomenon. The deconstructive strategy comes in as 'an unclosed, not wholly formalizable ensemble of rules for reading, interpretation, and writing' (Derrida 1983, 40). This should offer tools to analyze the specific texts we will be encountering both to expose and subvert the binary oppositions undergirding the dominant ways of thinking in this field.

I am using A. Quijano's concept of coloniality of power as a tool of world-historical analysis. A. Quijano establishes a direct link between the imposition of racial classifications and the emergence of the coloniality of power, as a permanent extension of the relations of subalternity created during colonialism. He also traces how these patterns of power configure Latin American and Caribbean institutions, forms of authority, modalities of exploitation, and the challenges that have been born in the center of long-term exploited populations. He argues that coloniality is based on the imposition of a racial/ethnic classification of the global population as the cornerstone of that model of power. It operates on every level, in every arena and dimension (both material and subjective of everyday social existence, and does so on a societal scale) (Lao 2008: 20).

As stated earlier, the goal herein is to contribute to dispelling, from the core sociological thinking and policy making, an historical conceptualization of the phenomenon many call forced migration. This is both an intellectual and a political imperative to question how a dispossessed person can be considered a migrant, and to what extent "labeling" the survivors of economic and political violence, development projects, and natural disasters as forced migrants produces a constrictive and hazardous intellectual and legal-political framework that substantiates their subordination.

The first reason why we should unthink/deconstruct the notion of forced migration is because it is conceptually dubious and narrow-minded. The International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM) describes forced migration as:

a general term that refers to the movements of refugees and internally displaced people (those displaced by conflicts) as well as people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine, or development projects.⁷

A second definition states:

Forced migration (also called deracination—originally a French word meaning uprooting) refers to the coerced movement of a person or persons away from their home or home region. It often connotes violent coercion, and is used interchangeably with the terms "displacement" or forced displacement. A specific form of forced migration is population transfer, which is a coherent policy to move unwanted persons, perhaps as an attempt at "ethnic cleansing" Someone who has experienced forced migration is a "forced migrant" or "displaced person."⁸

This second notion mentions the concept of deracination as another way to name this phenomenon. However, no major differentiations are introduced, when in fact there are important differences among the processes each concept allows us to comprehend. I will undertake this debate in Chap. 2. In addition to these definitions there is a typology of the people affected (see Table 1.1).

Among this typology I focus on the internally displaced populations (IDPs). In what pertains to forced displacement, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement states:

Internally displaced persons are “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.”⁹

Both notions identify the external force inducing the forced dislocation of the population and leave out the complexity of socio-economic

Table 1.1 Types of forced migrants and internally displaced persons

<i>Types of forced migration</i>	<i>Types of forced migrants</i>	<i>Internally displaced persons</i>	<i>Components of the definitions</i>
Conflict-induced displacement	Refugees	Development displacees	–The coercive or otherwise involuntary character of the movement –In the case of internal displacement, the fact that such movement takes place within national borders. –The immediate, and sometimes assumed, force inducing the movement (conflict, development, disaster)
Development-induced displacement	Asylum seekers	Development displacees	
Disaster-induced displacement		Environmental and disaster displacees Smuggled people Trafficked people	

Table constructed based on the information offered by the Forced Migration web guide op.cit

processes that have preceded ‘the armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters’ it identifies as the cause of the problem. The concept and the proposed typology are analytically, and empirically, misleading. It has been useful as a legal and political concept to formulate policies of temporal protection, but not for comprehending the complex structural, institutional, and every day dimensions of the phenomenon. It has been less effective in repairing the persecuted populations, and in promoting profound, long-term transformations of their living conditions.

After highlighting similar limitations, D. Hurton argues:

I do not conclude from all this that we should throw out the term ‘forced migrant’ and replace with something else. It is probably the best term available. But we should be aware of the conceptual difficulties it raises and not assume that it refers that to a clearly discriminable class of events. It is a useful shorthand term—what Wittgenstein called an ‘odd job word’—which cannot be defined analytically but which allows us to bring together a whole range of overlapping ideas and events which don’t have any single characteristic in common but which are connected to each other like members of a family—they have ‘family likenesses’. (2003: 10)

Nonetheless, I argue that by using the term ‘forced migrant’ for people who have been abused and dispossessed, in essence legitimizes a process of deadly land dispossession and economic exploitation. It makes us accomplices to it.

In the last two decades, the multiple perspectives converging in the field of forced migration have put forward diverse agendas for research and policy making to attend to millions of human beings fallen victim to this phenomenon (Refugee Studies Centre 2010).¹⁰ Over the course of these two decades, the field of social sciences has seen the birth of migration agencies, databases of all sorts, digital libraries, forced migration studies programs, research centers, and centers devoted to monitor the global politics of forced migration. The monumental efforts of several community organizations, parish groups, state-sponsored research groups, NGOs, research centers, university departments, and journals at core institutions and universities have translated into the production of one of the most complete records of reference data and background analysis on population ‘movements’ (Oxford 2010¹¹; UNHCR 2007, 2009).¹²

There is a growing trend in the literature concentrated on the production of guiding principles of forced displacement, humanitarian principles to protect human rights, and creation of spaces of protection within war zones. From this field emerged important debates on the usefulness of the concepts of protection and the legal and institutional challenges to ensure effective protection. Without these efforts the humanitarian tragedy—and the war crimes—the world knows today as forced displacement would, certainly, be much worse (Evans 2008; Feller 2009; UN Department of Public Information 2009; Wagner 2005; Zetter and Boano 2009). Contemporary reflections on the emergent trends of this field highlight how the proposed agendas in the management of forced migration remains a formidable challenge both in international and national communities. Central questions raised are: (a) in what terms are we to develop comprehensive migration management strategies that will help us achieve coherence of action? (b) What organizing principles should be adopted? (c) Is there, in conceptual terms, a point of leverage to move the debate forward? (IOM 2008).¹³ Additionally, the latest published overview of the current trends and future directions of research and policies focused on forced migration states such as state fragility and forced migration, the economics of forced migration, environmental displacement, displaced groups with specific needs, durable solutions, humanitarian space and spaces of protection, and realizing legal and institutional challenges of protection.

A “sociology of exile, displacement, and belonging... understood as a sociology of forced migration in the context of global transformation” (Castles 2003: 14) has been proposed by the mainstream interdisciplinary field of forced migration. Castles also states that we need a sociological argument that points to the significance of forced migration in contemporary society and in current processes of change (2003: 16). Decades have passed since national and international legal norms have been proposed, approved, and compiled to *diminish* the impact of this worldwide phenomenon (OACNUDH/ACNUR/CODHES 2002).¹⁴ Deep-seated improvements have been few, however, in the lives and regions of the victims of an historical continuum of pillage expressed in massacres, genocides, ethnic cleansings, and acts of land dispossession. The components of the definitions presented earlier illustrate the absence of a systematic historical analysis to connect the processes, the victims, and the geopolitical contexts in which they take place. Additionally, there is not a differentiation of the class, gender, and racial dimensions

establishing differences among the victims to comprehensively study this worldwide phenomenon. These presumptions, once considered useful to help victims of violence, environmental disasters, and development projects, today are the central intellectual and political barriers to useful analysis of the social world and its transformation. Even though the types of forced migration have been questioned, little attention has been paid to their effects. I argue that the reduced importance to the critics of this typology is located, first, in the way in which the problem has been framed, and second, because the critique made refers to populations historically marginalized and exploited.

While arguing for a sociology of forced migration, Castles states:

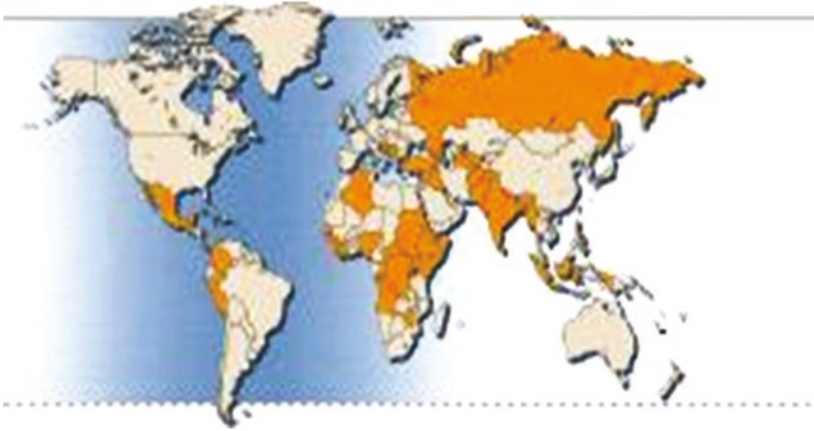
Then there are types of forced migration which are hard to quantify. Millions of people are displaced every year by development projects such as dams, airports, roads, luxury housing, conservation areas and game parks. The World Bank puts their number at 10 million a year. Some are able to rebuild their livelihood, but many experience permanent impoverishment and marginalization (Cernea and McDowell 2000; World Commission on Dams 2000). Typically, it is rural dwellers, ethnic minorities and indigenous people who suffer ‘in the national interest,’ while elites and transnational companies benefit (Roy 1999). In addition, many people have to migrate because of environmental degradation, natural disasters and industrial accidents or pollution. In such cases, it is extremely hard to distinguish between environmental, economic and political factors, so that the label ‘environmental refugee’ is misleading and even damaging, since it can divert attention from complex causes. (Black 1998; Myers and Kent 1995). (2003: 15)

Not only is the label of ‘environmental refugee’ misleading, the entire typology of ‘forced migration,’ and therefore of ‘forced migrants’ is misleading and constrictive. Labeling as *migrants* the victims of land dispossession, the populations left in locations of vulnerability to be violently disseminated by natural disasters, and those forced to either contribute, or to open space for ‘development’ to occur, is a harmful proposition. Such characterization contributes, first, to preserve the status quo of not investigating certain populations, arguing they are in spaces considered extremely violent and isolated. Second, the complexity of social forces and historical processes informing the realities of these populations and spaces is such that few are committed to assert their sociological significance.

These observations ought to enhance the understanding of the theoretical issues at the core of this field. To explore the empirical validity of these statements, the research should subsequently ask: who are those called forced migrants? Where are they located? What are their socio-political, economic, cultural, and religious histories? What makes them potential ‘forced migrants’ as compared to other populations of classes, races, genders, sexualities, and locations?

The second reason why we should unthink/deconstruct the notion of forced migration is because while it serves humanitarian purposes, it simultaneously legitimizes and contributes to the exploitation of the victims they aim to protect. Scholars of the TWAIL—Third World Approaches to International Law—have argued that even though this field has contributed to these humanitarian effects, it has also served the geopolitics of hegemonic states (Chimni 2009).¹⁵ The first reinforced area of research and policy of the mainstream approaches to forced migration is the relation between ‘state fragility’ and forced migration. The response to this call for research and action from institutions such as the World Bank and USAID allows me to suggest that the proposed solutions to these phenomenon contribute to a new version of a civilizatory mission to spaces that in previous centuries have been emptied epistemologically and cartographically, to be portrayed, afterwards, as spaces for conquest and exploration (Dussel 1992, 1996, 1998; Galeano 1974; Grucinski 1999; Hulme 2003; McClintock 1995; O’Gorman 1961; Quijano 2000; Said 1978), and as developmentizable spaces (Escobar 1995, 2009).

Accordingly, the second layer of meaning silenced in the current conceptual framework on forced migration is the geographical distribution of the population labeled as ‘forced migrants’ and the role of the regions from which they are forced out, play in the world economy. The conceptualization of this phenomenon limits the possibility of analyzing how those called forced migrants are also wounded by inequality in the long term. W. E. B. DuBois’ ‘darker races of the world,’¹⁶ F. Fanon’s ‘wretched of the earth,’¹⁷ and Erik Wolfs’ ‘people without history’¹⁸ are increasingly the victims of new and contemporary forms of land dispossession, destierro, and diasporic deracination.¹⁹ According to the Internal Displacement Monitor Centre (IDMC 2009), a global overview of trends of development of forced displacement, 11.6 million Africans are registered as internally displaced, while 5 million people in the Americas, 4.3 million people in Asia-Pacific, and 2.4 million people in Europe²⁰ are similarly displaced (Maps 1.1, 1.2).



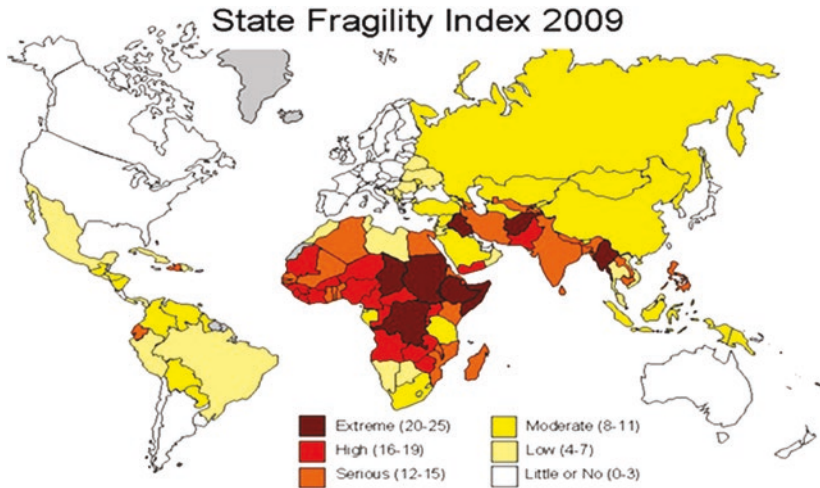
Map 1.1 Map of the global dimensions of forced displacements. IDMC—International Displacement Monitoring Centre. “Global Overview” (Interactive map). *International Displacement: Global Overview of trends of development in 2009*. <http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/> (Consulted January 2010), May 2010

Similar regions are targeted when it refers to ‘state fragility.’ According to the Center for Systematic Peace, the rate of forced migration is positively correlated to the fragility of the generator state.

USAID uses the term fragile states to refer generally to a broad range of failing, failed, and recovering states. However, the distinction among them is not always clear in practice, as fragile states rarely travel a predictable path of failure and recovery, and the labels may mask substate and regional conditions (insurgencies, factions, etc.) that may be important factors in conflict and fragility. It is more important to understand how far and quickly a country is moving from or toward stability than it is to categorize a state as failed or not. Therefore, the strategy distinguishes between fragile states that are vulnerable from those that are already in crisis (USAID 2005: 1).²¹

As a consequence, the tendencies marked in the map of the Global Dimensions of Forced Displacement and the State Fragility Index are similar. However, serious contradictions arise when comparing the maps.

Among these countries, Colombia has the highest degree of ambiguity to calculate the percentage of the displaced population. It has the



Map 1.2 State Fragility Index 2009. © 2010 Center for Systemic Peace. <http://www.systemicpeace.org/vlibrary/GlobalReport2009.pdf>

second highest percentage of IDPs, but is considered a ‘moderate fragile state.’ This example reinforces the statement of the double functionality of this field: serving humanitarian purposes, as well as the geopolitical interests of the imperial states. USAID, in its program for strengthening ‘fragile states,’ offers the main example I use to support this argument. This agency has built a direct connection between the countries from which ‘forced migrants’ run away and the spaces in which ‘terrorism’ is more likely to grow. They write:

Fragile states have posed a growing problem since the end of the Cold War, but they are now recognized as a source of our nation’s most pressing security threats. There is perhaps no more urgent matter facing USAID than fragile states, yet no set of problems is more difficult and intractable. Twenty-first-century realities demonstrate that ignoring these states can pose great risks and increase the likelihood of terrorism taking root. (USAID 2005: 1)

In 2009, Colombia’s IDP percentage was ranked from 3,303,979 to 4,915,579. The former base of the registry of the state was calculated through Acción Social²²; the latter was calculated by CODHES.²³ This

is a significant year to explore this analytical issue because, after 2011, when the victims and land restitution law was passed in Colombia, IDPs are counted in the unified registry of victims. As of April 1, 2017, there were 8,405,265 registered victims in Colombia. Of those, 7,159,144 are considered IDP's.²⁴

The 2009 report of the Monitoring Committee says:

Internal displacement currently affects 6 to 10% of the national population. According to CODHES, in 2009, 286,389 people were newly displaced, adding to previous displacements to create a total number of 4,915,579. 2008 thus brought a decrease of 24% compared to 2008, and the rate of displacement per 100,000 inhabitants decreased from 713 in 2008 to 660 in 2009. Government figures for 2009 differ significantly from CODHES's, registering a total of 122,398 for the year. The total, cumulative figure also varies significantly, as the governments registers a total of 3,303,979 to December 2009. 2008 and 2009 government figures are influenced by the decision of the Consejo de Estado that invalidated Decree 2569 of 2000, and by the Constitutional Court's Auto 011. (See previous section entitled 'Rules on IDP registration and their impact on official IDP figures') Nevertheless, currently, the rates of under-registration are substantially high. The national-survey by the Civil Society Follow-up Commission showed that the 65,7% of IDPs are registered in the RUPD, and the rest (34,3%) is not. Of the not-registered IDPs, 72.8% did not declare its situation of displacement to the relevant authorities, and 26,2% declared but was not included in the Registry'. (Comisión de Seguimiento, 30 April 2009: 50)²⁵

Despite this ambiguity²⁶ and high rate of 'forced displacement,' Colombia is considered a 'moderate fragile' state ahead of a supposed 'extreme fragile' state such as Zimbabwe, whose IDP population was ranked between 570,000–1,000,000 in 2009. Noting the growing impact of these narratives, and the growing discourses emanating from institutions such as the World Bank and USAID arguing to save these fragile states completes my critique of the significance of a geographical analysis as a second silenced layer of meaning within the field of forced migration. Analytics superseding this limitation can be found in F. Coronil's proposal of imagining nonimperial geohistorical categories. In his analysis of the Occidental imperial categories, he argues that map representations have often served to problematize views of the world (p. 52). Paraphrasing, Coronil writes that the unwieldy map is

eventually abandoned and is worn away by the corrosive force of time even before the decline of the empire itself. Thus, history makes the map no longer accurate, or perhaps turns it into a hyper-real representation that prefigures the empire's dissolution. This effect is achieved in part by the associations they conjure up as a group of terms. Often combined into binary sets, these sets forge links in a paradigmatic chain of conceptions of geography, history, and personhood, which reinforces each link and produces an almost tangible and inescapable image of the empire.

Coronil's claims constitute an important tool to criticize the so-called isolation of regions like the Colombian Pacific, and as a consequence, the justification of its *natural* (in Quijano's sense) marginality and ignorance of the population, and to unthink the argument that these 'kind' of regions offer the conditions for 'terrorism taking root,' or in the case of the state of Chocó, a permanent state of violence. After the peace agreement was signed between the Colombian government and FARC, there was hope that the region's armed conflict would come to an end. However, a new wave of violence started after September 26, 2016. Illegal armed groups, identified as neo-paramilitary, are terrorizing these communities.

How could we comprehend the functionality of land dispossession, and the major reasons behind the massacre of Bellavista, if we leave out all the events preceding contemporary processes of the same characteristics? Naming long-term practices of violent land dispossession as forced migration silences the local and world-historical significance of the events in which the dispossession occurred. It creates a fixed narrative that decontextualizes and isolates events in which acts of violence are committed systematically. It washes out the blood, the tears, and the horror. Its use as analytical categories is limited to revealing the constellation of historical processes lying behind long-term practices of violent land dispossession. As a concept of liberation/transformation, it is also restricted due to its lack of historicity and ability to reinforce racialization, marginalization, and domination. An unintended consequence of this intellectual model is that it contributes to the maintenance of projects of capitalist expansion and provides agendas for research, policy and practice for continuing such pillage and genocide worldwide.

Jacques Derrida's deconstructive strategy²⁷ is invoked here to examine the interpretations that have been produced and to unveil those that have been silenced, ignored, marginalized, or underestimated. Ethno-historical research, as I propose in this book, fleshes out how members

of social groups construct their experiences, question, repudiate, and explain them in the context of larger historical, political, economic, and cultural structures. By analyzing the accounts victims of land dispossession provide the researcher, we will be able to comprehend how meanings are constructed in the everyday life—and how social mobilization is crafted—while the violence is challenged simultaneously. Therefore, the case of Bellavista offers a unique opportunity to explore historical forces, actors, and factors in the transformation of the societies affected, which established analytical frameworks have failed to fully explain. Following the typology offered by Forced Migration Online (FMO), the major database of sources to study forced migration, Bellavista could be placed within all the categories of forced migration and its inhabitants could be placed among all the types of forced migrants and internally displaced persons, but this framework is still limited to explaining the serial occurrence of this phenomenon throughout the history of the region. Therefore, the main concept needs to be deconstructed and unthought, and more important, it offers no guidance for contributing to the social mobilization that could cause its overthrow.

The conceptual framework of forced migration has been one of the most important contributions the field has produced to support civilizing missions and the need to create aid programs to ‘help’ the countries in which victims are located. The rationale for the notion of forced migration and its types is ahistorical. It allows scholars, policy makers, and politicians to renew narratives and projects to help ‘vulnerable states’ or ‘states in crisis,’ and so on. If the researcher traces the linkages between world-historical conjunctures²⁸ of capitalist expansion and world-historical patterns of social mobilization of different populations, she will observe the resurgence of historical-emptied-spaces,²⁹ in which the inhabitants are seen as potential slaves, refugees, and forced displaced people. This conception is particularly absent from this field. In addition, almost no research critically reflects the rationales of the major concepts used in this field that allow for such routinization of erasure, and epistemological silencing from occurring.³⁰

Hence, when the ‘darker races of the world,’ the ‘wretched of the earth,’ and the ‘people without history’ meet the IDPs they realize they are the same. They are different generations of the same extended family. Alternative categories have been proposed to overcome the limitations of the prevailing categorical framework. Here, I introduce the Colombian debate around this matter. After 1996 the question of deracination

became a question of considerable historical importance in Colombia. Forced displacement, exile, forced migration, forced mobilization, migration, deterritorialization, and deracination are some of the concepts employed by scholars who study the armed conflict in Colombia to name the phenomenon that has been stripping more than 7 million people from the national space. Along with the community organizations, a group of historians, anthropologists, geographers, political scientists, and sociologists has emerged to point to the need for refocusing the studies of the effects of armed conflict such as “displacement”.³¹

They suggest reviewing the epistemic importance of the use of the concept ‘forced displacement.’ To them, this notion constitutes an obstruction to understanding the various dimensions of this phenomenon and its implications. They propose the notion of deracination as a category with a more powerful explanatory power to analyze, describe, and comprehend the actual situation in the context of violence. As a result, since approximately 2002, the notion of deracination has been used to move forward an emergent trend in the Colombian studies of violence, after the question of how to comprehend experiences such as the Bellavista’s massacre entered the field.

Afro-Colombian historian Santiago Arboleda is one of the main critical scholars introducing the concept of deracination, used by Afrodescendent communities in the scholarly debate of forced migration. He describes deracination as a phenomenon of prolonged historical projection, which emphasizes the centrality of the knowledge built by Afrodescendants, closely linked to the natural wealth of their ancestral environments in a defense of life. He argues that the notions of forced migration and forced displacement are euphemisms for deracination. Arboleda outlines an explanatory diagram of the reinterpretation of systematic process of deracination experienced by Afro-Colombians during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to identify its antecedents in the slave trade or mass kidnapping of Africans in the fourteenth century. He suggests that there is a continuation of enslavement lying behind processes of land dispossession. Accordingly, he describes the historical, socio-anthropological, economical and environmental information of the management plans for the rivers Mayorquín and Raposo in the Pacific coast to comprehend the impact of destierro in their lives. He relates the violent disintegration of these societies and the loss of their ancestral knowledge with their demand for reparations and compensation from the population. The author examines the role of traditional knowledge

and ancestral strategies of resistance in the current atmosphere of war and deracination. He argues that ‘displacement’ cannot be considered as such because what is happening in the contemporary Pacific coast region is articulated to an historical totality of domination connected to the colonial epoch. Thus, deracination means “uprooting from the ground, to deracinate from the landscape, breaking the communal relations.” I build on Arboleda’s notion of deracination to suggest that this model serves as a valid categorical framework to analytically signify a problem affecting a population that over the last thirty years has established a strong social movement around the defense of the territory.

Building on the narratives of the interviewees that I present in Chap. 3, I argue that deracination, as violence, is constitutive of the modernity/coloniality (Escobar 2004). It is a foundational political epistemic category encompassing the diasporas, exiles, holocausts, ethnic cleansings, and genocide that different societies have known through their histories. Consequently, the theoretical reflection of the empirical, legal, political, and historical usefulness of this, and the prevailing categories, becomes not only a need but a responsibility.

I conceive this concept as a category of Afrodiasporic Feminist Critique.³² It is a powerful perspective expressing the uprooting of ancestral communities from their native lands and the violent dispersion of the population. This notion is inspired by the beliefs, feelings, discourses, and practices embedded in the concepts of collective territory, ancestry, diaspora, memory, and community, which are affected when an act of mass killing and massive uprooting occurs. It is part of the political imaginaries and epistemic perspectives that surfaced along with the emergence of an Afro-Colombian social movement since the early 1980s and late 1990s.

Hence, without denying the utility of the concepts of forced displacement/migration, the strength of the proposition of deracination as an analytical framework is crucial to fully comprehend the massacre at Bellavista and other similar cases. Using this framework requires us to reverse the order of the actions and think of this phenomenon not by what it induces, but by what it motivates, what it produces: where it comes from in both the current conjuncture as well as in its *longue durée*. Thus, considering not only the mobilization (displacement) of those affected—but also the interests in land ownership and the strategies of killing to dispossess people from their land that has been worked and politicized for centuries by several communities of those whom W.E.B.

DuBois called “the darker races of the world” and Frantz Fanon “the wretched of the earth” (deracination)—and what makes them (deracinated), consistent with the breakaway of the historical relation with the territory and the construction of meanings of these populations, is presented.

In this way, I argue for analyzing the significance of the ruptures the process of deracination generates. As suggested by the authors referenced, suffering, trauma and pain are social or moral dimensions produced by the detachment and fracture of families, communities, territories and societies. Losses in human and material terms affect the subjectivity of the actors who are involved in the phenomenon. In contrast, forced migration/displacement as the main conceptual approach offers the analysis of a temporary condition that ceases, in most countries, after two years of being ‘displaced,’ when supposedly the vulnerability is overcome. The condition of deracination points to the irreversibility and irreparability of this experience. As suggested by the ACIA (Asociación Campesina del Atrato/ Peasant Association of the Atrato River), S. Arboleda, Oscar Almario, and Arturo Escobar,³³ and as I argue, the loss of the territory implies a rupture with the social constructions and meanings that Afrodescendent and indigenous communities have created in response to such loss. As a consequence, this case study emphasizes the significance of considering this process as an historical totality,³⁴ as a set of multiple processes— not as a set of multiple conditions³⁵ (Marx 1973).

There are two dimensions to my approach that I highlight: my notion of deracination and diaspora. My conception of deracination considers three components of socio-historical analysis: power, knowledge, and liberation. Embedded within these components are four dimensions: history, representation, memory, and mobilization. Additionally, I suggest that processes of deracination take place in the bodies, the cultures and the territories involved. The major problems I underscore are: deracination as one of the foundations of the contemporary moment of the Afro-Colombian diaspora; as an historical formation, as a social relation of domination based on the marginalization/isolation of the other(s); as an historical process by which racial, sexual, class, gender, and spatial categories condense to design and produce a marginalized other and naturalize the condition of who deserves to live and who deserves to die; as a process of allocation of targets in cultures, bodies and territories; and as a social relation of domination, as a mechanism, as well as a complex

of social relationships that are the foundations of historical institutions trans-historically, and trans-locally founding and maintaining imperial formations, and modern nation-states.

My conception of diaspora follows the characterization of the Puerto Rican sociologist Agustin Lao-Montes of diaspora as a process, a condition, and a project of affinity. He says

Patterson and Kelley argue that diaspora can be conceptualized both as process and condition(...) I will add a third dimension, the African Diaspora as a **project of affinity** and liberation founded on a translocal ideology of community-making and a global politics of decolonization. The African Diaspora can be conceived as a project of decolonization and liberation embedded in the cultural practices, intellectual currents, social movements, and political actions of Afro-diasporic subjects. The project of diaspora as a search for liberation and transnational community-making is grounded on the conditions of subalternization of Afrodiasporic peoples and in their historical agency of resistance and self affirmation. As a project the African diaspora is a north, a utopian horizon to Black freedom dreams.³⁶

I propose to articulate S. Arboleda's concept of deracination and Kim Butler's and A. Lao-Montes' concept of diaspora to set the basis of an Afrodiasporic decolonial critique of this field. From this epistemic perspective, I link a set of concepts that are usually studied in isolation. I relate the history of land acquisition, territorial settlement, territory making, the impact of racialization, capitalism, and globalization to the production of knowledge of the region invaded and pillaged.

Butler's articulation of the study of diaspora with place and A. Lao-Montes notion of African diaspora allow us to comprehend deracination as a strategy used for diasporization in long term processes of land dispossession, labor exploitation, and racial and gender domination. S. Arboleda's notion of deracination also aims to connect this phenomenon to the larger landscape of the African diaspora. Understanding diaspora as a process and as a condition contributes to the historicizing of the dynamic changes of this reality in different contexts, to the identification of its new forms or reconfigurations. Also, conceiving it as a project of affinity facilitates the recognition of the new sceneries of power the communities affected are mobilizing in the memory of their deaths and to defend their territories.

Developing a critique of forced migration with these analytics moves forward the proposal of engaging in the elaboration of an historical analysis of how territories are produced to therefore comprehend the empirical significance of deracination as a category of analysis, social mobilization, and reparation.

In the following chapter, I locate the massacre of 2002 in a larger historical context of four centuries of the local history of Bellavista with attempts to link the events from every period with major economic and political processes in other regions of the world. As a result, I highlight the need for a geo-historical analysis of deracination.

NOTES

1. However, this category means far more than these preliminary notions. The Colombian conceptual debate around the notion and its significance as a category of analysis, social mobilization, and reparation linked to major socio-historical processes such as the African and Afro-Colombian diasporas will be addressed in Chap. 2. By the end of book, I expect the reader will be familiarized with the term both in Spanish and English, since laying out the multiple meanings this notion encompasses, and the power it has to decolonialize the field of Forced Migration, is my aim. From here on, I will use the concept of deracination.
2. See Annex, map #2.
3. A more detailed description of the case statement is introduced in Chap. 2.
4. See Annex Map No. 2.
5. I expand this argument in Chap. 4.
6. This chapter does not engage in the debate about the transition from Refugee Studies to Migration studies, but it borrows major arguments from it.
7. <http://www.forcedmigration.org/webguide/>.
8. Butts, Alexander. *Forced Migration and Global Politics*. Wiley-Blackwell.
9. (<http://www.internal-displacement.org> *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Introduction, pag. 2*). This definition was postulated in the 1992 report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.
10. <https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/files/about/academic-record-2009-2010.pdf>.
11. <http://oxmofm.com/>.
12. <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=4c11f0be9&query=2009%20Global%20Trends>.
13. <https://www.iom.int/world-migration-report-2008>.
14. http://www.acnur.org/t3/uploads/media/COI_65.pdf.
15. B. Chimni in this article starts to historicize the transition from Refugee Studies to Forced Migration Studies as “the birth of a ‘discipline’”.

16. Among W. E. B. Du Bois' contributions to radical politics and critical social theory, the concept of the 'Darker people of the world' offers a keystone to identify the population that is affected by the gendered and racialized colonization of the world both in the colonial and post-colonial period. In his analysis of White supremacy, in the *Souls of the White Folks*, he asserts 'the European world is using black and brown for all the uses which men know. Slowly but surely white culture is evolving the theory that 'darkies' are born beasts of burden for white folk. It were silly to think otherwise, cries the cultured world, with stronger and shriller accord. The supporting arguments grow and twist themselves in the mouths of merchant, scientist, soldier, traveler, writer, and missionary: Darker people are dark in mind as well as in body; of dark, uncertain, and imperfect descent; of frailer, cheaper stuff; they are cowards in the face of mausers and maxims; they have no feelings, aspirations, and loves; they are fools, illogical idiots-'half-devil and half-child. Such as they are civilization must, naturally, raise them, but in soberly and in limited ways. They are not simply dark white men. They are not 'men' in the sense that Europeans are men. To the very limited extend of their shallow capacities lift them to be useful to whites, to raise cotton, gather rubber, fetch ivory, dig diamonds-and let them be paid what men think they are worth-white men who know them to be well-nigh worthless. (DuBois 1920, 460).

In addition to this quote I would like to introduce R. Rabaka's description of W.E.B. Dubois' understanding of white supremacy to present his arguments in its complexity. R. Rabaka states Du Bois declared, "whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen!" (1995a, p. 454). Here he is sardonically hinting at the cardinal difference between white supremacy and most other forms of racism: its worldwide historical, cultural, social, political, legal, and economic influence and impact. White supremacy serves as the glue that connects and combines racism to colonialism, and racism to capitalism. It has also been illustrated that it exacerbates sexism by sexing racism and racing sexism, to put it unpretentiously. Thus, white supremacy as a global racism intersects and interconnects with sexism, and particularly patriarchy as a global system that oppresses and denies women's human dignity and right to be humanly different from men, the ruling gender (Davis 1981, 1989; hooks 1981, 1984, 1991, 1995; James 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999; Lorde 1984, 1988; Rabaka 2003e, 2004)" (Rabaka 2007, 3).

17. In the *Wretched of the Earth*, F. Fanon describes the racialization of spaces to differentiate those in which the oppressed live from the colonializers. He describes the colonial world as a compartmentalized world divided in two, inhabited by different species, governed and ordered by violence of the colonial world. He emphasizes 'the colonial world is

- a compartmentalized world. It is obviously as superfluous to recall the existence of ‘native’ towns and European towns, of schools for ‘natives’ and schools for Europeans, as it is to recall apartheid in South Africa. Yet if we penetrate inside this compartmentalization we shall at least bring to light some of its key aspects. By penetrating its geographical configuration and classification we shall be able to delineate the backbone on which the decolonialized society is reorganized” (Fanon 1963, 3).
18. In the same vein of W. E. B. DuBois’ and F. Fanon’s concept to map global inequality, Erik Wolf’s concept of ‘the people without history’ highlights how certain populations considered lacking a formally written history like the ‘Western’ historical narratives are left out of the narration of the world history and its progress. He argues “we have been taught, inside the classroom and outside of it, that there exists an entity called the West, and that one can think of this West as a society and civilization independent of and in opposition to other societies and civilizations. (...) Such a developmental scheme is misleading. (...). By turning name into things we create false models of realities. (...) Thus it becomes to sort the world into differently colored balls, to declare that ‘East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet’” (Wolf 1982, 5–6).
 19. For the concept of diasporic deracination, see Kauanui, J. Khaulani “To deracinate is to displace a people from their own territory, place or environment – literally, to uproot” (139). Kauanui, J. Khaulani “Diasporic Deracination and ‘Off-island Hawaiians.” *The Contemporary Pacific*. Volume 19, Number1, Spring 2007, pp. 138–160.
 20. IDMC, op. cit.
 21. USAID. Fragile States Strategy. January 2005. http://www.usaid.gov/policy/2005_fragile_states_strategy.pdf.
 22. The agency created by the government of President Uribe Velez to redirect funds from Plan Colombia—funded by the US—to serve ‘social’ causes, such as ‘forced displacement’.
 23. Consultoria para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento (Colombian NGO advocating for Human Rights and against Forced Displacement). On May 24, 2010 the director of this organization was victim of an attempted murder. This act was attributed to the Paramilitary group ‘Aguilas Negras.’
 24. See <http://rni.unidadvictimas.gov.co/RUV>.
 25. <http://www.internaldisplacement.org/assets/library/Americas/Columbia/pdf/Columbia-Overview-Jul09-sp.pdf>.
 26. CODHES: The numbers don’t add up. December 10, 2008. <http://blog.usofficeoncolombia.com/2008/12/codhes-numbers-dont-add-up.html>.
 27. Derrida, Jacques. *Monolingualism of the Other or the Prosthesis of Origins*, trans. Mensh, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996 (MO).
 28. See Figures 1 and 2 for a development of this argument.

29. I am using the working concept of historical-emptied spaces to name the territories where exploration, exploitation, violence, deracination, politics for development, and contestation for liberation coexist, covered by the mantle of marginality, and barbarity. Put differently, historical-emptied spaces are the cradles of the coloniality of power. Bassett, Thomas (1994). "Cartography building and Empire in Nineteenth-Century West Africa," *Geographical Review*, Vol. 84, No. 3 (Jul., 1994), pp. 316–335.
30. *Routinization of erasure*, and *epistemological silencing* are working concepts I am using to navigate the research on this field. Their primary purpose is to help me to conceptualize the continuing practice of silencing the past of the populations being defined as refugees, displaced, asylum seekers, forced migrants, and so forth. I aim to explore how the use of these categories makes routine a practice of *erasure* as opposed to engaging with *the long durée* of the history of those populations.
31. See the following selection: ACIA (2002), Almario, Oscar (2004), Arboleda (2004, 2007), Escobar (2004), COCOMACIA (2006), CODHES (1999), COMISIÓN VIDA, JUSTICIA Y PAZ. (2002), Diócesis de Quibdó (2006), Molano (2001), OPOCA (1999) (Oslender 2004).
32. I will elaborate the conceptual schema this perspective offers in Chap. 4.
33. Op. cit.
34. Arboleda (2007): "Conocimientos ancestrales amenazados y destierro prorrogado: la encrucijada de los afrocolombianos", en: Mosquera, Claudia y Barcelos, Luíz Claudio (edit) *Afroreparaciones: Memorias de la esclavitud y Justicia Reparativa para negros, afrocolombianos y raizales*, Bogotá, Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
35. Pérez (2001): "Una mirada empírica a los determinantes del desplazamiento forzado en Colombia", en *Cuadernos de Economía*, Vol. XX, No 35, Bogotá, Centro de Investigaciones para el Desarrollo – CID-, Facultad de Ciencias Económicas, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, pp. 205–243.
36. Montes, Agustín Lao. "Decolonial Moves. Translocating African Diaspora." *Cultural Studies* Vol. 21, Nos. 2–3 March/May 2007, pp. 309–338.

ANNEX

See Table 1.1 and Maps 1.1, 1.2.

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The Region: Emptied Spaces and Geographies of Death in Colombia

Abstract In this chapter, Vergara-Figueroa describes how people at Bojayá constantly face death. She identifies the main characteristics of the Atrato region on the Colombian Pacific coast and the living conditions of Afro-Colombians. In doing so, she places Bellavista, the municipality of Bojayá and the state of Chocó in the global context of violence and land dispossession. She argues that territories are historical formations that need to be understood within the context in which they are conceived, produced, lived, re-produced, and unproduced. So are the experiences of land dispossession. Bellavista-Bojayá illustrates the intricate power of the intersection between people, rivers and territories. Contrary to spaces that are design for enjoyment and for living a life with dignity, the territories of Chocó and its rivers are laboratories of death. The massacre at Bellavista is one of a series of violent events that have occurred in the Atrato River region and it is reviewed in the context of similar events around the world.

Keywords World system · Emptied spaces · Geographies of death
Colombia · Bojayá · Chocó

Territories are socio-geo-historical formations that need to be understood within the context in which they are conceived, produced, lived, re-produced, and unproduced. So are the experiences of land dispossession. Bellavista-Bojayá illustrates the intricate power of the intersection

between people, rivers and territories. People at Bojayá constantly face death. Contrary to spaces that are designed for enjoyment and to live a life of dignity, the territories of Chocó and its rivers have been kept as laboratories of death. The massacre at Bellavista is one of a series of violent events that have occurred in the Atrato River region and can be linked to the world system. In this chapter, I describe the main characteristics of the region and the living conditions of Afro-Colombians using the empirical and historical grounds in which my understanding of deracination and my working hypothesis of the Diaspora-Territorialization-Deracination/Diaspora (D-T-D²) model have been shaped. In so doing, I place Bellavista in the global context of violence and land dispossession.

If we are to fully comprehend the stories of the families presented in Chap. 3, we need to know the history of their territories, the competing logics behind their land struggles, and their legacies. Their lives and the battles to survive that each of the families depicted in this book undergo are shaped by the legacies of slavery and the colonial foundation of the power, which reconfigure in every historical period to dispossess the population that resides in the land where they have worked, fought, and produced. It is a history of a racialized and gendered labor exploitation.

As such, we need to unpack the colonial, modern, racial, sexual, patriarchal, and capitalist historical forces that have shaped the process of land dispossession of Bellavista and communities in the Atrato River region. In the narratives presented in Chap. 3 are two major issues: the competing logics of the meaning of the land for capitalist exploitation vs. as an integral part of the community life, and the multiple actors and processes of the current armed conflict in Colombia. We see how the interviewees attribute responsibility to one armed group or the other, but this is a phenomenon that goes beyond just this depiction.

In this chapter I develop the argument that historical analysis is essential for thinking critically of the scope of the notion of forced migration. As stated earlier, I argue that historicizing land dispossession, ‘race,’ racism, patriarchy, labor exploitation, and region making are as central as conflict arising from development projects and disasters, which have been established as the main factors that induce forced migration.

Hence, the third silenced layer of meaning in the mainstream conceptualization of forced migration is historical analysis. Arguably, the concepts of forced migration and forced displacements are limited in explaining the complexity of deracination as a world-historical reality. In

the case of Bellavista-Bojayá, the scope of historical analysis is too narrow to make sense of the isolated facts and observations listed in Table 2.1. In this table, I summarize major dates of land dispossession in the Bellavista region over a period of four centuries.

I introduce these historical dates from the region to argue that it is not possible to articulate a relevant sociological analysis in the absence of historical categories capable of comprehending how and why these events relate. The prevailing categories are unable to explain how countries and populations with similar histories—of racialization, conquest, and domination—are the targets of ‘old’ and ‘new’ forms of dislocation. Hence, we need new categories such as deracination and diaspora to comprehend historical process and their social complexity.

The concepts of deracination and diaspora offer these analytics. I will develop this argument in four parts in this chapter. First, I introduce the concepts and methods of deracination as diaspora and as categories of historical analysis, social mobilization, and their power as legal categories for reparation. Second, I reflect on the stories of Chap. 3 to assess how resisting deracination has allowed the Bellavista community to deny its displaced status. I discuss the major effects of this phenomenon. Third, I move towards the development of a research design that builds on these analytics. I develop the three components of socio-historical analysis of my conception of deracination: power, knowledge, and liberation, along with the four dimensions underlying them: history, representation, memory, and mobilization. I conclude my attempt to demonstrate the limitations of the framework of forced migration, developing the notion of world-historical emptied-spaces. I propose a historiography on the forms of land acquisition and land tenure in the Bajo Atrato region as a strategy to comprehend the meaning of collective territories, and the power of what these communities call ancestry. I compare this conception of territory into an historical revision of how spaces in which deracination occurs are constructed discursively. Building on Arturo Escobar’s notion of “developmentaizable spaces,” I describe how the same territories are portrayed as spaces for exploitation. Hence, I confront these two competing logics to conclude my narrative on how the context of place-based ethno-territorial social mobilization and violence in the territories of the state of Chocó enlighten alternative ways to comprehend experiences of deracination, and new cycles of diaspora among Afrodescendent and Indigenous populations in the world system.

Table 2.1 Summary of key events of deracination in the Bojayá Region 1500–2002

<i>Events</i>	
XXI Century	The Afrodescendents settle in the community of Bellavista, and surroundings communities, in May 2nd of 2002 were deracinated from their territory after the massacre of approximately 119 inhabitants
XX Century	In the period know as <i>La Violencia</i> (The Violence), exactly in January 1st of 1952, it is said that the communities of Bojayá and Bebará disappeared due to and killings produced by individuals and redoubts of cuadrilles of killers coming from Antioquia ^a
XVII-XVIII Centuries	<p>After the defeat, and “pacification” of the Indigenous populations of the region, and the enslavement of the Africans in their Diaspora in its pick, the exploitation gold marks another series of events, let say of “displacement” both of the inhabitants, and the region, particularly when contraband started to represent a threat to the Spanish Crown. The description about how the Spanish Crown tried to prevent the contraband trade with the Dutch merchants highlights the acts of land dispossession in the region:</p> <p>Boyd-Bowman & Sharp write “(u)nable to guarantee the loyalty of officials in this isolated gold producing region, Crown authorities sought instead to make illegal shipments to and from the providence easy to detect.” (6) “Although the vigias did not prevent contraband trade, they did prevent the legal passage of merchandise, observers, and passengers into de Chocó by way of the river highways. (...) The Chocó was cut off from outside by geographical barriers and Crown regulations (...). Isolation, wealth and mystery continued as the prevailing view in the Chocó” (7)</p> <p>The vigia founded to prevent contraband trade was located in the piece of land that exists until today called “Vigia del Fuerte”, community located in front of the community of Bellavista</p>

(continued)

Table 2.1 (continued)

<i>Events</i>	
XVI Century	<p>Since 1500 until 1566 a drastic royal ordinance forbade, under pain of death, any conquer or explorations in new land^b. “New lands” for this moment referred to the region known as “Bajo Choco” where contemporary Bojayá is located. The inhabitants of this region where the Kunas, labeled in the historical accounts of the period “Indios hostiles” (hostile Indians). This region remained ‘closed’ until a strategy was orchestrated to pacify and settle the provinces of the Choco and Chancos Indias</p> <p>In the introduction to the SUNY Description, a more illustrative account of the moment is written, it says: <i>“in the sixteenth century several well known attempts to secure the Chocó, including those by Pascual Andagoya, Captain Melchor Velásquez, set the pattern for hardship and failure. (...) All three expeditions ended in disaster as an estimated two-thirds of the soldiers who entered to Chocó with the fanatical captain died of hunger, disease or Indian attack (...) Despite the hardships and examples of failure and death, gold continued to draw adventurers. By the end of the seventeenth century soldiers, miners, priests and officials had conquered the Indians of the central Chocó. They did not defeat the Cuna Indians near the mouth of the Atrato River, but the Noanames and Chocoos, decimated by disease, tamed by friars, and herded into corregimientos^c by priests and soldiers, offered little resistance to future Spanish encroachment”</i> (3) <i>“Spaniards who entered to Chocó gave and contracted smallpox and were particularly susceptible to many tropical fevers. Because seventeenth- and eighteenth century accounts describe the Chocó simply as fever-ridden (...)”</i> (4^d)</p>

^aEven though this mention requires a more complex description to determine the exact location that is referred as Bojayá, it is one of the few evidences of the impact of violence in the region during this period. This annotation could be found in Guzmán Campos, Germán, Orlando Fals Borda, and Eduardo Umaña. “La violencia en otras regiones”. *La Violencia en Colombia. Estudio de u proceso social*. Tomo I, p. 96

^bThis royal ordinance was communicated through the “Cedula Real de 31 de Diciembre de 1549. Footnote # 12 in Romoli Kathleen. “El Alto Chocó en el siglo XVI”. *Revista Colombiana de Antropología*. Vol. XIX. Bogotá. Instituto Colombiano de Cultura. 1975, pp. 14–16

^cSmall villages

^dBoyd-Bowman, Peter M. & William Sharp. *Description of the province of Zitara and course of the Atrato River*. Special Studies Series. Council on Internacional Studies. State University of New York at Buffalo. 1981

DERACINATION AND DIASPORA AS CONCEPTS AND METHODS

How does deracination and diaspora capture new realities? How do the concepts capture new global realities or designate old phenomena in a new way? As stated in Chap. 1, the concepts of diaspora and deracination allow us to capture historically and geographically specific processes of land dispossession from a world-historical decolonial perspective. In this sense, I propose the concept of deracination as a category to articulate how local conceptions of territory are constructed historically, and the impact of being dispossessed from it, and connect it to similar experiences in the world system through the rationales of the concept of diaspora. Applying a D-T-D² cycle (Diaspora-Territorialization-Deracination/Diaspora), these two notions surface as significant analytical tools to comprehend first, a history of territorial settlement as all human beings; second, an experience of deracination; third, a process of dispersion, a condition of dislocation; four, a politicization of the condition of diaspora as a project of affinity, and the re-start to the cycle through the creation of new territorial settlements; new experiences of deracination, and so forth.

As proposed by K. Butler and A. Lao-Montes, the African diaspora is a multicentered historical field framed by a world-historical process of domination, exploitation, resistance, and emancipation. I argue that processes of deracination are an integral part of the axis framing this field. Building on S. Arboleda's conception, I propose the concept of deracination as a category of historical analysis, as a method, and as the foundation to generate the main claims that structure diaspora as a project of affinity (Lao-Montes 2007: 310). In this vein, the concept of deracination subsumes the following:

- Deracination as one of the foundations of the contemporary moment of the Afrodescendent, Indigenous, Mestizo Diasporas; the historical formations of the relations of domination based on the marginalization/isolation of the other(s).
- The historical process by which racial, sexual, class, gender, and spatial categories condense to produce a marginalized other. This naturalizes the condition of who deserves to live and who deserves to die as a process of allocation of targets in cultures, bodies and territories.

- Deracination can be conceived as a social relation of domination, as a mechanism, as well as a complex of social relationships that are the foundations of historical institutions trans-historically, and trans-locally founding and maintaining imperial formations and modern nation-states.
- Deracination as violence is constitutive of modernity/coloniality. It is a foundational political epistemic category constitutive of the diasporas, exiles, holocausts, ethnic cleansings and genocide in different societies.

RESISTING DERACINATION DENYING THE DISPLACED STATUS

Thus viewed, I set the rationales for an analytical framework to study processes of Deracination and Diaspora reflecting on the unanswered questions of the current literature of forced displacement and forced migration (Chap. 1) and the lessons learned from the stories of the survivors of Bellavista (Chap. 3). The basic epistemological assumption of this framework is rooted in the significance of locating an act of violence, such as the one that occurred in Bellavista, in a larger and longer conceptual and socio-historical formation, in a broader spatial configuration, and in a more complex structure of social systems.

Within this framework I attempt to historicize deracination by conceptualizing these experiences as one of the foundations of the Afro-Colombian Diaspora. Hence, I propose to place deracination in the time space realities in which it occurs. Doing so requires us to consider multiple social, geographical and historical dimensions and to disentangle the spatial, racial, gender, and class logics of deracination. This process allows us to understand how it impacts women, Afrodescendent and Indigenous populations; the local, the regional, the national, and the global context in which the history of this community has been developed. Finally, the impact of racism, sexism, patriarchy, and imperialism is also considered.

In the case of the massacre at Bellavista, we can see how processes of deracination render profound changes in a society suffering from the devastation wrought by such events as the disappearance or decrease of the population, the destruction of communities, as well as the relationships built with their territories. The effects of the deracination may become irreversible and irreparable in the cultural, economical, and political aspects of the community. These changes are seen in the negative transformation of the territorial configuration of rural communities.

Living through deracination strengthens the social mobilization of the Afro-Colombian and Indigenous populations. Hence, considering that the territory is an element that has been built, fought, and politicized, the problem of deracination involves a deterioration of the social condition of the subjects who are abruptly removed from their territories.

The descriptions of the experience of Bellavista in Chap. 3 allows us to see some of the features of this phenomenon, and the role of women in the creation of strategies to survive the act of violence and to rebuild the community. How can we move the lessons of this case forward? How can we move from discussing the impact of deracination on the bodies, in the communities, and territories to understand, for example, the role of deracination in the nation-state? What is the analytical scope of deracination as a category of historical analysis? Some answers to these questions lie in systematic historical analysis, an area that, while it has been widely studied, has been limited: the historiography of land acquisition, and territory making. I elaborate this argument in the following two sections.

It is imperative to answer the question of why the land in which Bellavista is located today has been systematically disputed in the course of the last four centuries. As I show in Table 2.1, underneath the contemporary old and new Bellavista and Vigía del Fuerte runs the blood of the Indigenous Kuna—disseminated in the sixteenth century—and of the Africans, Afrodescendants, diverse contemporary Indigenous communities, Chilapos, and Mestizos systematically disappeared, assassinated, uprooted, and deracinated in the subsequent centuries up until today. It is not only the same geographic space, but also the same racialized population, with its reconfigurations, and the same reconfigured discourses of marginalization. In such cases, the analytical framework of forced migration proves not only limited but ineffective for bringing justice to these populations.

DEVELOPING AN ANALYTICS AND A METHOD TO STUDY THE QUESTION OF THE DERACINATION OF COLOMBIA

The remote region of Chocó, in the northwest of Colombia, has long been synonymous with poverty, backwardness, isolation and ignorance. Nonetheless, the region has also been a significant locale for the development of the feudal and capitalist economies of Spain and the United States since the sixteenth century (Archer 1937; Collins 1874; Sharp 1975; West 1957). The legacies of colonialism continue to profoundly affect the economic and social condition of the region. In the

Colombian colonial era, the inhabitants of this state were forced into slavery, and after independence and emancipation, they became servants in the upper-class houses of the country. These two roles—slavery and servitude—have been maintained through two further centuries, in which both Indigenous and Afrodescendants have been the targets of development policies, and recently, the victims of massive deracination.

I use the concept world-historical-emptied-space as a working analytical tool of world historical analysis to comprehend how the configuration of territories where conquest, exploitation, violence, deracination, politics for development, and contestation for liberation coexist and are covered by the mantle of the narratives of underdevelopment, marginality, and barbarity. Regions such as the Chocó have been represented economically as poor, racially as black and Indigenous, gendered as ‘virgin’ territories; and politically, socially and culturally as ‘backward.’ I am conceptualizing world-historical-emptied-spaces as the cradles of the colonality of power (Quijano 2000).¹

My concern with colonial and contemporary narratives of the region is in part methodological and in part pragmatic. I argue that there is a need to challenge a diverse range of structural, institutional, and everyday representations deeply rooted in political, academic, and popular discourses, which are preventing us from systematically studying populations that have been invented and preserved to be perpetually exploitable. Studying the context of place-based ethno-territorial social mobilization and violence in the territories of the state of Chocó will enlighten alternative ways to comprehend experiences of deracination and new cycles of diaspora of Afrodescendent and Indigenous populations in the world system because it shares world-historical processes of domination, exploitation, resistance, and emancipation of nations such as Sudan, Iraq, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, and Pakistan, which happen to be among the largest countries with the highest rates of deracinated populations.

HOW DO THESE WORLD-HISTORICAL EMPTIED-SPACES AND THE SUBJECTS OF VIOLENCE FORM?

Anthropologist Veena Das argues that there are three components on the formation of the subject of violence: (a) discursive formations that make women victims of violence; (b) the experience of becoming a subject, linked to the experience of subjugation; (c) women’s own formation

of their subject positions (2001, 205). Building on this rationale, I argue that to historicize land dispossession—with the aim of reparation—we need to describe two opposing logics in the conception of the land that are at play in the case of Bellavista. Describing these conceptions gets us to the center of how these spaces have been created as spaces of exploitation and as spaces of liberation.

Allow me to compare two excerpts to develop this statement:
The members of the Community Council COCOMACIA say:

Defending the land we defend our life, it is not our caprice, our ancestors have already done it. If today we are divided, and all dispersed, tomorrow whoever will come and will displace us all. Among us there is the war which is the greatest enemy that threatens our land. (COCOMACIA 2006)²

An illegal mine owner from Antioquia portrays the ownership of the lands in the state of Chocó in the following manner:

All this- land-at the beginning is nobodies land, but when people come and enter this region, and find gold immediately there is a display of plenty of owners ... they appear all off a sudden, and one without knowing they were owners ... one comes here because everybody does it; entering, exploring to see what can one find, and once people come to know that there is gold they start claiming they are the 'owners'. Owners in quotation mark because they don't have ownership titles.³

How are these competing visions possible? How can one describe the historical formation of the notion of collective and ancestral territory claimed by Afrodescendent and Indigenous communities of the Colombian Pacific? How does this historical description open a space for alternative epistemologies of dislocation?

HISTORICIZING DERACINATION: LAND ACQUISITION AND TERRITORY-MAKING IN THE ATRATO RIVER REGION

To start answering these questions, in this section I introduce a collection of notes on the construction of a state-of-the-art historiography of initiating practices of land acquisition and territory making. My aim is to concentrate on the practices of land acquisition and territories to substantiate the use of the concepts of deracination and diaspora. I develop

the model I proposed in the introduction: the D-T-D² cycle through the colonial, emancipation, independence, and post-emancipation periods. Most of the references that I found locate the period 1750–1850 as central to understanding the processes of the establishment of mines in Colombia. The population enslaved to do the mining was organized in slave gangs— *cuadrillas de esclavos*. A second major historical stage is located after the liberation of the enslaved population in 1851 until 1930, when they were forced to move to the Pacific coast to establish new communities. Finally, a third historical stage could be located from 1930 to today. I argue that by looking at the major ideas and practices related to the making of territories and the major descriptions of how these processes were drawn during these periods is central to moving forward a critical debate about contemporary dispute over land ownership, and the ongoing violent land dispossession.

Historians such as Sergio Mosquera, William Sharp, Orian Jimenez, William Villa, and Robert West; and architects such as Jacques Aprile-Gnisset and Gilma Mosquera offer us the major accounts on this topic. I distinguish two major lines of analysis in the literature. First are the patterns of land acquisition, in which the main units of analysis are the trajectories of socio-spatial formations, land uses, and land rights. Second are the patterns of territory making, in which the main ideas, memories, meanings and beliefs of these communities are considered in the description of the formation of territories and territorialities in the Colombian Pacific.

*World-Historical-Emptied-Spaces: Thinking About the Bases
of Contemporary Processes of Deracination in the State of Chocó-
Colombia*

In this section, I confront the trajectories of territorial settlement by marooned Afrodescendent communities and Indigenous communities that resisted the colonial dissemination with the discursive construction of these spaces as spaces for capitalist exploitation.

SPACES FOR EXPLOITATION: SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH
CENTURY REPORTS ABOUT THE CHOCÓ REGION

The literature produced to describe the history of the department of Chocó links it to the Spanish.

Empire-building era. Its place in this history is principally as a space exclusively destined for extracting gold.

In W. Sharp's account:

Chocó is located in the northwest corner of Colombia, and borders Panama, the Caribbean, and the Atlantic Ocean on the north and west. The region is hot and humid, and heavy rainfall produces a thick tropical vegetation and countless streams and rivers. The Chocó also contains a highly desired mineral-gold. For a century-and-a-quarter during the colonial period-1680-1810- the Chocó became an important source of gold for the Spanish Empire. (Sharp 469)

Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, evidence indicates that 'explorers,' Spaniard officials, map readers, miners and priests interpreted the Chocó as an area open for exploration and colonialization. It is a constant in the documentation from this period to describe in detail the conditions of the environment, the weather, and the amount of resources available for exploration without mentioning the condition of the population—the organization and life of the communities that were established in the territory. In the colonial reports, the negation of the humanity of the Indigenous and African people led to the consideration of the area as a commodity and thus as property of the miners. The mapping of the region during these centuries concentrated solely on mines for exploitation and territories for expansion.

The *Description of the province of Zitara and the course of the Atrato River* was one of the most important reports of the explorers of the Atrato River in colonial Chocó. It constituted the main source of inquiry of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries about this territory. I found it useful to mark the main historical stages regarding the initiating practices of land distribution, land acquisition, and territory-making. Its introduction starts with the attempts of colonialization and the relation between Indigenous and Spaniards in the colonial period.

It states that:

In the sixteenth century several well known attempts to secure the Chocó, including those by Pascual Andagoya, Captain Melchor Velásquez, set the pattern for hardship and failure. (...) All three expeditions ended in disaster as an estimated two-thirds of the soldiers who entered to Chocó with the fanatical captain died of hunger, disease or Indian attack (...) Despite the hardships and examples of failure and death, gold continued to draw

adventurers. By the end of the seventeenth century soldiers, miners, priests and officials had conquered the Indians of the central Chocó. They did not defeat the Cuna Indians near the mouth of the Atrato River, but the Noanames and Chocoes, decimated by disease, tamed by friars, and herded into *corregimientos* by priests and soldiers, offered little resistance to future Spanish encroachment. (3)

Spaniards who entered to Chocó gave and contracted smallpox and were particularly susceptible to many tropical fevers. Because seventeenth-and-eighteenth century accounts describe the Chocó simply as fever-ridden (...). (4)

This suggests three dimensions that seem central to my reading of the significance of this description. First, the way in which the label of ‘empty territories’ served the purposes of empire building and how Spanish officials used it to legitimize killing of the native population and the proposal of projects to expand the domain of the empire. This initial moment is what the Spanish officials called exploration. Second, the complex structure of individuals and functions to make the process of exploitation/colonialization work; this is expressed in the sentence “soldiers, miners, priests and officials had conquered the Indians.” Third, the role of space-making in the process of exploitation and the use of violence; this is expressed in the sentences ‘indigenous disseminated’ offered little resistance to future Spanish encroachment.” Thus enunciated, the opposition made by the inhabitants is constructed as a savage act that has to be controlled while the territory is violently taken and exploited. These processes mark the initiating practices of land acquisition, while planting the basics of the historical and geographical representation of these territories. Thus, even though this region was central to the economic development of the Spanish Empire, it remained marginalized, isolated, and silenced. In this context, Boyd-Bowman and Sharp write:

Once miners actually began exploiting the place mines in the Chocó early in the eighteenth century, some lucky individuals reaped great fortunes. I have calculated elsewhere, using quinto records and estimates of contraband trade, that the total amount of gold extracted from the Chocó during the period 1680-1810 was worth approximately \$ 83.313.00 silver pesos. This figure while impressive even today (...). On today’s gold market the 416,565 lb of gold mined in the Chocó would be worth approximately (...) \$ 4.332.276.000 dollars. (4)

The violent and bloody settling in Chocó, the exploitation of its territories, and the establishment of mines brought a threat to the agents of the empire—the illegal exchange of gold. The description about how the Spanish Crown tried to prevent the contraband trade with the Dutch merchants brings an important category to this mapping on the constitution of these territories, and the narratives that accompany this geopolitical construction, which in part justifies the contemporary deracination of its inhabitants (Fig. 2.1).

Thus, Boyd-Bowman and Sharp say:

(u)nable to guarantee the loyalty of officials in this isolated gold producing region, Crown authorities sought instead to make illegal shipments to and from the providence easy to detect. (6)

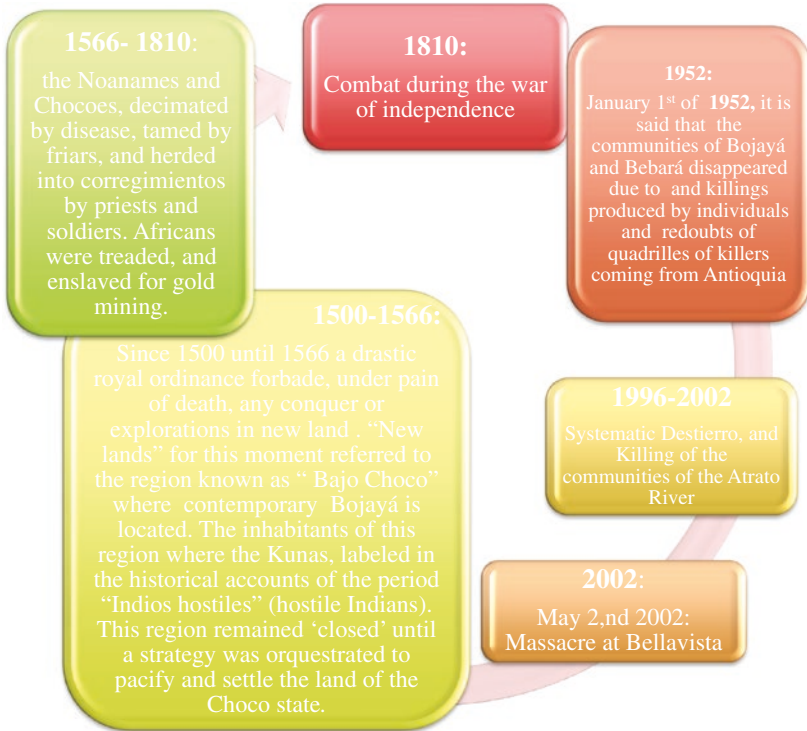


Fig. 2.1 Preliminary schema of historical events of deracination at the Bojayá region 1500–2002

Although the vigias did not prevent contraband trade, they did prevent the legal passage of merchandise, observers, and passengers into de Chocó by way of the river highways. (...) The Chocó was cut off from outside by geographical barriers and Crown regulations (...). Isolation, wealth and mystery continued as the prevailing view in the Chocó. (7)

This mixed view of isolation, wealth, and mystery not only impacted the economic process of extraction during the eighteenth century, and the relation constructed between the cores of the Empire and its peripheries, but also the foundation of the construction of a region, its culture, and history, as we know it in the modern times.

The Boyd-Bowman and Sharp's report continues:

(t)he aura of mystery and wealth sustained interest in the Chocó. Although few actually visited the region official reports(...) continually mentioned the Chocó's wealth, both real and imagined, and isolation. But because of the Crown restrictions regarding travel on the Atrato during most of the eighteenth century, maps drawn during this century tended to involve either the central mining region or the Darien/Panama area. Maps could not be completed of a region where it was illegal to travel by either visitors or residents without granted special Crown permission. In fact, many smugglers traversed the Atrato River to its mouth but maps and descriptions of their travels could not be committed to anything but memory. Official and family archives remained empty. (7)

Furthermore, they point out:

(i)t is ironic that during the eighteenth century, the century of tremendous mining and agricultural expansion, isolation and crown regulations prevented good descriptions and maps of the Atrato region. (8)

At the end of the colonial period, and the beginning of the republican era, the representation of the mysterious/silent region was consolidated and the idea of a marginal, savage, and ignorant population was an unquestioned truth, which supported the compartmentalization of the new independent country after 1810. This is why M. Taussig argues that the state's biggest need is to control massive populations, which it does through the 'cultural elaboration of fear.' Thus, silence becomes the biggest producer of fear. As a result, in the reports from the republican period up to the 1900, the description of the inhabitants of the territory

is covered with the colonial narratives of marginality and non-humanity. This last idea is a challenge that scholars of the territorial construction and the processes of deracination will have to face and develop strategies and research agendas to overcome. These elements bring us to three fundamental aspects that have influenced the production of knowledge of this region: (a) the writing of its history; (b) the sources used; and (c) the final stories integrated as ‘official’ history.

Regarding the writing of the history of the state of Chocó, critiques that have been raised about the impact that the “prevention of good descriptions and maps of the region of Chocó” has on the historical process of writing its history. How has it helped to create and maintain the representations of backwardness, isolation, and marginality of this region? Second, on the matter of the sources, as this report indicates, most of the available sources were written to serve the requests of the Spanish Empire. When this is the case, other versions of the same stories remain silenced or tergiversated.

ON THE TRAJECTORIES OF TERRITORIAL SETTLEMENT AND THE PATTERNS OF LAND ACQUISITION

To historicize the trajectories of territorial settlement and the main patterns of land acquisition, J. Aprile (2004) proposes describing the past of the Pacific region to illuminate in a more comprehensive way the socio-spatial configuration of its territories. The author introduces essential periods for the comprehension of the process of settlement. He has divided it into three forms: “a) the aboriginal socio-spatial formations; b) the socio-spatial slave training and mining; and c) the socio-spatial formation of agricultural colonization” (275). Accordingly, he introduces a description of the multiple processes that led to the configuration of the modern socio-territorial organization. He suggests that the main features of this process are: (a) a socio-spatial formation of an agriculture-based colonization; (b) an endogenous colonization; and (c) a popular colonization of the jungle. Building on these previous descriptions, Sotomayor and Valderrama (1995) illustrate the process of the settlement of the communities of the Atrato River region.

They state:

the process of settlement is given by the flight and slave uprising, but this process is accentuated in the mid-eighteenth century, a period during which arose black villages of enslaved runaways or fugitives, who

continued working as independent gold washers, and to whom the jungle became an impenetrable refuge. The first villages founded by blacks in the Atrato River were Ichó, Neguá, Beberá, and Bebaramá that have served as a fulcrum to reproduce forms of social organization based on the extended household. It is from these places that come to the Medio Atrato the first black communities to found settlements such as Buchadó in 1842 and La Boba in 1882 that come to be the oldest settlements in the municipality of Bojayá. Prior to the emergence of these towns, the Spanish had set up checkpoints and traffic of slaves. This is the case of Vigía del Fuerte founded in the late eighteenth century. One could say that the first wave of settlement takes place along the rivers that descend from the western slopes of the Cordillera Occidental.

A second epoch is identified after 1850, mainly driven by the abolition of slavery. The authors argue:

In this period, black communities expand their economic alternatives to the exploitation of rubber, tagua, radicle and animal skins. During this period the state is concerned to establish a presence in the territory leading to the villages during the administration of justice, and religious education, creating new villages and prompting the growth of existing ones. In this period is defined the structure of the settlements and the territorial distribution of these as a line along the rivers, a pattern that still exists. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with the territorial expansion of the black communities is completed the extraction cycle of the raicilla, the tagua, and caucho, and it is the beginning of the process of the strengthening of the occupation of the Medio Atrato. In this moment is founded Opopodó (1936). In this stage the mobility of black communities is intensified and new processes of the production land are incorporated. The most recent period is identified by the appearance of towns that are considered the extensions of older communities. This process looks for an appropriation of natural resources for subsistence by fewer people compared to the village core. Upon the occupation of the Spanish in what is now the municipality of Bojaya used to lived the Cuna Indian community, which also covered the Bajo Atrato. (Jimeno 1995)

In addition, the authors introduce the question of resistance as an important component of these processes. They say:

The first period of colonization pressure by the Spanish led to the depletion of the indigenous population in the seventeenth century. Thus, the Spanish divided the territory into Indian provinces. Several groups were forced to work in the mines of the tributaries of the Atrato and San Juan

rivers. However, in the middle of the century, there were indigenous rebellions that swept the colonial towns and mining centers, culminating in the massive displacement to remote lands especially in the headwaters of rivers and coasts of the Pacific Ocean. Throughout the centuries of Spanish presence there were numerous indigenous movements forcing them to relocate, merge or driving them to extinction. It should be mentioned that cultural changes in indigenous social groups have been as a result of a historical process by the formation of clusters, loss of control over territory and evangelism. During this process the transformation of their production systems takes place by introducing livestock and in general to join the social systems of Spanish and black communities. The creation of the Municipality of Bojayá comprises relatively recent settlements; the oldest is La Boa created in 1883, and Bellavista the municipal capital that was established in 1946. However, the creation of the municipality as a territorial entity was given with Ordinance No. 13 of 12 December 1960.⁴

These descriptions are an extraordinary finding to flesh out my argument of the historical formation and repetition of these processes of deracination. The Cuna Indian Community was decimated by Spanish explorers in their journey to find gold in the region. Today the Afrodescendent and Indigenous communities living in these territories are being both deracinated and exterminated by those interested in gold exploitation, drug dealing, transportation of weapons, and plantation of oil palm.

ON THE FORMS OF LAND TENURE

Robert West (1957) asserts that:

The majority of the inhabitants of the Pacific lowlands are not only subsistence farmers. They are squatters as well, just as their great-grandfathers were after the abolition of slavery. Today probably not one farmer in a hundred holds legal title to the land he occupies or cultivates, nor does he pay rent. Much of the Pacific lowland of Colombia is a national domain, which may be claimed by any person who (1) cultivates or otherwise uses an area amounting to at least a third of this claimant (2) files the requisite paper with the government and pays certain small fees. (...) Some lands are owned or leased by mining concerns; others are held legally by individuals from the interior who have little interest in their development. (...) In the long-occupied mining districts levee, terrace and hill lands near the main settlements are considered to be privately owned by families of the community, each having its written title to certain plots. (153–155)

Furthermore, Aprile (2004) affirms that the main forms of land tenure are the expropriation of the absent owners by cultivating it and cleaning it constantly. The properties obtained are then passed on to the new generations of the family. G. Mosquera reinforces the idea of these communities of families as a form of land tenure. She describes the main dimensions of the inherited territory by listing the principal features that have identified the residential space. She states that the system of villages that developed out of this form of land appropriation configured a historical process of settlement on the land that the enslaved population had worked, and that was previously occupied by the aborigines. The marooned and freed populations of African descent occupied the riversides, cleaned, worked, and created communities in the land as dispersed productive unities. (293)

ON THE FORMS OF LAND ACQUISITION AND STATE FORMATION

Formally established royal ordinances or laws influenced the multiple patterns of land use and land acquisition presented here. The end of the colonial state brought intense conflicts over land ownership that marked and oriented the course that these patterns took. To explore this question and integrate it into the study of slavery, S. Mosquera argues that it is frequent in the studies of slavery to omit the legislative aspect of it. In this sense, he presents a set of archival documents in which the rights of possession, ownership, and property of both enslaved and lands are explained.

He introduces the legislative aspects of colonialization in Colombia to explore the importance of the social classification of the population coming out from slavery and goes on to the narrative of the building of the nation. He describes the enslaved as an object of right, the modernization of the Spanish empire, the set of laws that made the abolition of slavery possible, to end up explaining the main gendered discourses that de-constructed the colonial state and built *La República*. In that sense, he introduces the constitutional changes and major global historical events of the period under review in this chapter. Thus, between 1815 and 1853 these processes of land acquisition are going to be cut across several legal changes. Mosquera summarizes them:

The Congress of Vienna of 1815 and the Royal Cedula of 1817 on the prohibition of the slave trade of the Spanish dominions, the law of 28 May of 1821 on the freedom of childbirth, the Constitution of the Republic of Colombia of 30 August of 1821, Constitution of the Republic of

Colombia of 29 April 1830, Constitution of the State of New Granada of 29 February 1832, regulation of the law of childbirth in Law 29 May 1842, the Constitution of the Republic of New Granada on 20 April 1843, the dismantling of the colonial state with the abolition of slavery law of 21 May 1851, and the Political Constitution of New Granada of 30 May 1853.

With the end of the colonial state these constitutional changes were followed by policies of recolonization or, more specifically, law prescriptions to keep the domination in these territories. The major pieces of law were the Resolution of November 22, 1888 on the granting of uncultivated lands to informers of Mines, and the Resolution on Uncultivated Land, July 28, 1894 on preferences between two informers, among others (until 1905), which are covered in this book.⁵

Following Le Grand (1988), there are two major epochs that should also be mentioned. It is important to tie to the processes of land acquisition—which took place in the nascent state of Chocó between 1827–1873—with legislation that was designated to ease the fiscal crisis in Colombia (costs of independence) and to strengthen the land titles of big landowners. Also, it is important to recognize that, between 1874 and 1930, the importance of the economy of the border.

Then, laws 61 of 1874 and 48 of 1882 established that the land should belong to those who cultivate the lands. Title was given through free grants to those who had worked and occupied the land for a period of at least five years. However, the high transaction costs of certification and the local political strength of landlords prevented the formalization of the property rights of farmers. This is an important evidence of the inequalities born in these conditions.

In addition, Webster F. McBryde's piece (1969), building from the description of human ecology of Chocó argues that:

land tenure, in new and recent zones, involves a variety of serious problems. Spontaneous settlements result in *de facto* occupation of land without legal title, which in turn gives rise to dispossession and litigation. The farming population may be divided into two main demographic groups: the *libres*, who are little attached to the land, and the *cholos*, who have a close attachment with the land. Neither group is protected by legal title. The presence of these squatters creates some of the most serious. The Colombian Agrarian Reform Institute (INCORA) is gradually helping farmers to obtain titles. (434)

In Don Melchor de Barona y Betancourt y la esclavización en el Chocó, S. Mosquera (2004) describes the arrival of the national revolution to Chocó in 1813, where the provinces of the time claimed their independence and constituted the town councils of Nóvita and Citará. I argue that these political and economic environments had to mean something to the processes of land acquisition, but they are not mentioned in the literature that describe the processes. The diaries of the travelers display evidence of this omission. Thus, the author cites the disarticulation of the economy of the Nueva Granada after 1810 and the systematic impoverishment of the rich, of what it meant to the enslaved and runaways in their projects of liberation as unexplored questions.

“DEVELOPMENTIZABLE” SPACES

In the twentieth century, the emergence of contemporary forms of globalization, the advance of technology, the emergence of dependency discourses and the compartmentalization of the world according to their ‘degree of development’ brings to the history of the Chocó what Arturo Escobar calls the invention of the Pacific as a ‘developmentizable entity,’ and places it as a Third World region within a Third World State, a periphery of the periphery.

Arturo Escobar’s account states that:

In 1983, the first Plan for the Integral Development of the Pacific coast stated its call for development in the following way: This vast region harbors enormous forests, fishing, and mining resources that are required immediately by the nation; the region constitutes an area of fundamental geopolitical interest for the country. Hence, the inevitability of a state policy capable of understanding and assuming the integral development of the Pacific Littoral as a great national project. This project can no longer be postponed. (156)

Subsequently, “(w)ith PLADEICOP, the Pacific was constructed for the first time as a ‘developmentizable entity’” (159).

In 1993, a project funded by the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank called “Plan Pacífico also took place. At the same time the policy document entitled *Agenda Pacífico XXI* and the *Proyecto Bio Pacífico* were arranged as initiatives to preserve, develop and modernized

the biodiverse Pacific.” These policy prescriptions were made at the same time that the Law 70 of 1993 or Black communities’ law was being institutionalized. This law was the product of a constitutional change based on the mobilizations of indigenous and afrodescendants organizations both in the rural and urban areas. The Law 70 of 1993 gave to the afrodescendent communities the legal frame to legalize their territories, to structure ethno- education, an Afrocolombian Cathedra, as well, it states the autonomy of the communities to rule their lives in their territories.

SPACES FOR DERACINATION

Thus, the spaces for deracination came to be. The establishment of the law and the beginning of the development projects inaugurated a new era of death and constituted the spaces for deracination. From 1996 to 2002 in the Bajo Atrato region, for every community council meeting (the minimal structure to legalize a portion of the territory), there was a massacre, a collective deracination, or a set of indiscriminate killings. The massacre of Bellavista is just one of those examples.

This massacre of 2002 in Bellavista took place at an important political and economic moment in Colombia. At this time, there was a debate in Congress about the importance of this region to the palm oil trade, which would strengthen the economy, as well as the importance of the strategic location of Chocó, particularly the Atrato River, to both legal and illegal economic activities, such as trade of drugs, arms, wood, and medicinal plants, among others. Again, the population of this region is erased, and the implementation of these projects is justified with the argument of the powerlessness of the population to administrate their richness.

This description links Tilly’s account on the relationship between extraction, protection, state and war making to explain the role of violence in state building.

He states that:

Power holders’ pursuit of war involves them in the extraction of resources to fuel their efforts, and this in turn encourages them to organize the people in their sphere of control into better capital accumulation systems. This creates a cycle that is what led to the modern states of Europe. The states were not intentionally created; rather they were the inevitable result of this behavior (172)

Four things states do that are related to violence: war making, state making, protection, and extraction. All four of these depend on the state's tendency to monopolize concentrated means of coercion, and each will reinforce the others. (181)

It is also imperative considering that:

Building a new state apparatus requires continued extractions of resources from the population. The new tax burden not only worsens old conflicts but also creates new ones, especially with peasants whose primary reason to join the independence movement was to free themselves from the burden of taxation. (Cohen et al. 903)

In light of this historical evidence, I speak of emptied territories and geographies of death, following the reasoning of A. Mbembe, J. Vargas and J. Alves to understand the configuration of territories where colonization, exploitation, violence, banishment, policies for development, and resistances for liberation coexist; covered by the mantle of narratives of underdevelopment, marginality and barbarism. A. Mbembé (2003) argues “the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die” (11).

J. Vargas and J. Alves (2010) “deploy the concept of geography of death to investigate the multi-layered aspects of state-sanctioned lethal violence perpetrated by, but not limited to, the police force. This entails a consideration of at least three types of factor: actual violent acts, their symbolic dimensions and the historical and structural conditions within which violence emerges.” (611). These concepts are useful for studying regions, such as Chocó, that have been economically represented as poor, racially as Black and Indigenous, in terms of gender as virgin territory, pending exploration, and socioculturally as backward.

These representations extend to the human beings who inhabit them, and sometimes their is not questioned, thus reproducing prejudices and stereotypes that impact narratives and ethnic-racial images.

The systematic killing of its population and the appropriation of the land and natural resources have marked the history of the state of Chocó. Therefore, a sociological account of the massacre at Bellavista cannot overlook that history. Describing the collective actions undertaken by the inhabitants of the community of Bellavista-Bojayá is particularly important. This community experienced one of the most tragic massacres of the beginning of the twenty-first century in the Americas—the output

of this event forced all its residents to acquire the status of ‘displaced’ people.’ After four months away, the people returned to Bellavista; and five years after their return, the project of resettlement of this population ended in the construction of the New Bellavista, making it one of the few such communities to have a satisfactory return to their land.

Studying this case has a special importance as a chance to analyze the implications of emptying the history of territories, like those of the Chocóan Pacific. With this massacre, 119 people died, and more than 100 human beings were injured. This event transformed the way of life in this community, its daily life, the use of its territory and the distribution of the population in its space.

However, the spaces for deracination are at the same time spaces of contestation and struggle for liberation. Studying them reveals how these spaces created as empty are actually full of people, albeit marginalized people, with a determined race, gender, class, and location that make them objects of the coloniality of power, objects of exploitation, politics of development, and violence, and at the same time subjects of resistance and liberation. I expand on these aspects on Chaps. 3 and 4.

NOTES

1. The concepts of coloniality and the coloniality of power were coined by Anibal Quijano. See Quijano (1989, 1991, 1998, 2000a, 2000b). I am using it as a tool to comprehend the world-historical patterning of power in the *longue durée* of historical capitalism; as a specific attribute of the modern regimes of power.
2. “Defendiendo el territorio, defendemos nuestra vida, no es capricho de nosotros, los ancestros ya lo hacían, pero si hoy nos dividimos, y todos nos dispersamos, mañana llega cualquiera y todos nos desplazamos. Es que también tenemos entre nosotros la guerra que es el enemigo más grande que amenaza nuestra tierra” (COCOMACIA, 2006).
3. Jorge Martínez, Administrador Mina- Comunidad Villanueva-Municipio Lloró-Chocó- Documental Chocó-La quimera del Oro/Colombia. Rutas de la Solidaridad, documental- Igor Olateta. — “Todo esto-la tierra en un principio no tiene dueño pero cuando la gente viene y entra a esta región cualquier persona encuentra un poquito de Oro inmed iatamente aparecen infinidad de dueños...aparecen de un momento a otro sin saber que eras dueños...porque uno se entra aquí porque todo el mundo lo hace. Entrando, explorando a ver que se consigue y ya cuando se llega a saber que existe oro aparecen los dueños. Entre comillas dueños porque no hay títulos.”

4. <http://www.bojaya-choco.gov.co/nuestromunicipio>. Own translation.
5. Ministerio de Obras Públicas y Fomento. *Recopilación de las leyes y disposiciones vigentes sobre tierras baldías*. Bogotá. 1907

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They Kill Us, Therefore We Exist?

Abstract In this chapter, Vergara-Figueroa presents accounts of survivors of the massacre at Bellavista-Bojayá in a collective voice. Using the 25 interviews she conducted, the author gives an alternative narrative of the event in a post-massacre context. Notably, she links scenarios and actors that were left out in previous accounts of the massacre. Hence, in this new narrative, the author places mainly the voices of women survivors at the core of the story to describe how life was in the community prior to the massacre, how they experienced the event, the process of organization to return to the community after they were deracinated and their multiple efforts to reconstruct their routines.

Keywords Massacre at Bellavista · Bojayá · Chocó · Black Women
Afrodescendents · Ethnography

In this chapter, I present accounts from a group of survivors of the Bellavista massacre that of May 2, 2002. This community is the main political center of the municipality of Bojayá in the state of Chocó in Colombia. It is located by the riverside of the middle course of the Atrato River. The municipality of Bojayá has, according to the 2005 census of population, 9941 inhabitants. Of that number, 58.4% are Afro-Colombians and 41.4% are Indians. Almost the entire population—95.86%— do not have their basic needs met, and this figure has stayed consistent since 1993. In the municipality of Bojayá, 61.4% of

the population changed their residential address due to threats to their lives, 20.4% due to the difficulty of obtaining employment, and 10.8% due to family reasons. Only 38.2% of the population between the ages of 3–5 years attended a formal educational establishment; for ages 6–10 years, 59.4% attended and for those between 11 and 17 years of age, 56.4% attended. In the capital of the municipality, where 50.4% of the population is concentrated, there is no hospital and no university. There is one school, one Catholic Church, and close to five other Christian churches. On the morning of May 2, 2002, approximately 119 people were massacred in the community church of Bellavista-Bojayá-Chocó, and approximately 1744 families abandoned the territory to escape the atrocity of this event. Their actions forced them into the category of forced displacement, and they were registered in the Colombian system of Internally Displaced Populations (IDP). Worldwide, more than 65 million people in 54 countries have lost their territories and are also considered displaced peoples. In Colombia, the massacre at Bellavista raised challenging questions about the nature of what the politicians at the time called ‘acts of terrorism.’¹

Every May 2 the event is remembered, and the inhabitants of Bellavista protest the abandonment of the state and its corruption, racism, and marginalization of the Afrodescendant population. In 2014, 12 years after this horrifying event, answers about what caused the massacre—and repairs to the material, emotional, and psychological damages it caused—still remained unanswered and unfulfilled. Various journalistic, sociological, and anthropological studies of this event reaffirm that the massacre was the result of the growing armed conflict in the country. However, the overall history of the region is constantly overlooked.

How do we tell stories of land dispossession that capture the complex, diverse, contradictory, and contested historical forces that shape them? When discussing the political economy of land dispossession in the Pacific coast, where do we place race, gender, and class? The concern behind these questions is the challenge I face in trying to understand this case and its complexities. Particularly, I look at the role of race, class, and gender in the dispute over land and resources. I tell a collective story, using 6 family interviews (that condense 14 individual’s voices), 45 translated songs—out of 130—and three of my own journal entries of three different visits to Bellavista. Through this form of narration, I place the voice of the interviewees at the center of the story to raise the issues in both the theoretical literature on race and violence, and in the

Afrodesscendent social movement. Specifically, I focus on comprehending the everyday lives of Afrodescendent communities and the victims of deracination in the rural areas.

In these stories from Bellavista survivors, I explore how these families make sense of their own realities. Multiple realities surface in the insights of the interviewees, particularly regarding their struggle to produce a collective voice to stop the abuse not only of different armed groups, but of the state as well. Other salient dimensions of these interviews include the role of women and youth in community organizations, the position of the Diocesan Afro-Colombian Pastoral, the multiple effects of international aid groups, and the impact of megaprojects that have come to the region.

In the voices of interviewees, the following discussion touches on three segments of inhabitants' experiences during and after the massacre in Bellavista. To start, interviewees describe the event itself and how they experienced it. I analyze these descriptions in depth in Chaps. 2 and 4. Secondly, I present how this community was uprooted from the territory. The third section shows how they regrouped and developed new ways of living upon their return to a region immersed in armed conflict and under numerous disputes for capitalist exploitation.

MÁXIMA AND FAMILY

Mija (little daughter), I was right there where the pipe exploded. It was the morning of May 2, 2002. How could we forget that day? I was below the Christ all the time. I wanted him to protect me and my little baby. There was no place safer than my spot. But I moved because my older daughter, who was pregnant at the time, needed me to help her with her older son. I swear that a minute after I moved to help her, the cylinder broke into the church and exploded right there. Look how the Christ was left. I would have never survived, but I did. I guess God has a mission for me, but one never knows. They can come back at any moment and kill us all. If it is not them, is the state, of the paramilitaries, they are all the same, in the end (Photo 3.1).

This violence started in the year 2000. At the time the guerrilla fighters invaded the community, they took over the police station, the Banco Agrario, and the community. They didn't kill all the policemen here because the *guerrilleros* took all the arms while the policemen were sleeping, but they did killed everybody in the Vigía del Fuerte's police



Photo 3.1 Image of the Mutilated Christ of Bojayá, May 2, 2008. A symbol of resistance to rebuild life in the New Bellavista

station—except for one that runaway—the FARC massacred 25 policemen. They became the kings in the community ever after. I will go as far to say that with that event was when the armed conflict started here.

They were the owners of all this *llano* (land) you could see them in the streets as if they were the army or the police. They used to go to the houses and knock “*tun, tun,*” “*we are inviting you all to a meeting in the community stadium, nobody can missed it, not even the smallest one, you know what will happen to whomever does not show up.*” At the time, we-the women used to meet at someone’s house around 3:00 pm to play *bingo*, and they will say to us “*stop that bingo, don’t you know it is an emergency? We need you to listen to what we have to say in the meeting.*” They said in the meetings that they will defend us. They defended us that much that they ended up killing almost everybody! Since then we have been suffering the war. Since 2000 they have been the kings in this Atrato.

By the end of April of 2002 the paramilitaries invaded Bellavista Viejo, and because the *guerrilleros* were the owners of the territory they didn’t like it. The paramilitaries entered eight days before the massacre. It was a Sunday, we were coming out of the mass, and we saw two boys that came running desperately, I recognized my nephew running through the

bridge, *que se la embalaba*. “*Qué pasó, Qué pasó* (what happened, what happened- we asked-, they looked terrified). *Se nos metieron!* (they have entered!), they said. They also mentioned that the paramilitaries that came in the boats were not few, they said, *viene todo un pueblo, un poco de uniformados* (they were a whole uniformed town).

They arrived to the riverside and there was a *guerrillero* without uniform taking a shower in the river. They talked to him and asked him where the guerrilla was living. The *guerrillero* told them that the guerrilla lived in the community in front in Vigía del Fuerte. So the paramilitaries were here and immediately crossed to Vigía. He sent them there. While the paramilitaries were crossing, the *guerrillero* took an Indian and forced him to take him in a *champa* to Murri. He sent them there so that he had enough time to run away.

Eight to ten days passed since this encounter. People started getting nervous and decided to leave to Quibdó or to nearby communities. We all knew things were not *sabrosas* (good) here; the guerrilla also run-away, so at the very beginning there was not a combat. People started getting sick with nervous breakdowns when the paramilitaries took possession of Bellavista. Father Antún, the priest of the community parish, had left to Quibdó to bring food to supply the community store. Two days later, when he was coming back, in Tagachi, the *guerrilla* stopped him and confiscated all the food he brought. They also told him to go back to Quibdó because they were going to *act* in Bellavista. “*But people may need my help*” the priest said. The *guerrilleros* responded: “it is your responsibility if you continue from this point,” and he came back. When the father got here he didn’t say that they guerrilla *se iba a meter* (was going to take over). He went straight to the major, and the director of the school, and asked to suspend the classes. He didn’t say why, just that it was better if classes were suspended.

Because there were no classes the professors that were not from here traveled to Quibdó; I sent my nephew to La Loma, I was raising another girl that I sent along with my grandmother to Arenal. I stayed here with my son, my daughter, and my grandsons. I sent them away on Wednesday morning. In the afternoon Bellavista was full of paramilitaries. There was another group of boats that had entered to Murri with other paramilitaries that had not come out; we knew that that was a war sign.

They started to make *retenes* (illegal retentions) at different points in the course of the river so people were not able to see how they were grouping. The first of May at 6:00 am *se formó la arrechera aquí*

(everything started). People were still sleeping when the shots started to fly. People thought that it was in their dreams. My daughter told me “*mom I heard something, was I dreaming?*” She woke up right away and looked through the door.

She told me “*the door is open, and the door is closed.*” That is a contradiction isn’t it? Something was really wrong, I thought. Seconds after she said that I heard “*the nurse, the nurse,*” the paramilitaries were screaming; *le habían dado al comandante* (their commandant was deadly shot).

What happened was that in April 30 when the Father organized the meeting to suspend the classes, he also organized a meeting with the leaders of the community and the paramilitaries. He was telling them that it was not good that they were landing on the community. In the middle of the meeting the commandant of the paramilitaries received a call.

It looks like from an airplane a paramilitary saw how the guerrilla was arriving to Bellavista, and told the commandant that they were a lot. So the commandant suspended the meeting without an explanation, and around six in the evening gave the order to all his people to leave Bellavista and cross over to Vigía.

There were two *paracos* (paramilitary) that stayed in Bellavista trying to escape, and at six in the morning of May 1 *una panga* (a boat) crossed to get them. When they were crossing back the combat started. *Y le bajaron al comandante* (the first shot was for the commandant). So when I heard “*the nurse, the nurse*” this was when the paramilitaries were trying to save him. When they passed by my house I saw when they were taking him to the hospital. It was like they were carrying a pig. Then, was when I realized the seriousness of the situation, and my daughter’s contradictory statement.

Y de verdad se formó la arrechera que Jesús creo en Dios Padre- And the combat started for real. People started to come to my house because it was close to the *caño* (channel of the river) where they could hide more easily.

At around eight or nine the Father invited us to come to the Church. It was made out of concrete and we could be protected there.

The Father said that we should come to the Church because the combat was really serious, and that we will be all together supporting each other.

Imagine hundreds of us in there from May 1 in the morning; we also spent the night there. In the morning of May 2 *pan y aguapanela*

(bread and a warm beverage called *aguapanela*) was distributed. Someone had the courage to go out while the combat was ongoing, and brought a big stove for us to cook rice. It was a living nightmare. Gun shots from one side to the other, pipe bombs lunched sent, screams, when...BOOM!... one pipe bomb crossed the ceiling and destroyed everything it reached. I don't know how more people didn't die. That pipe fell down, and exploded. The pipe the guerrilla sent exploded right in the middle of the Church. It was sent from the neighborhood Pueblo Nuevo in a direction so that the *guerrilla* could kill the paramilitaries that were hidden next to us by the Nun's House.

The *guerrilleros* already sent various pipe bombs that had failed to explode; the only one that exploded was the one that fell into the Church where most of the women and children were seated. That was why mostly women and children died out of the 119 casualties of the massacre. Those who made it [out] alive but were hurt by the *esquir-las* (little pieces of the pipe) died in the next years of different kinds of cancer.

After the pipe bomb exploded I was *aturdida* (dazed), I was seeing through the door of the *Casa cural* (priest's house) because my daughter had called me. The Father was wounded by a glass and was *aturdida* as well. People ran afterwards. Those that were alive started to scream, to cry, to run, some of them died while trying to escape, [because of] the pain that was invading their bodies.

A man with no head ran for seconds until he finally fell. A woman that was crazy for years started putting together the pieces of heads, legs, and arms that she found to put people back together. This was just inhumanly horrible. Why would something like this happen to us? What do they want from us? Why God? What have we done to deserve this? How long will you keep us [seeing] our people dying? *Nosotros hemos pasado mucho trabajo* (We have suffered enough).

All these questions crossed my mind while witnessing so much horror. Will we survive? I thought we will not.

I was hypnotized by seeing so much people dead, Ba!, I said people, *pedazos de carne mija* (it was pieces of human remains). Then my daughter said "mom, are we going to stay here? We were the only ones that were at the Church after that. We ran to the Nun's House. My little son almost drowned because the river was flooded. My little son, who was three months old, fell off my hands in the water. My God! I looked desperately but I could not find him. People passed by my side running,

nobody cared, but I don't blame them. We were all trying to save our lives. I could not manage to hold my grandson, my daughter with her baby, and the one that just had fallen off. I was desperate and running out of time. Where in that flooded river was my little son? Suddenly, someone stopped and helped me. That was a miracle. Nothing else can explain how we survived.

In our desperate escape we all got to a point in the community where all the survivors were safe for a moment. The Father and other leaders said that we had to get out of the community because the combat was turning to worse. Some people went to the forest; others went to the *caño* to rich communities of the Bojayá River. Josefa, and the women of the Church started organizing people in groups to cross over to Vigía. We knew that crossing was risky but we had no other option. These women didn't think about themselves, they wanted everyone to make it to *el otro lado* (the other side alive). Gun shots were flying, and they were putting pieces of wood together to make a big *boat*, and get people out. Those women were the last who left the riverside.

Nos montamos en ese bote sin canaleta ni na' (we all got into that improvised boat with no paddle). The teenagers started moving the boat with their hands, and others were in the river hanging by the side, while swimming to cross the river. While we were struggling to cross we were screaming "*somos civiles, somos civiles*" (we are civilians, we are civilians). We screamed it from the bottom of our hearts to reach the *orilla* (riverside) of Vigía.

In the following section, another family describes how they experienced this event.

CERAFINA AND FAMILY

I was watching the tragedy from Bogotá, and I will take the narration from here. I am not from Bellavista; I am from the Alto Bojayá. I am a 52 year old housewife who migrated to Bellavista when I was eight. All the Bojayaseños were dying no matter where we were. I was watching the news seeing the faces of the people I knew. My mother, my six children, and siblings were in Bellavista. They all run to the Church except my mother who was sick, and stayed at home.

While in Bogotá, I called, and called my siblings in Quibdó and they responded crying with no stop. As the media was allowed to enter to Bellavista, in the news I started seeing *todo mi personal* (all my people).

As I saw the images, [I] started counting who was alive. I said, *ese es julano, sutano, mengano* (that's so and so). The morning after the explosion, May 3, 2002, while my family was trying to escape from the church, members of the paramilitary group were *busmeando* (sniffing)-in the kitchens of the empty town to see what they could eat. In one of the houses they found my mother, an elder woman, trying to get out of underneath of her bed. They asked her:

P: "And you little grandmother stayed here?"

She responded:

R: "I could not run. I said... If I have to die here, then, I will have to. That will be up to you...if you want to kill me, then go ahead and kill me because I could not run. If I have to die here what else can I do?"...

Then they asked her:

P: "Do you have anything to eat around here? We are hungry can you give us something to eat?"

She responded:

R: "Go ahead look around and eat whatever you find"

Everybody had run away to Vigía del Fuerte. I am not exaggerating; the only one who was left behind was my mother. Everybody was afraid *toda esa muertesiña* (all that death) that was left in the Church. *Ay hombre por Dios* (Oh My God!).

My younger brother, the one who hunts *guagua*, asked the guerrilleros to let him cross over to Bellavista to look for my mother. They didn't allow people to go back. And because at the time it was *la ley era Doña Guerrilla* (Ms. Guerrilla Law) they were the ones with the authority both here in Bellavista and in Vigía. After three days, with nights included, of begging them to please let my brother to go find my mother they say: *go but don't take too long, you have no right to take anything more, either alive or dead just bring her.*

Because three days had passed, and mom was sick, people had the coffin ready to give her a decent burial.

My brother went and while arriving he called “*Vieja Maria*” “*Vieja Maria*,” and as weak as she was she responded *auuuuuuuuuuhhhhh!* Oh God! My brother said “*mom is alive.*” He brought her back. That was a small joy in the middle of so much suffering. I didn’t expect my mother to make it alive after this. She has an angel for that. The first time she saw the *paramilitars* was when she and most women stop working in the *monte* (farms). She will tell what happened.

Rosalía. Cerafina’s Mother

Now what is killing us is the armed conflict, since all the illegal armed groups are around our peaceful life has chaged. I am old, don’t remember how old. I used to go fishing to the swamp, I left at the hour I wanted, I came back went I wanted as well. Since these people entered here they have been determining schedules. After 6:00 pm nobody leaves or enters Bellavista. If something moves in the river police puts out all the lights to see if it is guerrilla. With that the ones who lose the most is us, *los campesinos* (the peasants). One can’t do the labor we need to do to feed our houses.

Yo pues (I will never) go back to that farm. One day before the massacre of May 2, 2002, I was coming back from my farm up here by the Bojayá River. My canoe was full of plantains, *yuca*, *Borojó*, *caña* y unos *animalitos* (and little animals I had hunted). I was alone with God and the Virgin. I was eating a *caña* because I was hungry I was enjoying myself. All of a sudden, I looked to the riverside, by the farm of *Las Tierras del Señor Eleodoro* (the land of Mr. Eleodoro), and that was full of men in all that jungle they were hidden there. I stopped my eating and moved faster to reach home. I have not come back since then *toy pa decirle unos 10 años* (I am about to say like 10 years ago), 1998. *Esta violencia nos ha atrasado mucho* (This violence has underdeveloped us so much).

Just as no government authority said a word about what was happening in the Atrato, nobody attended the alerts we; with the people of the Dioceses, we sent warnings that something like this could happen. It was a matter of time.

Nobody knew what was happening to the people in Bellavista, nobody cared. I think the first [one] from outside Bellavista and Vigía who knew

about the massacre was my mother. She was in Cali, and for two days she said, she was calling to the public Compartel phone because she lost contact with me. She said that one of her calls went through, and was a *paraco* (paramilitary) who answered. She said “*alo*” and *disque el paramilitar le dijo* (the paramilitar told her), *que alo ni que nada, digale a la Cruz Roja que la Guerrilla tiró una pipa y mató un poco de gente* (what hello, tell the Red Cross that the guerrilla threw a pipe bomb and killed a lot of people in the Church).

She was going to die right there, she told me. She knew I am all about the church activities and she thought *abi cayó mi hija* (my daughter died there), and the news spread. When *esto se ajustó* (the combat got worst) the communication was cut off. Everybody *se agosimpó* (conveyed) in Quibdó trying to know what *acá abajó* (happened down here). Nobody was moving here, people were trapped. There were no more airplanes coming in, not even to take the wounded to Medellín.

Those who didn’t die in the Church died waiting to be taken care of, and the rest of us have been dying slowly from one thing or the other afterwards.

When the military came to take over, *Jesús por Dios!* It would have been better if they never showed up. Helicopters started to arrive, and they were supposed to take the wounded either to Quibdó or to Medellín. But *ve!* they started to take their own people, the paramilitary. While we were trying to find a safe place in Vigía, the paramilitaries robbed our houses, they took our clothing, dressed up, and were taken out as “civilians.” *Taban enteros* (they were not hurt), but the military flew them away from the scene. The military knew there was no Bellavisteño they taking to their helicopters.

When the military came the harm was already done and they came to make it worse. Journalists came along with them, and that was when we became the show of the moment. The show of the man with no head was spread around the world in minutes; the lieutenant crying with the shoe of a little boy in his hand; a drunken president promising to reconstruct Bellavista in a few months. It was all about them, the politicians. While they were mobilizing their agendas in the media we were trying to escape such horror, and to find a safe place. But where will that place be? Our biggest enemy, the fear, was in our bodies, the pain, the horror. We were mourning our loved ones we could not bury. It was just a profound anguish.

None of us was taken in the fast boats of the military; no helicopter came to take us out. We had to find among ourselves the means to get to Quibdó, or the communities in the Bojayá River.

Nobody came for us because we have always been nobodies, and after the massacre we became displaced. We were that much of a displaced [people] that I just carried my dirty clothes in a plastic black bag because someone gave me old clothes in Vigía. A plastic bag! A plastic black bag is for the eggs, for the rice, it is not for my things, not for me!

This was just the beginning of all our humiliations. In Quibdó, some of us went to the houses of our relatives; others were allocated in the coliseum. The agents of *Acción Social* registered us, and gave us bags with food. We were not supposed to be in that situation when we have all our things in Bellavista. They made us go from one side to the other in Quibdó to get that little bag with rice and grains, which was their idea of food to feed a family.

It was humiliating. I am telling you, I am a school teacher, with relatives in Quibdó, and a family, and I am not displaced, but the people who had nothing? What could they do?

It was a matter of a couple of months we said: “we need to go back, no matter to what cost.”

Everyone has something to say. Some have more to tell than others, *sigá ud mijo* (you go next little son).

George and Family

We are originally from Apartadó. We came to Bellavista displaced from our farm.² When the massacre occurred we were already displaced. After that we were kind of *dobles desplazados* (double-displaced). My brother was the *guerrillero* who sent the paramilitaries to Vigía. He joined the guerrilla after the paramilitaries killed the peasants in my village, and forced us off our property at Apartadó, Antioquia. We have been ripped from our land, shipped away, and it has been really difficult to have a new life. I was eighteen years old in 2002. In the news there was a famous story about a woman who gave birth in the Church because she was too nervous, and who died instantly with the baby after the explosion. They were my woman and my child. How can one possibly recover from that? I am about to tell that I could be considered a displaced, a deracinated, an uprooted all of that, and none of the above at the same time. That is me. What can we use that for if at the end nobody likes us,

or cares about us? My family is pretty much falling apart. We, my mom and I, made it alive, but we all have our own traumas. If someone is to tell my story is to get people to know that I am a human being, I also have feelings. I really don't know why this happened to us. Is it because we are Blacks? I don't know.

Now these politicians come with their speeches saying they will save us, but they are messing around with us. After our people got killed, everybody had money to give us; here the president came to build a new town that was pretty much an imposition because they said we know nothing, and they are the ones with the knowledge. The few things that we are comfortable with [came] after long battles, and exhausting meetings.

Mayito and Family

It was May 1 of 2002, my father said: 'we are not going to the Church. There are too many people in there already.' I was afraid. Our house is made out of wood, and the Church out of concrete. There was no chance we will survive. I had already lived *la toma* (the takeover) of 2000, when they took over the police station. I thought I will not survive another one.

You have seen pieces of my life in the accounts of my sisters, and brother. I would like to remember the day we came back to the Old Bellavista. In memory of the massacre we wrote several songs, and sing them in every mass ever since we returned, here are some excerpts:

We will not cry for what has already happened, we will build together a better future. It is time to help, to plant with faith and love, a smile, hope, and a flower.

The Black people can't stand more misery and oppression. Like with the Israeli people, be with us God. The Afro-Atrateña people sing to God this song offering our dreams for a better future.

The memory of our dead strengthens our history with the conviction as Black People they remain in our memory.

The return to our land strengthens the hope as a united race, our song is a dance.

Brothers and Sisters let's don't allow others to come and decide for us, with the hand in our hearts, let's start making decisions in our own.

This land is our life, and others are mistreating it. But the Black People continue their struggle with no rest.

This community of so many beautiful people asks God in heaven to give us a life in justice.

We could not live with all the disdain people [had for] us as displaced in Quibdó. We were not in our land. Between June and August of 2002 as people, as a community, as a family we organized ourselves to return to Bellavista. With this action we became the first community in Colombia that returned to its land. A community as organized and fighting as our Bellavista could not long endure the torture to which we were being forced, so we mobilize all the necessary means to return home. Despite being refugees in various places around the city, the facilities of the Asociación Campesina Integral del Atrato (ACIA), the Integral Peasant Association of the Atrato served as a meeting point to bring forward the strategy of resistance to the death, hunger, and desolation, which in those days were up and down in the Atrato, and still are. In the facilities of the ACIA we listened to each other's complaints and concluded that what was left to us was the return. The brothers and sisters of ACIA support and helped us writing a statement of appeal to the government.

There were no material or security conditions to stay in Quibdó or to return to our community. In Quibdó, people were living in improvised refugee camps, in some houses there were 38 people living overcrowded. Others were living outside Quibdó in rural communities of the municipality. We had to walk a lot to localize every family that we knew were from our community. In Bellavista, the Colombian Army there was still in battling mode. There was electricity, or running water or food. The full cleaning of local parish was still pending. After several meetings and after the creation of a list of demands, with the support of members of Community Councils in the area, pastoral agents of the Diocese, and some sympathetic to the cause, we organized to return [on] the [1st] of September of 2002. The military were established in Bellavista supposedly to expel the illegal armed groups and to protect the community. When we announced that we were coming back to Bellavista, we received information that everything was ready, that the combats had stopped, and that the town was cleaned, with power to facilitate

our arrival and installation; ready for us to start over. What was not said was that the concept of good conditions they had was entirely different from ours. The power they were talking about was a set of torches in the entrance to the town that those that arrived before us soldiers and government functionaries installed.

They lied to us. We arrived in the evening; there was no peaceful return, as we were promised. Even though there was no combat, the soldiers welcomed us with a tuft of mosquitoes that were going to kill us all. There was no power, no food. The houses were robbed and dirty. The people of Bellavista have suffered enough. Upon this traumatic installation, we cleaned the community, while remembering what had happened. To accompany the souls of our family members we celebrated a ceremony to illuminate their path to heaven. After our accommodation we started a whole new process of territorialization. Different institutions around the world started offering money to help us reconstruct our lives.

The international funding was not managed by the community itself. Agents of the Uribe's government were sent to start the construction of a new Bellavista. We wanted the funds to be invested where the Old Bellavista is located but they said that money was not going to be invested in that piece of land easily floodable by the Atrato.

The problem was not the land itself. The Atrato River has been flooding more than ever because it is full of garbage in the end of the river to the ocean. If they do their job and clean the river it will not flood as much. They didn't listen to what we had to say. Everything was imposed. We struggled to negotiate minimum conditions but the final design of the town was theirs. The COCOMACIA donated the land in which the New Bellavista is located now. The President Uribe called it "The City of the Jungle." They said, they wanted to give us a taste of development, and by doing so they ended up deepening our anguish. Most of the houses were never completed; their design broke apart everything that we are. The kitchens are so small, like the city kitchens. We no longer have a space to seat around and talk while cooking. The river is now so far away that we can't reach easily the man selling the plantains or basic food supplies. Everything became more expensive.

There are fewer jobs, and more people depending on aids. The electricity is worse than ever, and the water is as turbid and dirty as the river when flooded. They took us out of our old Bellavista with the argument that it was easily floodable. After getting the new house in the New Bellavista they made us renounce the properties we had [in] the

Old Bellavista. We could no longer even visit, or keep our houses as the memory of our history. What for? *Los Duros* (the men with the money) are taking that land over. First it was the army seated there, and nobody was allowed to pass by. Now, there are cows being feed there.

We have been resisting and demonstrating our presence in the Old Bellavista celebrating regular masses and meetings to demand material reparations of the damage that has been done to us. We have placed marks in the land, and the owners of the cows took them off. We are now planning on building a community museum or memorial in the reconstructed Church to tell the world our story. If we don't have a presence in our land what history are we going to tell? What is going to be written about us? [Who] are the massacred Bellavista people the world will see? In the memory of our *muertos* (dead) we find the strength to survive.

As stated in Chap. 2, the Bellavista massacre located within a global racial formation demonstrates the paradigmatic positions of Blacks in Colombia today. In Chap. 4, I present one strategy they use to resist amid deracination.

NOTES

1. For further inquiry see <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/farc-piden-perdon-en-bojaya-por-la-masacre-de-2002/452601-3>; <http://www.semana.com/buscador?query=masacre%20de%20bojaya%2012>; <http://www.periodismosinfronteras.org/la-tragedia-de-bojaya-un-simple-accidente.html>.
2. The name of this person has been changed to protect his identity.

Suffering While Black. Resistance Amid Deracination

Abstract In this chapter, Vergara-Figueroa describes how a group of traditional singers in the municipality of Bojayá, use songs as a means of resistance to channel their mourning, calling it the politics of spirituality. It was this form of resistance that placed Bojayá at the center of the peace agreement signed between the Colombian government and FARC, a process that started in 2012 and finished in 2016. When forgiveness appeared in the debate as an important need, the victims of Bojayá became the symbol of reconciliation of the country even though their demands of reparation have not yet been fulfilled.

Keywords Blackness · Suffering · Collective pain · Resistance
Deracination · Bojayá

The narratives of the survivors of the Bellavista massacre raise challenging questions: how do they cope with this pain, how do they grieve? Over the decade that I have been doing participant observation in

I wrote this chapter during the field trips of the project “Voices of resistance.” I thank Diego Cagueñas for insisting on conducting this new phase of my research with a focus on the role of religious practices. I thank Lina Jaramillo, Ana Garay, Lina Mosquera, and Mario Hernández for their multiple efforts to transcribe and translate the alabos I present in this chapter. I also thank Phenómena Photogramas for providing their visual material for this chapter.

Bojayá, it struck me how incisive violent events can be in a territory. I pay special attention to the many ways in which the inhabitants prepare for a future violent incursion of any armed group, legal or illegal. These preparations include: delineating escape routes, protesting, strengthening religious beliefs, struggling to preserve their cultural practices, opening legal proceedings against the government, registering as victims of FARC or Paramilitary so they can demand compensation, and giving truthful accounts of what happened on May 2nd 2002. Afrodescendants of this region are constantly on the move, attending meetings, looking for help, contesting the government in their local offices, in addition to working to provide food for their families and for many other families in their community.

They are insidiously resisting the racism manifested in the normative structural willingness of the government to let them die. As Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007) argues, “racism, specifically, is the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death.” (p. 28)

Resistance studies reveal the complex nature of this sociological concept and the phenomena it tries to capture (Hollander and Einwohner 2004). In this book, I refer to resistance as a constitutive element of power relations (Bracey et al. 1971; Pfeffer 2014; Scott 1985). To resist, in the context of Bojayá, is the primary resource of survival.

I build here on the analytics of K. Sanger (1995), who states that:

African-American slaves used their spirituals to provide themselves with a rhetorical self-definition that served to refute limiting definitions pressed on them by whites. As a form of slave resistance to psychological oppression, the spirituals were used to limit the slaves' value to owners while enabling them to assert their worth as human beings.

I agree with the statement that the condition of black life is one of mourning.¹ Hence, in this chapter I highlight one strategy used by Afro-Colombians in Bojayá to resistance amid deracination: *singing to the death*. Here, I use the municipality as a unit of analysis because a group of about 37 women and 3 men, from different communities, created a group to sing “alabaos.” Those are usually sung at mortuary rites. This group of “alabadoras” is based in Pogue, a village located three hours from Bellavista. Many of those who died on May 2, 2002 were from this community.



Photo 4.1 Group of alabadoras

Starting in 1997 this group, which traditionally sung at individual funerals, started to change the lyrics of their songs to relate to recent massacres, at which many people were killed. They did so because of one over-arching principle—since they were not able to bury, properly, every loved one, their souls were pending in limbo. In Chocó, Afro-Colombians use “Alabaos” to say goodbye to those who die. However, when selective disappearances, kidnappings, and killings started to increase, this group started to sing about these issues. As a consequence, a new type of song genre emerged. Alabaos changed to an art, as Cira says, an art of denouncing (Photo 4.1).

In so doing, the new songs they wrote became a form of memory preservation of the violence that occurred in the region. From here on, I present a selection of lyrics from pre- and post-massacre alabaos to give evidence of the strength of this cultural dynamic turned into political discourse.

I don’t present the songs in their full extent. The audience repeats most of the sentences of Alabaos. Thus, the community participates in this form of sung mourning.

Group of Alabadoras de Pogue

Alabaos pre-massacre

For the Face and the Blood

For the face and the blood
That Jesus has shed

From the mount to the Calvary

The pure virgin walks
In search of her beloved son

For the three leagues I walked
And a woman I have found

Tell me good woman
If you found Jesus for me

Yes I have found him, madam
And on the cross crucified
A crown of thorns
A sore on the side
Jesus is taken prisoner

His mother is crying for him
And on the cross crucified

Jesus Christ died
And there they carry him singing

Where are they going to bury him?
And there on the Mount Calvary

The pure virgin walks
In search of her beloved son
And in search of her beloved son
And in search of her beloved son
And in search of her beloved son.

Jesus Nazarene

Jesus Nazarene
King of the Jews
Deliver us Lord from the enemies

Jesus of my life, who is on the cross for me
And in life and death, you remember me

Raise him high
His mother was behind

Afflicted and sad
Without being able to cry

When they nailed him
His mother cried
Afflicted and sad
Dead of pain

Tell me Jesus,
Where do you come from?
From making the cradle of the baby Jesus

When you enter the church
With the hat in the hand
You will see Jesus Christ
Feet and hands tied

White little doves
Hold your flight
And carry these verses

They say that Jesus
Was crucified for three hours
Giving him bile and vinegar
And he is so obedient and he drinks it.

When my God was Absent

When my God was absent
I did not like it

The Host remained blessed and amen, and the divine sacrament

The virgin all afflicted and all covered in tears
To see that the soul of her son Jesus was already being torn away

Jesus Christ died and there they carry him singing
Where are they going to bury him?
And amen, and there on the Mount Calvary

Christ tells his mother
Mother, do not cry anymore
That the power of God is very great and amen I return to resurrect.

Alabaos post-massacre

Arriving to the Grave

We are arriving to the grave
With a grieving heart
And those who did the damage
Amen, they feel no pain

Gentlemen of the armed groups
We ask from the heart
That you repair those damages
Amen, caused in our region

Today we remember the day
Of everything that happened
And we look at the place
Amen, where the case happened.

Jorge Luis Maso Palacios

He was humanitarian in the river of Bojayá
And with all his patience
And he was going to visit us

That Father Jorge Luis Maso was going to Quibdó
And arriving at the Mercedes a panga killed him

The panga that killed him
Belonged to the paramilitaries

He received a heavy blow
That threw him into the Atrato River

He was going up with Inigo along the Atrato
They went in search of the stores
To buy cheaper

Goodbye Father Jorge Luis
You left for no more

The Pogue Community
Will always remember you.

The Virgin gets Very Upset

The virgin gets very upset
When a soul goes there

They say that a soul has arrived
Without God asking for it

The virgin is very sad
Aching and complaining

When seeing that her son Jesus
Is taken in handcuffs

Get inside, inside, inside
And sit down in your rest
Sit to take care of the children
Who are in the dungeon

The demon is very ill
With fever and melancholy
Because Christians pray
The rosary of Mary.

Oh Little Light

Oh little light, Oh novenario
To my mourners I ask you not to make me a novenario

And for the departed when it dies
Four candles are lit
A wake is held all night until it is brought to the ground

And to take him to the ground
My brothers accompany me
They leave me alone to be the food of the worms

And even if the worms eat me
I have to come back here
To collect my cloudscapes what I leave the world

What I left in the world
And in the other one I found it
May the pure virgin and the glorious Saint Joseph

Forever Blessed

Forever be blessed
And eternally praised
Of a lamb without a taint
And a Lord in the Sacrament

But always being in Tauta
With the clearest mirror

He penetrates before the sun
It remains more purified

And until when, holy virgin
Temple of eternity

And until tomorrow
If life was lend to us

And to Guzmarda we ask and to the virgin of Belen
That in the day and holy night, we wake up well.

The Patroness of Bojayá

Virgin of the Candelaria, patroness of Bojayá
Here we come to sing because we want peace

And humble devoted Antonio
Teach us to forgive

What happened in Bojayá
That was already warned
They informed the Government
And it didn't pay attention

Just because we are Black
They treat us that way
They declare war on us
To get us out of our land

War is not good at all
What it brings is destruction
Disarm the hearts and no more repetition

We do not want any more war
We do not want more violence
Colombia is already tired,
Of its shed blood
We all want peace
And specially Colombians
We ask the president
Beware of deceiving us

We must forgive
The way Christ Forgave
So much damage that they did to him
And that example he left us.

Virgin of the Candelaria

Virgin of the Candelaria
And to the world we are going to sing

Because we are peasants
We cannot move forward
Poverty and distress
Do not let us work
To give to our children
The basic needs.

Those who didn't know
And voted with the "No,"
God bless their memory
And think better

To Santos and Uribe Velez
To sit and reconsider
That peace dialogue
To become a reality

Be full of condolence and
Peace be built

We walk up and down
And from below to there
To see if with our struggle
Peace can be achieved

To Mr. Santos Calderon
We will congratulate him
For that beautiful patience
To work for peace

The lords of the law
Who come to remedy
That such silent war
Can also kill us.

Fifteenth Anniversary

Fifteenth anniversary
And this remained for history
Do not erase the memory

And this remained for history
And it will never be forgotten

Tell those in the media

Children are the future
And a lot of children died

Gentleman of the armed groups
Do not come back over here

And this was a very hard blow
That frightened everyone
They formed that fight
And the peasant suffered

Gentleman of the armed groups
Do not cause us more terror

With this we say goodbye
We do not sing anymore
May violence be over
In the river of Bojayá

The One about Manuel Santos

Listen Mr. Manuel Santos
We will ask a favor
You pay close attention

To the dialogue in Havana

We the Colombians
Are awaiting peace
And we want that at that table
It can be negotiated

We the peasants
Are very upset

Because the damn war
Has killed a lot of people

To former President Uribe
We want to remind him
He created the Convivir
So he could massacre us

We the Colombians
Have many rights
The leaders take them and throw them into their chest
These verses that are here
We made them with feelings

We are the group of alabaoras
Suffered and with good talent

The women and men of the group of alabadoras of Pogue-Bojayá resignify the meanings of the armed conflict they experience on daily basis. The previous alabaos show a radical change in their narrative. Alabaos pre-massacre had a fixed narrative of calling the Virgin Mary or God to assist the soul of the dead person. ‘Alabaos,’ post-massacre, become a strategy to defend the community ravaged by violence. The lyrics have transformed a from traditional mortuary song into a memory tool of denunciation, a form of commemoration and a form of conversation with politicians.² In so doing, they embody what Millie Thayer (2014) calls a feminist political practice.

Achile Mbembe names these kinds of actions visceral politics. In an interview with Amador Fernández-Savater-Pablo Lapuente Tiana y Amarela Varela from *Interferencias*:

It is interesting to see how in many places, both in the struggles of the black population in South Africa and in the United States, the new imagery of struggle seeks mainly the rehabilitation of the body. In the US, the black body is at the center of the attacks of power, from the symbolic - its dishonor, its animality - to the normalization of murder. The black body is a beast body, not a human body. There the police kill blacks almost every week, and there are hardly any statistics to account for this. The generalization of the murder is inscribed in the police practices. The administration of the death penalty has been disconnected from the law to become a purely police practice. These black bodies are bodies without jurisprudence, something closer to objects that the power has to manage.³

Something similar is happening in Colombia. The voices of black women and men in Bojayá sing as acts of resistances to regain the ownership of their bodies.

POLITICS OF SPIRITUALITY: REPARATION OF THE SOUL

These alabaos provide strength to the community. These songs are being used by the people in Bojayá to demand material or symbolic reparation from the state. The songs demand reparation of the soul. Leyner Palacios, a leader in the region, son of one of the members of the group of alabadoras, and relative of more than 40 who died on May 2, 2002, says:

Since we went to Havana, we stated that reparation, beyond giving us some resources, is to repair the psychological damage, the damage of the soul, and in that sense we see reparation more as a restorative measure. It is important for us to do community work and, in this way, to repair the things that have been damaged, beyond material repair.⁴

The Committee for the Victims of Bojayá concluded that the armed conflict damaged the soul, emotions, joy, tranquility, and the memories of those who are no longer alive. In this strategy, I see how these communities find power in their spirituality. It is a spirituality that does not disconnect from the reality lived, but rather provides energy by the collective action in the process of construction and articulation united by the experiences lived collectively. It strengthens creativity in community action that subverts all the values and principles of the institutions involved (state, church, international cooperation, community council.) As we see in the previous alabaos, some political practices are channeled through acts of traditional spirituality and are not limited to these, they elude classic notions of alienation. This spirituality is chameleonic and tactical.

In Bojayá, they turn spirituality into a policy of not becoming the target of disappearance or murder; instead, they use spirituality as a resource for resistance and change. Their policies of spirituality help them to organize and give meaning to their action. But it is not an end in itself; it is complex, and most of the time, it is constantly changing.

NOTES

1. See Claudia Rankine's report on https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/22/magazine/the-condition-of-black-life-is-one-of-mourning.html?_r=0. Last accessed on April 14, 2017.
2. Currently, I am coauthoring an article with Jerónimo Botero Marino in which we develop this argument further.
3. I translated this excerpt from an interview published on <http://www.eldiario.es/interferencias/Achille-Mbembe-brutaliza-resistencia-visceral6527807255.html>. Accessed June 2016. The interviewers recognize the support of Ned Ediciones and of Pablo Lapuente who transcribed and translated from French into Spanish.
4. <http://www.elpais.com.co/elpais/colombia/proceso-paz/noticias/queremos-nos-reparen-dano-alma-lider-victimas-bojaya> (Last accessed on January 16, 2017).

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Final Remarks: For an Afrodiasporic Feminist Sociology of Land Dispossession

Abstract In this chapter, Vergara-Figueroa argues that there is a need for an analytical framework for Afrodiasporic feminist sociology of land dispossession to historicize processes of deracination such as the massacre at Bellavista-Bojayá-Chocó-Colombia. The deriving analytics of this study suggest a path to overcome the limitation of the prevailing intellectual, legal, and political framework of forced migration. This book is an attempt to demonstrate the need to unthink and deconstruct a conceptual framework that is limited, dubious, and narrow-minded. Such limitations are dangerous in the sense that they may contribute to the legitimization of renovated discourses and practices of domination and dispossession.

Keywords Feminist sociology · Diaspora · Land dispossession
Forced migration · Bojayá · Deracination

Some excerpts of this chapter were co-authored with Katherine Arboleda and published in Aurora Vergara Figueroa, & Katherine Arboleda Hurtado. (2016). Afrodiasporic Feminist Conspiracy: Motivations and Paths forward from the First International Seminar. *Meridians*, 14(2), 118–129. doi:[10.2979/meridians.14.2.08](https://doi.org/10.2979/meridians.14.2.08).

In this book, through the lens of a case study on the 2002 massacre at Bellavista-Bojayá-Chocó-Colombia, I have crafted an analytical framework for Afrodiasporic feminist sociology of land dispossession to historicize the processes of deracination. The deriving analytics of this study suggest a path to overcome the limitation of the prevailing intellectual, legal, and political framework of forced migration. This book is an initiating attempt to demonstrate the need to unthink and deconstruct the current conceptual framework that is limited, dubious, and narrow-minded. Such limitations are dangerous in the sense that they contribute to the legitimization of renovated discourses, and practices of domination and dispossession.

With this concept in mind, I recognize that there is still a lot more to be done in this field. Battle-Baptiste (2011) states that, “when one writes about Black Feminist Thought there are many things to consider. How strong you make your arguments, how carefully you choose your words, and most of all, how purposeful you are in telling a story filled with pain, personal politics and anger” (56–57). The lyrics written by the women of Pogue reveal the need to have such a perspective to understand their experience of dispossession. Major approaches on the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality as interlocking systems of oppression provide a significant set of analytics to locate in a historical context “regimes of oppression” (Collins 1993). They demonstrate how these historical formations inform contemporary institutional locations, structures, and diverse social relationships; how, for example, the diverse configurations of the labor market are historically gendered, racialized, and classed spaces (Branch 2011; Collins 1993; Crenshaw 1993; Glenn 2015).

The request to consolidate an Afrodiasporic feminist agenda has a long tradition in the Americas. In her 1988 article, Leila González calls for an Afro-Latin American feminism. She argues that the feminist meetings arising from this proposal should consider these spaces as an inclusive space opened to the participation of women of different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. Sueli Carneiro’s 2001 call to blackening feminism defends the argument that the final aim of this struggle is achieving equity of rights to become human beings with full possibilities and opportunities beyond the conditions of race and gender.

In 2007, Sônia Beatriz dos Santos used the concept of a Diasporic Black Feminism to designate diverse black feminisms in the Diaspora. She identifies five types: the Afro-Latin-American, the Afro-Caribbean, the Afro-American, the African feminism and the feminism of the British

Black women. She defines these as the groups whose political and intellectual practices are produced by Afrodescendent feminists or activists. Their practices highlight the articulations of the political categories of race, gender, class and sexuality—in response to a system of domination that impacts black women, and that mainly is characterized by the intersection of racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism (dos Santos 2007, 11). She concludes that it is important for black women to appropriate the Diasporic Black Feminism concept because it helps to comprehend how black women collectively play a central role in reorganizing social, economic and political structures beyond geographic, socio-cultural, economic and political frontiers. In 2009, Keisha-Khan Y. Perry proposed to restore the transnational black feminist possibilities in the Americas by building a Black Diaspora feminist agenda. This proposal introduced the hemispheric solidarity as a central element of the diasporic dimension of black women's politics. K. Arboleda and I argue that Afrodiasporic feminism is a strategy of social mobilization, a practice of solidarity, and a claim for reparative justice.

I build on this tradition to propose an Afrodiasporic feminist sociology of land dispossession to historicize processes of deracination. In this vein, I construct a theoretical and methodological argument to assess the need to revise and deconstruct the concepts of 'forced migration,' and 'forced displacement.' Unthinking these notions offers at least three opportunities: (a) to reinforce the claims of the communities deracinated from their ancestral lands by linking their history of land tenure, territory making, and land dispossession to world-historical conjunctures of local/regional/global cycles of capitalist exploitation; (b) to enhance a nascent intellectual model to critically comprehend this phenomenon by assessing the importance of studying its *long durée*; and (c) to contribute to the current Colombian debate on how to return the land to the deracinated, and what effective laws should be proposed to secure this outcome.

In this regard, this book combines a general review of the forced migration literature as a global field of research specifying the local trends the field took in Colombia. This background sets the stage for a conceptual and methodological debate on the epistemic and political value of history, geography, and complexity in the study of Afrodescendent Diasporas, as opposed to just one dimension of this phenomenon: the forced displacement. The theoretical analysis presented draws on over two decades of studies in the field of forced migration and

the literature on forced displacement. In addition, it is based on ethnographic field notes, interviews, participant observation, daily life experiences, and historical research compiled since May 2002, as presented in Chaps. 1 and 3.

In Chap. 2, I laid the conceptual framework to propose the notions of deracination and diaspora as categories of analysis, social mobilization, and reparation. Hence, I highlight the significance of re-writing the memories of deracination and diaspora to build more dignifying realities and to transform marginalized voices into voices of dignity.

Accordingly, the main contributions of this book are:

Ethnographic Contributions

- A critical ethnographic narrative of the massacre of May 2, 2002, voicing the experiences and demands of the survivors in the aftermath of the event
- A depiction of the strategies of resistance developed by the people of Bellavista to survive, runaway, return, and rebuild their community.

Conceptual Contributions

- An updated mapping of the major arguments explaining the phenomenon of forced displacement/migration and emergent trends going beyond this conceptual framework
- An Afrodiasporic feminist critique of the epistemologies of dislocation
- The construction of a profile of the areas converted into centers of dispute in the state of Chocó, and integrated into the geopolitics of the conflict in Colombia.

Geo-Historical Contributions

- A detailed description of the socioeconomic, political and cultural context of the community of Bellavista
- A historical narrative of the process of settlement of the population of Bellavista, its economy, regional society, and the forms of territoriality in the village

- A socio-historical analysis of the changes generated in the community—and the region of the Atrato River—after the massacre of 2002.

I propose an analytical framework to study processes of deracination and diaspora, reflecting on the unanswered questions of the current literature of forced displacement and forced migration. I highlight the importance of historicizing processes of land acquisition and territory setting in order to comprehend the contemporary process of deracination in Chocó-Colombia. I argue that what makes this phenomenon possible is a long history of a geopolitical construction of Chocó as an emptied space.

I argue that the representation of the territory as ‘empty’ and open for exploitation and colonialization, rather than as a society with a different culture and history, facilitates practices of deracination. I present some of the main dimensions of the process of ‘marginalization’ of this region by describing some of the colonial narratives that refer to it. I split the historical formation of these blank spaces into three categories: (1) spaces of exploration; (2) ‘developmentizable’ spaces; and (3) spaces for deracination. I highlight the continuity of the images of isolation and marginality as foundations of state/empire building and deracination.

Hence, I show how these historical processes of territorial representation lie behind the contemporary deracination of the population of the department of Chocó. I describe how this production of blank spaces has taken place, and then I state how this logic is reflected in the contemporary deracination of the population of the department of Chocó. In this way, I argue that space-making mediates the relationship between historical transformations of territorial representations and the contemporary practice of deracination. Thus, space-making remains as a significant factor that explains the incidence of deracination not as a causal factor, but as a facilitating feature.

In so doing, I introduce a set of preliminary notes towards a historiography of the initiating practices of land acquisition and territory-setting in the state of Chocó. I present some of the main dimensions of these processes in the state of Chocó. I also highlight the main silences, unexplored questions, and unexplained issues. I emphasize the continuity of the images of isolation and marginality within the narratives presented, which introduce the question of the production of knowledge and its challenges.

At the same time, I point out that there is still a lot of research that needs to be done epistemically—and politically—to comprehend and challenge contemporary processes of deracination. Regarding the academic's *to do list*, I argue there are some issues on methodology and theory that need to be addressed.

THE USE OF TIME

Following Braudel's critique on the use of time to narrate the history of the world, I argue that there is a lack of systematicity in disintegrating time's importance: its multiplicity, diversity, and complexity to understand the historical processes of this region and the nation. This discussion is followed by a small consideration of the plural temporalities as a strategy to unify the diverse elements of human history that are embedded within these narratives. I found useful Braudel's notion of *world time*, to flesh out this point (Braudel 1980, p. 19). This notion pretends to contemplate the history of those spaces (or TimeSpaces realities in Wallerstein's narrative) that the "world history does not reach, zones of silence and undisturbed ignorance"—the *historical-emptied-spaces*.

THE USE OF THE RELATION BETWEEN TIME AND SPACE

I also identified that the links between the configurations of space and time are not fully developed. I believe that Wallerstein's notion of TimeSpace reality is a useful change to strengthen these methodological issues. He points out that spatial categories such as East-West and North-South are geographical categories that, when linked with a given time period, can transform a temporary truce-line into a long-term reality.

THE USE OF GEOGRAPHICAL CATEGORIES

This field needs an urgent advance. Beginning with the question of the origin of the Chocó region's name, which still remains unsolved, the study of this region needs to break the mantle of backwardness, isolation, and ignorance that has covered it since the seventeenth century. In that sense, Fernando Coronil's claims constitute an important tool to criticize the so-called isolation of the Pacific region, and as a consequence, the justification of its *natural* (in Quijano's sense) marginality and

ignorance of the population. So, the answer to the question of how the Pacific has been represented both discursively and geographically could generate significant narratives to continue Coronil's recommendation of 'imagined geohistorical categories for a nonimperial world' (p. 52). The simplistic representation as Chocó as an underdeveloped zone going backwards is precisely the kind of intellectual disposition that denies the possibility of producing knowledge that could be useful in solving the problems of the region. Indeed, on one hand, this region has been represented as a space of darkness and impossible to live in, as a space of extreme poverty and ignorance, and as a place that is unable to administrate its own resources. On the other hand, this region has been seen as potential for territorial expansion, as an area open for exploration, and continued colonialization

Hence, this colonial, geopolitical, economical, ideological, and historical representation is used as a common place to explain a variety of phenomena that is occurring in this territory. Describing, or at least outlining, the histories behind those representations remains an epistemic turn in order to disentangle colonial continuities of domination, such as deracination, that the population of the region of Chocó faces today. Accordingly, it is important to not only develop alternative epistemologies to comprehend how this region came to be, but to also look forward to create a sense of dignity for the inhabitants.

With those elements, I propose beginning a debate about the role that colonial narratives play as bases of legitimization of contemporary forms of violence, such as deracination, that go along with political projects driven by the Colombian state.

Although the vision of land possession among Afro-Colombians has started to be integrated, there is still much to be done. There are considerable silences that need to be addressed and tensions to be resolved.

For example, tensions and silences are evident among the descriptions of the processes of settlement, the laws established by the state for the colonialization of *tierras baldías*, and the actions of resistance started by the communities. As I see it, the events occurring in the state of Chocó are still isolated in relation to the rest of the country. It is observable in the marginal reference the state is given in discussions of the significance and dynamics of the period studied. Additionally, there are several problems in the region that have not been discussed nor problematized in a more comprehensive way. Some of those are from the past, such as the fact that after the formal abolition of slavery there have been systematic

attempts to maintain control over these territories with the state establishing politics of re-colonialization. It was in response to these attempts by the state for control that gave rise to the notion of *tierras baldías*. The repetition and renovation of these processes directly impacts today's new establishment of gold-extraction and palm oil companies in communities such as Cerro Careperro, Suarez, Jiguamiandó, Curvaradó, Belén de Bajirá, and Bellavista.

Believing that names, concepts, and terminologies set up a field of power, the basic argument I have developed here is that the concept of forced migration is a formula for historical erasure. As Michael Roulp-Trouillot argues, terminologies demarcate a field, politically and epistemologically; names set up a field of power. It follows that the concept forced migration routinizes this practice by providing, in the name of humanitarianism, rationales for conquest, exploitation, and domination. Forced migration and analogous terms allude to a temporal condition, a so called 'displacement' in the physical move. It emphasizes the external force inducing the move, and leaves out the local meanings and the history of the region affected, which could inform the social forces behind the events inducing the move. Whatever would have happened in the region, and to the population targeted as the forced displaced, is reduced to nothing because it is erased.

Land and territories are neither represented in the same way in every society, nor the same at every historical epoch. Territories are socio- and geo-historical formations that can only be understood within the context in which they are conceived, produced, re-produced, and unproduced (Almario 2004; Arboleda 2007; Vergara-Figueroa 2008). Consequently, the use of notions to comprehend the experiences of land dispossession are only understood in much the same way. However, land dispossession has different meanings to the populations affected. Therefore, the notions used to understand this process must consider local meanings of land and territory. Historical analysis as an analytic to unthink/deconstruct the notion, and the field of forced migration implies that scholars will have to historicize the processes of territorialization (Almario 2004), land tenure, and land acquisition to comprehend what the violent uprooting of a population means in the *long durée* of the life of any population. This certainly implies breaking down most prevailing assumptions of the impossibility of studying, or quantifying, the realities of the populations constructed as being so far afield of civilized life, where violence will make life impossible for the 'safety' of the author. But this will

have to be done if social transformation means something else than just a terminology.

I would like to end with the words of the Nigerian Novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adiechie and legal scholar Bernadette Atuahene. While describing the danger of the single story, Adiechie says:

the consequence of the single story is this it robs people of dignity...stories have been used to dispossess... stories can break the dignity of the people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.

Atuahene (2014), based on her findings in South Africa, allows me conclude that Afrodescendants in Bojayá resist getting their dignity restored “for things taken or destroyed through a process that affirms their humanity and includes them as full and equal members of the polity.” Unthinking the concepts of forced displacement and forced migration, as well as seeing Bellavista as an event of forced displacement is an attempt to write stories that can repair the broken dignity of those that have been, and still are, continually abused. Imperial tactics of colonial and postcolonial domination hidden in these continuing abuses could not be unveiled in their complexity, and consequently deconstructed to produce new histories and realities, until the intellectual models and categories that sweetened them are un-thought and deconstructed.

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INDEX

A

Acción Social, 12, 64
ACIA (Peasant Association of the Atrato River), 18, 66
Adiechie, Chimamanda Ngozi, 89
Agenda Pacífico XXI, 47
Alabadoras, 70–71, 78
Alabaos, 70–71, 78–79
Almario, Oscar, 3, 18, 88
Alves, J., 49
Andagoya, Pascual, 31, 38
Antioquia, 30, 36, 40, 64
Aprile, Jacques, 37, 42, 45
Arboleda, Katherine, 83, 88
Arboleda, Santiago, xxix, 1, 3, 16–19, 32
Atuahene, Bernadette, 89

B

Bajo Atrato River region, xxiv, xxvii, 4, 29, 43, 48
Battle-Baptiste, Whitney, 82
Bellavista-Bojoyá massacre survivors
 accounts of; Cerafina and family, 60–64; George and family,

64–65; Maxima and family, 55–60; Mayito and family, 65–68

overview, 53–55. *See also* Bojoyá; Massacre at Bellavista-Bojoyá

Black Feminism, 17, 82–83

Black, R., 2, 9

Boano, C., 8

Bojoyá

 death and, 49

 deracination and, 29–30, 77–78

 land acquisition and, 43

 population, 53–54

 resistance and, 69–70, 77–78

 slavery and, 43–44

 territory and, 27–28. *See also*

 Bellavista-Bojoyá, massacre survivors

Boyd-Bowman, Peter, 30, 39–41

Branch, Enobong Hannah, 82

Braudel, Fernand, 2, 86

Butler, Kim, 19, 32

C

Carneiro, Sueli, 82

- Castles, S., 2, 8–9
 Center for Systematic Peace, 12
 Cernea, M.M., 9
 Cerro Careperro, xxii, 88
 Chilapos, 34
 Chimni, B.S., 1, 10, 20n15
 Chocó
 Alabaos and, 71
 colonization and, 3
 death and, 27–29
 deracination and, xix, 34–35, 48–50, 84–85
 “developmentizable” spaces, 47–48
 exploitation of, 37–42
 histories, xxii, xxvi, 41–42, 85
 land acquisition and, 46–47
 origin of name, 86–87
 violence and, 2, 14, 54, 82
 world-historical-emptied space and, 35–37
 Chocoe Indians, 31, 39–40
 COCOMACIA, 36, 67
 CODHES (Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento), 12–13
 Cold War, 12
 Collins, P. Hill, xxix, 34, 82
 Colombia, death and
 Chocó region, 37–42
 deracination and diaspora; as
 concepts and methods, 32–33;
 historicizing, 36–37; resisting, 33–34; study of, 34–35
 developmentalized spaces, 47–48
 emptied spaces, 35–36
 land acquisition and state formation, 45–47
 land settlement and acquisition, 42–44
 land tenure, 45–46
 overview, 27–29
 spaces for deracination, 48–50
 violence, 35–36
 Coloniality, xxix, 5, 17, 23n29, 33, 35, 50
 Committee for the Victims of Bojayá, 78
 Congress of Vienna (1815), 45
 Coronil, Fernando, 13–14, 86–87
 Crenshaw, K., xxix, 82
 Cuna Indians, 31, 39, 43–44
- D**
 D-T-D² (Diaspora-Territorialization-Deracination/Diaspora) model, xxvi–xxx, 28, 32, 37
 “Darker races of the world”, 10, 18, 20n16
 Das, Veena, 35
 Deracination
 Bojayá and, 29–30, 77–78
 Chocó and, xxii, 34–35, 48–50, 84–85
 concepts and methods, 32–33
 diaspora and, 22n14, 29, 32–33, 35–37
 historicizing, 36–37
 Massacre at Bellavista–Bojoyá and, 33, 48–50
 resisting, 33–34
 study of, 34–35
 Derrida, Jacques, 4, 14
 “developmentizable” spaces, 47–48
 Diaspora
 Afrodescendent populations, xxi
 deracination and, 22n14, 29, 32–33, 35–37
 feminist perspective of, xxiii, 81–85
 forced displacement and, 11, 14–20
 new cycles of, xix, xxi
 theories of, 3. *See also* D-T-D² cycle
 Dos Santos, Sônia Beatriz, 82–83
 Drugs, 44, 48

DuBois, W.E.B., 10, 18, 21*n*16,
22*n*18

Dussel, Enrique, 10

E

Environmental refugees, 9

Epistemological silencing, xx–xxiii, 15,
22*n*30

Erasure. *See* Routinization of erasure

Escobar, Arturo, 3, 11, 17–18, 29, 47

Evans, G., 8

Exile, xxiii, 1, 8, 16–17, 33

F

Fanon, Frantz, 10, 18, 21*n*16, 22*n*18

FARC, xxx, 14, 56, 69–70. *See also*

Paramilitary groups

Feller, Erika, 8

Feminism, 3, 17, 77, 82–89

Fernández-Savater-Pablo, Amador, 77

Forced displacement

causes of, 4–20

deracination and, 10, 15–20

guiding principles of, 6–8

notion of, 5–7

reasons for, 1–3

research on, 14–20

sociology of, 8–10

state fragility and, 11–14

Forced Migration Online (FMO), 15

G

Gilmore, Ruth Wilson, 70

Global Dimensions of Forced

Displacement, 12

Globalization, 19, 47

Gonzalez, Leila, 34, 82

Guerrillas, xix, xxiv, 55–64

H

History

people without history, 10, 15,
22*n*18

world-historical-emptied spaces,
xxviii, 15, 23*n*29, 29, 35–37,
86

I

Interational Association for the Study
of Forced Migration (IASFM), 5

Internal Displacement Monitor Centre
(IDMC), 10

Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs),
xix, 6, 12–13, 15, 54

Isolation, xx, xxi, 4, 9, 14, 18–19, 32,
34, 41–42, 85–86

J

Journalism, 3, 54, 63

K

Kunas, 31, 34

L

La República, 45

Land acquisition, xxix, xxxi, 19, 29,
34, 36–39, 42, 45–47, 85, 88

Land dispossession, xxix, 1, 4, 7–9,
11, 14–16, 19, 27–29, 32, 36–37,
54, 81–83, 88

Lao-Montes, Agustín, xxix, 3, 5, 19,
32

Law 29 May 1842, 46

Law 70 of 1993, xxii, 48

M

- Marx, Karl, 18
- Mass graves, xxx. *See also* Massacre at Bellavista–Bojoyá
- Massacre at Bellavista–Bojoyá
- Alabaos and, 77
 - background, xix
 - deracination and, 33, 48–50
 - emptied spaces and, 27–28
 - forced displacement and, 16–17, 20
 - methodology of study on, xxiii–xxv, 2–4
 - reasons behind, 14. *See also* Bellavista–Bojoyá massacre survivors
- Mayorquín River, 16
- Mbembe, Achile, 49, 78
- McBryde, Webster F., 46
- McClintock, Anne, 10
- Melchor Velázquez, Captain, 31, 38
- Memory, 17–19, 29, 37, 41, 65, 68, 71, 77–78, 84. *See also* Songs of mourning
- Mestizos, 32, 34
- Mosquera, Sergio, 37, 45, 47

N

- New Granada, 47
- Noaname Indians, 31, 39–40
- Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), xxii, 7

O

- Oslender, Ulrich, 3

P

- Paramilitary groups, xxiv, 14, 22n18, 55–59, 61–64, 70. *See also* FARC
- Peace Agreements, xxx, 14, 69

PLADEICOP, 47

- Pogue-Bojayá, 70–72, 74, 77, 82
- Project of affinity, 19, 32
- Proyecto Bio Pacífico, 47

Q

- Quibdó, 57, 60, 63–64, 66
- Quijano, Anibal, xxix, 5, 10, 14, 35, 50n1, 86

R

- Rabaka, Reiland, 21n16
- Race
- DuBois on, 21n16
 - Fanon on, 21n17
- Raposo River, 16
- Reparations, xxi, xxx, 16, 19, 20n1, 29, 36, 68–70, 77–78, 84
- Resistance
- overview, 69–71
 - politics of spirituality, 77–78
 - songs as form of, 71–77. *See also* Songs of mourning
- Rodgers, G., 1
- Routinization of erasure, xxi, 15, 23n30, 88
- Royal Cedula (1817), 45

S

- Sharp, William, 34, 37–40
- Slavery, xxi, 15–16, 28, 30, 35, 37, 42–47, 70, 87
- Social mobilization, 20n1, 29, 34, 35, 64, 83–84
- Songs of mourning, 71–77
- Arriving to the Grave, 73
 - For the Face and the Blood, 71–72
 - Fifteenth Anniversary, 76
 - Forever Blessed, 74–75

- Jesus Nazarene, 72
 Jorge Luis Maso Palacios, 73–74
 Oh Little Light, 74
 The One about Manuel Santos, 76
 Patroness of Bojayá, 75
Virgin of the Candelaria, 75–76
 When my God was Absent, 72–73.
 See also Memory
- Sotomayor, Jimeno, 42
 Spain, 30–31, 34, 37–40, 42–45
 Spirituality, politics of, 77–78
 State fragility, 8, 10–12
 State Fragility Index, 12
 Subjugation, 35–36
- T**
- Territorialization, xxvi, 16, 37, 67, 84.
 See also D-T-D²
 Terrorism, xx, 12, 14, 54
 Thayer, Millie, 78
 Third World, 10, 47
 Third World Approaches to
 International Law (TWAIL), 10
 Time, 86
 Trouillot, Michel-Rolph, 3, 88
- U**
- United States, 22n22, 34, 78
 USAID, 10, 12–13
- V**
- Valderrama, M.L., 42
 Vargas, J., 49
 Velez, Uribe, 22n22, 67
 Vigía del Fuerte, 30, 34, 41, 43, 55,
 57–58, 60–64
 Villa, Willialm, 3, 37
- W**
- Wagner, J.I., 8
 West, Robert, 34, 37, 44
 White supremacy, 21n16
 Wolf, Erik, 11, 22n18
 World Bank, 9–10, 13, 47
Wretched of the Earth (Fanon), 21n17
- Z**
- Zetter, R., 8
 Zimbabwe, 13
 Zitara, 38