

Fragments of Absence:

Stories of Life and Migration

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Implemented in collaboration with Wind of the Spirit

Colombia

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This work begins with those who remain.

About the Project



This project gathers the voices of Colombian families whose loved ones live in the United States. Through their stories, feelings of grief, nostalgia, melancholy, and enduring love surface—echoes of what it means to live with a family shaped by distance and borders.

The work invites reflection on what is often unseen:

Behind every person who migrates, there are those who remain.

Lives sustained by memory, emotional ties, and dreams that continue to exist beyond geography and separation.



This is how I see her:

*she stitched her little wings back together
and began again in another country, far
from everything that once held her in
place.*

*And it hurts — of course it hurts...leaving
your children, grandchildren, family... yet
she is there, fighting for what, deep inside,
is a dream.*

Karen



*She always calls me Elena—only she
does that—and when I hear my name
in her voice, it's as if for a moment...*

she's back here again.

Gloria Elena



I have not seen my brother or my nieces for four or five years. The last time we spoke, he said:

“I’m really leaving for good,” and we cried, knowing it would be many years before we saw each other again.

During his first Christmas away, he sent me this photo of my nieces and this watch. It is the best gift in the world—not because of the gift itself, but because it passed through his hands.

That is why I keep it, protect it, and love it.

Natalia



“Mancha, take good care of my daughter.”

*That was the only thing he said to me
before leaving, his eyes filled with tears.*

*The first thing he missed was his
daughter’s fifteenth birthday. And now,
this year, she will graduate—and he will
miss that too.*

Marcela



My parents fled the violence of the armed conflict in the 1950s.

They arrived to Quimbaya to work as day laborers on coffee farms. And little by little, they saved until they were able to buy a small farm of their own.

At that time, work in the countryside was barely enough to survive, so my siblings migrated in the 1990s.

Alberto



In my case, I have dedicated myself to selling the coffee from the family farm.

“Frutos de mis viejos” was born as a legacy from our parents.

Alberto



The most sacred thing my sister has here in Colombia is her dog.

A dog she's had since he was a puppy; he was always like her child, the one who went everywhere with her.

She always says to him, "My Romeíto, my son, how is my baby?"

Jessica



*This is the only photo I have
with my mother.*

*Maybe the experience is
different for everyone—right?*

*The one who leaves says, “Oh,
but it’s been so hard for me.”*

*But the one who stays also
suffers, because they’re left
alone, orphaned.*

*I feel like I was left an
orphan...*

Isabel



*My daughter came home at 5 a.m. and said to me,
“Mom, the time has come... I’m leaving...
and I don’t know when we’ll see each other again.”*

*And it’s so hard, because migrating means risking
your life.*

*It means, essentially, leaving your family—leaving
everything behind: abandoning what you’ve built,
your friends, your family, and living with the
awareness that you’re leaving, that you may not
return soon, and that during that time you will lose
loved ones, you will lose so much.*

Sandra

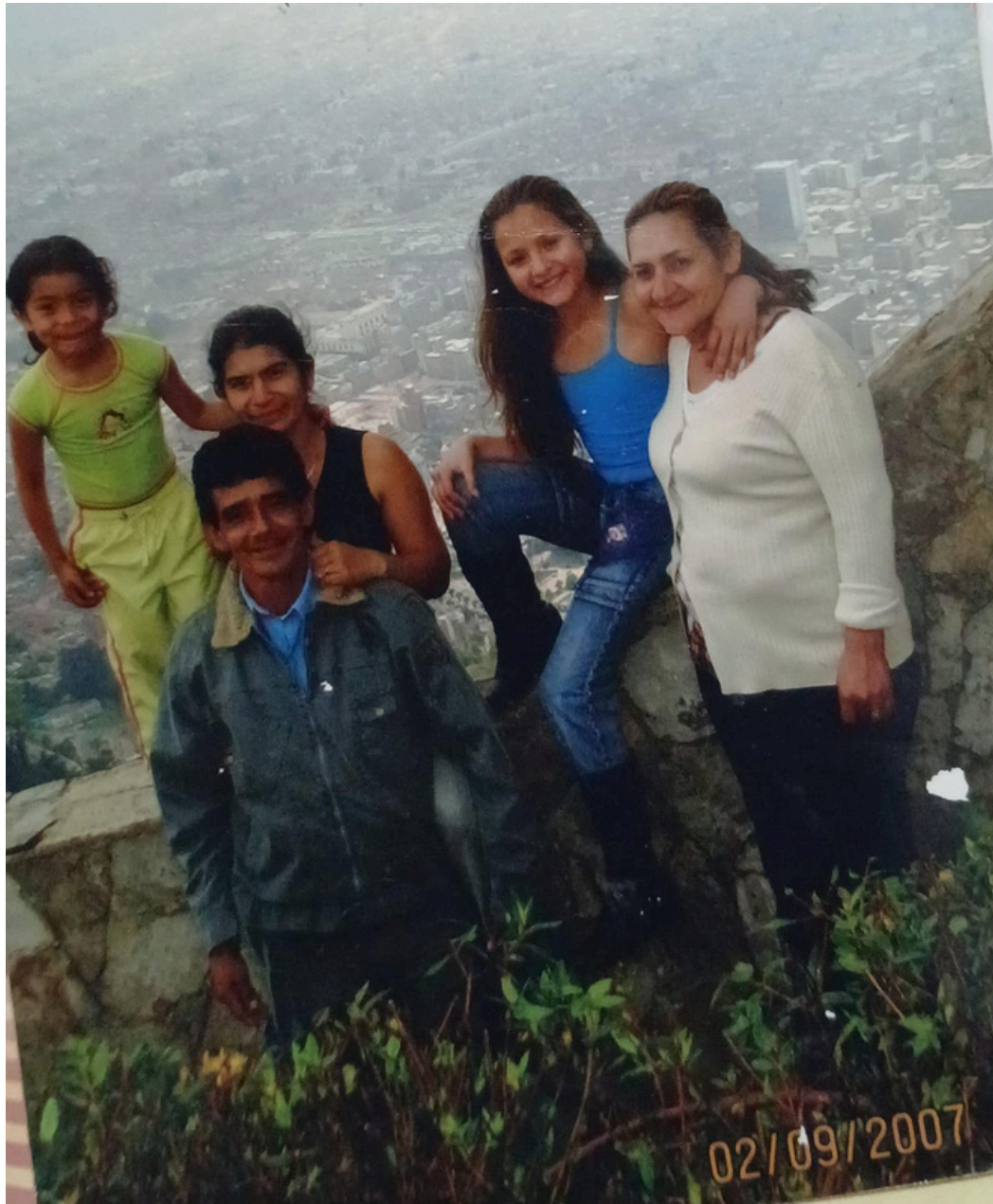


When I left, my daughter was one year old and my son was seven months old.

I worked in restaurants or wherever I could, but many times it wasn't even enough to buy milk — that's why I migrated.

I was deported after 12 years, and it was very difficult. My daughter was around 12 and my son 11, but they no longer saw me as their mother.

Paola



My niece left seeking Colombian asylum after being a victim of the armed conflict.

She had to serve the guerrilla on several occasions when they were operating in those mountains.

Nothing ever happened to them, but they grew up watching the guerrilla come to the farm with rifles and everything that came with it.

Jenny



*There isn't a Colombian who
doesn't long to return to their
country,*

*to that place that was their source
of life when they were a child or
young,*

because, in one way or another,

this country is a paradise.

Jorge



While I was away, I received the news that my mother had died.

It was devastating, because you never imagine that something like that will happen while you're gone.

So many thoughts rush through your mind. You ask yourself: Was it worth leaving? Was it worth it at all?

I never saw my mother again.

I was left with the longing to hug her one more time.

And when I finally returned, the only place I could go back to was her grave.



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EDUARDO PEREZ S
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MARLENY ANTURI C
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Some of us left.

Some of us stayed.

All of us remember.