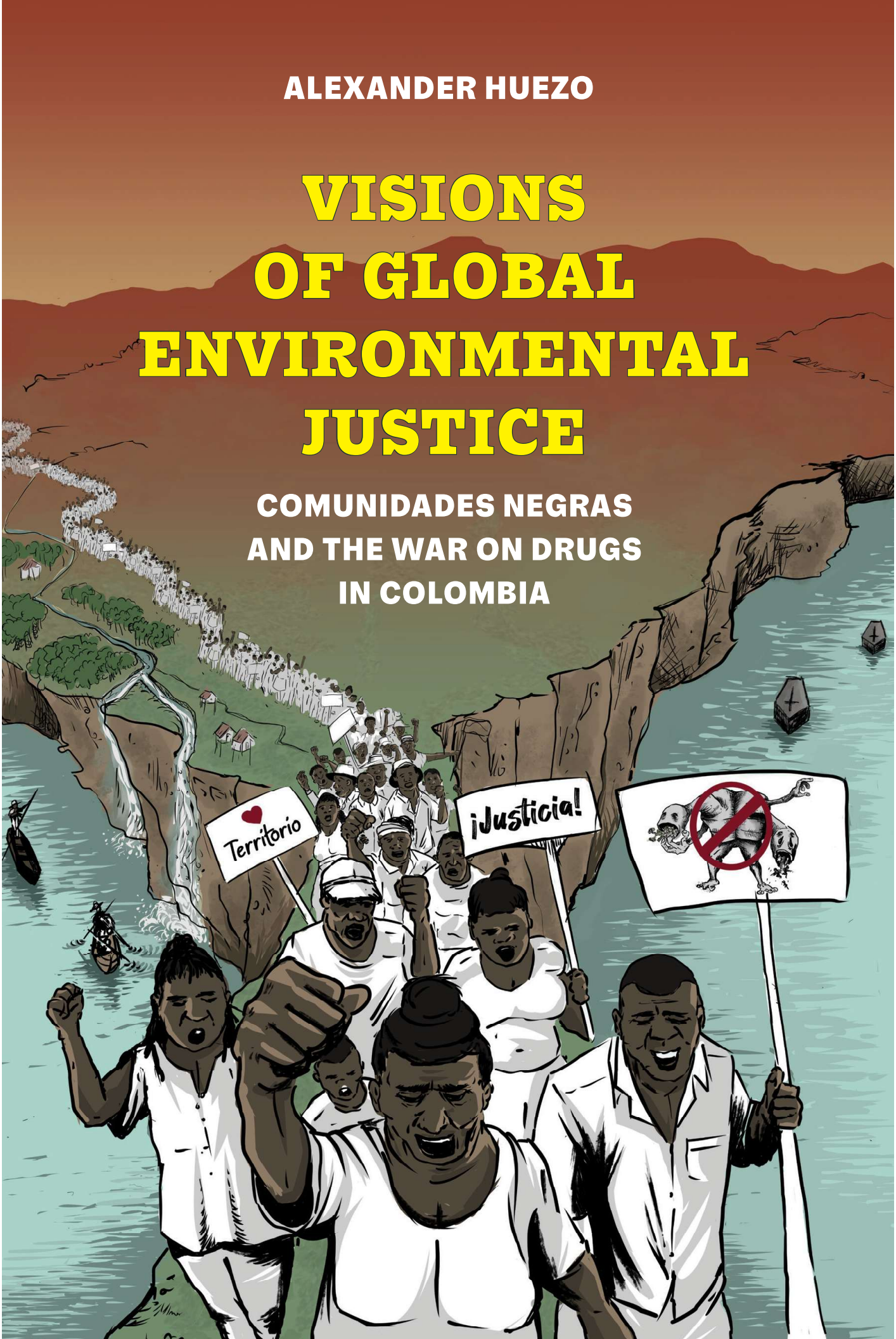
ALEXANDER HUEZO

VISIONS OF GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

COMUNIDADES NEGRAS AND THE WAR ON DRUGS IN COLOMBIA



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Visions of Global Environmental Justice

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Comunidades Negras and the War on Drugs in Colombia

Alexander Huezo



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To my parents, Alberto and Maria Huezo

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A NOTE ON ILLUSTRATIONS

Every chapter of *Visions of Global Environmental Justice*, as well as the cover, features illustrations that put elements of the supernatural in conversation with issues of socio-environmental justice (indicated with * in the list of figures). These graphic novel–style vignettes were specifically commissioned for this book. The purpose of these illustrations is to engage your imagination in ways that transcend academic writing, prompting you to envision different facets of environmental justice in the Colombian Pacific region. Each illustration required an exchange of ideas and much creativity on the part of artist Jose E. Arboleda, a *caleño* (person from Cali, Colombia) of mixed heritage (European, Indigenous, Afro-descendant). In some cases, such as figure 3, I shared photographs with Jose that served as the basis for the illustration. In other cases, such as figure 4, I shared passages from the manuscript and suggested specific symbols that I felt should be included in the final image. In all cases, Jose first drew a *boceto* (sketch) that we would discuss in detail before creating the final version of the illustration.

Throughout the book, I refer to specific elements of these illustrations but have placed each image before such explanations so that you may first have a chance to interpret the images on your own.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BACRIM	criminal bands
BLM	Black Lives Matter
DEA	US Drug Enforcement Agency
DIRAN	Colombian Counternarcotics Police
EJ(S)	environmental justice (studies)
ELN	National Liberation Army
EPSA	Energy Company of the Pacific
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
ILO	International Labour Organization
INL	Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
JEP	Special Jurisdiction for Peace
NAS	Law Enforcement and Narcotics Affairs Section of the US Embassy
NGO	nongovernmental organization
PCN	Process of Black Communities
SINIC	National Cultural Information System
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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Introduction

Mosquitoes and other insects buzzed around while I tried to pretend it was not affecting me. I swatted them away haphazardly while taking pictures and recording video with my iPhone. I am pretty sure that my eyeballs were sweating from the humidity. Moments earlier I had sunk thigh-deep into soft ground, even though I had been warned to only step on roots to avoid that predicament. It happened so fast that I felt like I was being swallowed whole by planet Earth. Thankfully, the guys pulled me out of the mud *and then* made fun of me. *They do this on a regular basis just to get to their farm plot?!?* I could not even imagine how much time and effort . . . how much sweat . . . how much money . . . to lose it suddenly.

My misstep provided some comic relief in an otherwise somber occasion. I was visiting a farm plot fumigated with the chemical glyphosate. This herbicide, the key component of Monsanto's Roundup, is commonly used to eliminate weeds in everything from personal gardens to large agro-industrial farm plots. It is a chemical that is gradually being banned throughout the world because it is linked to cancer in human beings as well as the loss of flora and fauna (e.g., insects such as bees). However, intentionally spraying one's garden or crop dusting an agro-industrial farm plot to eliminate weeds is quite different from having your food crops sprayed without your permission, under the premise that you were harvesting coca leaves to be processed into cocaine.

Both the market for cocaine and the pressure to limit the supply of the drug are driven by US demands that imperil socio-ecological communities south of its border. The vast majority of the cocaine seized in the United States, and in the world in general, is processed in Colombia.[1] Colombia is also a major supplier of the coca leaves processed into cocaine. This was not always the case. The cultivation of



MAP 1. Physical map of Colombia with comunidades negras (created by Author).

coca bushes, the processing of coca leaves, and the trafficking of cocaine gravitate toward spaces out of reach of drug eradication authorities. However, counternarcotic measures enforced in one part of the world will likely shift those activities to another part of the world because those measures do not impact the demand.

Aerial eradication, or the spraying of illicit crops with aircraft, has been a US War on Drugs strategy in Latin America since the marijuana boom of the 1970s.[2] It is a controversial practice because of the harmful chemicals that have been used in the past as well as the fact that the spray can drift with the wind and affect much more than what was initially targeted. Colombia is the only country where it has been conducted recently. US efforts to limit coca leaf cultivation in Bolivia and Peru in the 1980s and 1990s shifted coca leaf cultivation into southern central Colombia and then into the Colombian Amazon.[3] In the 2000s, aerial eradication campaigns intensified in those areas as part of the Plan Colombia agreement that Colombia signed with the United States.[4] In response, coca cultivation has shifted toward more remote locations, not connected to roads (i.e., not easily accessible to manual eradication crews who can pull the plants out of the ground) and not easily detectable via satellite imaging, because of dense tropical vegetation and shifting cloud cover. However, these newer areas of coca cultivation often overlap with spaces supposedly protected by Colombian law, such as national parks, *resguardos indígenas*[5] (Indigenous reserves), and *comunidades negras*[6] (Black communities).[7]

When looking at a map of Colombia, you can see that the Pacific region—west of the mountain ranges and spanning the border between Panama and Ecuador—is largely granted to comunidades negras (shaded in map 1). The southwestern Pacific area is currently the largest coca-growing region in Colombia. Its network of rivers is a popular transport route for cocaine shipped to the United States through Central America and Mexico.

The guys who pulled me out of the mud that day were farmers in the comunidad negra of Temuey, on the Guapi River in southwestern Colombia. They worked a farm plot together, and I was there to interview them and document what their plot looked like a week after an aerial eradication plane had sprayed their licit crops (yucca, white taro root, peach palm, mango, plantains, guava, etc.) with glyphosate. They did not grow coca plants and had no idea why their plot had been sprayed. I asked them if there were farm plots nearby that *did* grow coca.[8]

Toño: "No, not here."[9]

Jorge: "There was before on that side, in the communities of El Penitente and Juan Pérez."

Toño: "Here we are at least 5–6 kilometers away."

Later, on the boat on the way back from their farm, I asked how coca arrived in the region (described in figure 1):



FIGURE 1. Outsiders arrive to the region (illustrated by Jose E. Arboleda).

Jorge: "It arrived from Cali, from Nariño, Antioquia, with people from Medellín."

Adolfo: "All of them *paisas*[10] . . ."

Tadeo: " . . . who come to our region."

Toño: "Imagine this—you have your plot of crops, and they begin to harvest coca. And you cannot say anything because they threaten you. They took your land, and you just have to shut up."

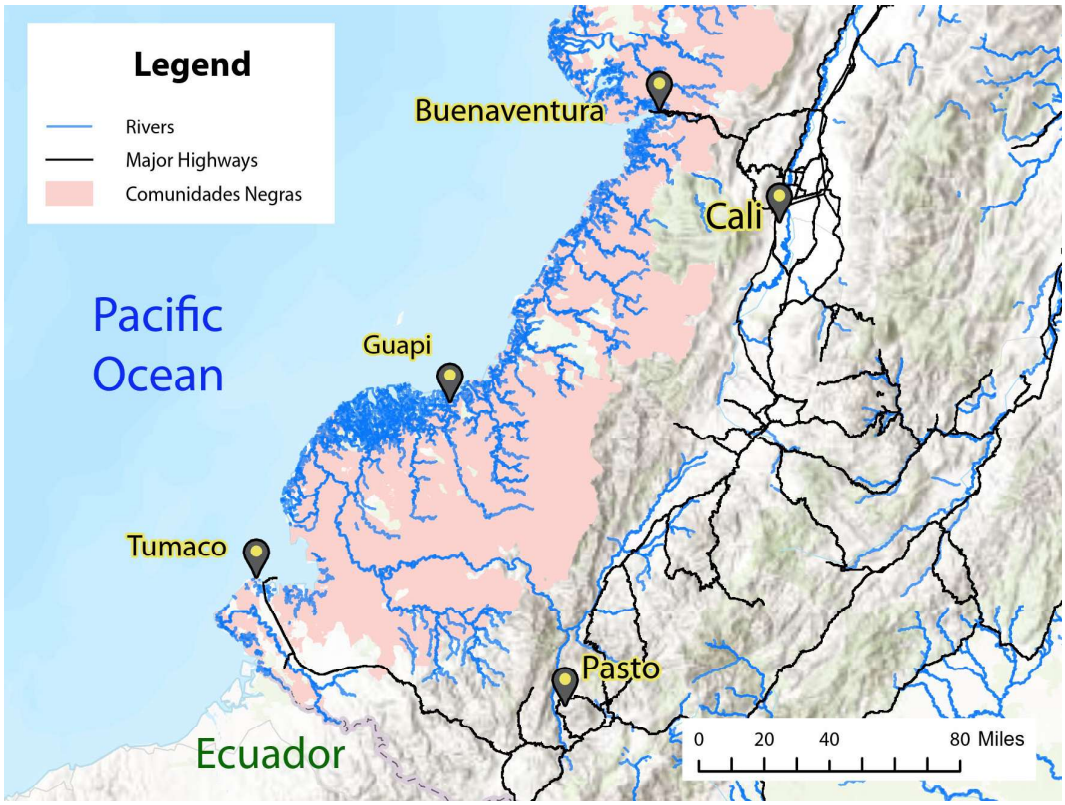
Tadeo: "They look for the weakest, least wise person in the community. They offer them money to rent the land . . . then they start taking our land."

Jorge: "One does not want to create problems by speaking out."

Toño: "Something could happen to you. We cannot say anything."[11]

After decades of struggling to be granted territorial rights similar to those of Indigenous communities, Black social movements achieved recognition of "comunidades negras" in the 1990s. The Colombian state, articulated as a pluriethnic nation under a new constitution in 1991, recognizes these collectively titled communities on the basis of the following: (a) the lands they inhabit are *tierras baldías* ("empty lands," not settled by other peoples),[12] (b) they possess a culture distinct from the Spanish and mestizo populations that settled in the Andean highlands,[13] (c) this distinct culture persists in the traditions that comunidades negras practice today in the Pacific lowlands,[14] and (d) an important part of this distinct culture involves environmental stewardship or the responsibility of preserving the ecosystems they inhabit.[15]

The grander objective of my trip that day was to investigate the disconnect between US and Colombian drug eradication authorities, who framed aerial eradication as a necessary but harmless tactic, and people in comunidades negras, who consider this strategy environmental racism. Coca cultivation is illegal in Colombia, except in Indigenous communities who grow coca for traditional purposes.[16] When cultivated at a large scale for the purpose of producing cocaine, coca is considered a threat to Colombia's national security and biodiversity. It is



MAP 2. Comunidades negras in southwestern Colombia (created by Author).

considered a threat to national security because numerous armed groups throughout Colombian history—including drug cartels, guerilla forces, paramilitary units, and newly emergent criminal bands—have financed their operations and profited from the cocaine trade. It is considered a threat to biodiversity because large-scale cultivation involves clearing tropical forest to plant coca bushes and applying numerous chemicals to limit pests and weeds. These plots are often accompanied by makeshift laboratories where coca leaves are processed into coca paste, which employ an even longer list of toxic chemicals.[17] Ironically, US and Colombian drug eradication authorities have described aerial eradication as a form of environmental conservation that limits deforestation and pollution. In stark contrast, comunidades negras have described it as "biochemical warfare of the Colombian government against its own territory."[18]

There are only two roads that connect the entire Pacific region to the Andean highlands, and both are located in southwestern Colombia (see map 2). The primary means of transportation in the Pacific region is via river. Every time I visit Guapi, I must fly in a small commercial propeller plane from Cali or take the long and choppy boat ride from the Pacific port of Buenaventura. I then travel by river to reach the comunidades negras in the surrounding area. The farmers who brought me to their lot that day would row an hour in one direction from their homes and then hike 20 minutes, hacking through vegetation with a machete, just



FIGURE 2. El Duende disappears (illustrated by Jose E. Arboleda).

to reach their farm plot. I was exhausted by the time we reached it. I could not imagine laboring in that heat and humidity, only to find out one day that the crops had been ruined. I understand why Toño cried upon seeing their crops burnt by the chemical. This lot was a significant financial investment for him and his fellow farmers. They had families to feed. He said he grabbed an armful of dead crops and marched to the mayor's office to show local officials what had happened. They looked at him like he was crazy.

Exactly four years later, in July of 2019, I revisited the same farm lot to see how things were going. Adolfo had moved to a distant community. Jorge still lived in the community but had taken up another occupation. Toño had died from natural causes. His son and a friend were now farming the lot.

On the return from visiting the farm lot, I again asked questions while recording on my iPhone as Tadeo (the same boat captain as my first trip) maneuvered the boat out of the shallow waters of the mangroves. Since aerial eradication had been suspended shortly after my original visit in 2015, this visit was largely about understanding the residual impacts of the spraying. We then discussed the potential for the aerial eradication suspension to be lifted, which seemed eminent as Colombia experienced a coca boom.[19] The conversation tailed off into silence. Maybe the thought of being sprayed again became too depressing to talk about anymore.

The boat stayed on course, but the conversation took a major detour. The guys started telling stories about the supernatural visions of the region (illustrated in figure 2):

Tadeo: "*El Duende* (the Troll) is the one who knows how to play the guitar. And guitar music is what he uses to get the girls that had not been deflowered yet. And he is the one who is going to deflower them."

Josué: "A scoundrel, that's a real scoundrel!"

Gabriel: "Nowadays . . . approaching minors like that, that would land you in jail."

Everyone: (Laughter)

Gabriel: "A pretentious type, this guy . . . very pretentious."

Tadeo: "And this guy who was fond of music would come, he would listen to him play. El Duende said that he was going to lend the guitar to him when he finished. But he had another tune he wanted to play. He never finished that song."

Gabriel: "You don't hear about El Duende anymore. Much less *La Tunda* (a vision about a supernatural female being that seduces young men). Has anyone heard about La Tunda lately?"

I was all ears. Even though this conversation had seemingly nothing to do with aerial eradication, it had everything to do with my first research project in Colombia, which documented the experiences of people forcibly displaced from the countryside and their beliefs in supernatural visions. Stories about supernatural visions are common throughout the Americas. The visions are sometimes described as sentient beings but often dismissed as the fiction of active imaginations. Such entities are much less common in North America, where the closest comparison—in terms of mysteriousness but not supernatural qualities—is probably Sasquatch (aka Bigfoot). As explained on the National Cultural Information System (SINIC) website, "these entities can be evil, vengeful, and frightening, or alternatively, playful (in a bothersome way), inoffensive, or worthy of sympathy."[20] *La Llorona* (the Crying Woman), the apparition of a woman who murdered her children to be with the man she loved, is a popular example of this type of entity. Her story is often interpreted as both a lesson about unfulfilled love (the man does not love her back) and a warning for children not to wander too far from their parents (lest they fall under her spell).

Talk of visions in the Pacific region of Colombia is common in the *veredas* (small villages or hamlets) of the countryside. Older generations tell the younger generations about these entities, and neighbors chat about them on occasion. Most people I interviewed about this subject witnessed visions outside of the veredas, in the woodlands, the hills, plantation fields, rivers, or ocean—predominately the domain of men logging, fishing, harvesting, or hunting. It is much less common to hear such stories in urban settings that are more densely populated, well lit at night, and bustling with human activity. It is in these remote areas—such as the stretch of mangroves I traveled through with the farmers—that visions make their presence known and become part of local lore. As local Afro-Colombian scholar and poet Alfredo Vanín Romero explains, "water is water, but it hides secrets; the jungle is not only full of trees, but the myths also tell us it contains more beings than is believed."[21]

There exists a wide variety of terms to describe this set of entities in the Spanish-speaking world—*mitos* (myths), *leyendas* (legends), *fantasmagorías* (illusions), *ánimas* (souls), *espíritus* (spirits), *espantos* (entities that frighten), and *fantasmas*

(ghosts)—but this book will mostly refer to them as "visions" (*visiones*) or "supernatural visions." Though some of these other terms will be employed at times, the term *visions* encompasses a wide spectrum of these entities without judgment about what was witnessed or whether they actually exist. US anthropologist Norman Whitten, who conducted ethnographic fieldwork along the Pacific coast of Ecuador and Colombia, uses the term frequently: "there are a number of fear creatures in the wet littoral called visiones."[22] For Whitten these stories are a communication of a "fear of the unknown" and a way of discussing the "means of combating manifestations of the unknown."[23]

Roughly fifteen years ago, when I originally conducted research on visions, I wanted to know whether Colombians displaced to cities brought these stories with them or left them behind in the countryside. I also wanted to know whether people adapted older visions to process the violence that drove them from their homes and whether they invented new visions to prevent their loved ones from succumbing to the violence of their new urban surroundings (specifically in the city of Cali). However, I had never considered whether the arrival of new visions to Cali could have anything to do with the disappearance of visions or other elements of the supernatural from the Pacific region.

In hindsight, this second conversation about supernatural visions, which took place in the same exact stretch of mangroves but four years later, was a detour that completed a loop. For multiple reasons, including the suggestion that I might be exoticizing the plight of rural Colombians displaced to cities, I felt discouraged to continue my investigation on violence and supernatural visions. I never tried to publish any of it. I eventually shifted to a completely new line of research, a political ecology of the US War on Drugs in Colombia, thinking that I should do something more proactive for the displaced people I had interviewed. It occurred to me that both the demand for drugs and the War on Drugs are causes of displacement. As a US citizen, I felt a responsibility to ask drug policy officials questions that people impacted by aerial eradication would not be able to get answered for themselves.

However, despite that decision, supernatural visions continued to be part of my experience in Colombia and Latin America in general. Sometimes people would tell me stories when I explained why I originally started conducting research in Colombia. Other times, people would just start telling stories about supernatural experiences that happened to them or visions that they had heard about. In the case of that second conversation on the boat, about the disappearance of visions, I was there to document environmental injustice and the conversation organically transitioned to supernatural visions. It forced me to think about how the arrival of coca impacted the foundation of the community itself. Has El Duende disappeared because he wants to stay out of the way of the violence associated with drug production and trade? Does he get talked about less because many of the original residents of the community have moved on? Or do people talk about El



FIGURE 3. Visions of global environmental justice (illustrated by Jose E. Arboleda).

Duende less often because they do not tell stories anymore and are less connected than they used to be? I view these questions as an invitation to finally share some of those stories and even create and reinterpret some visions to explain different aspects of environmental racism and justice. *Visions of Global Environmental Justice* explains how those two very different conversations—one about environmental justice and the other about supernatural visions—are interrelated. More specifically, this book will employ supernatural visions as a narrative framework to theorize the global and non/human (both human and nonhuman) dimensions of environmental justice.

By "global" dimensions of environmental justice, I refer to the way that the US foreign policy, specifically War on Drugs policy, impacts ecologies outside of the United States and across rural and urban geographies in Colombia. Both the demand for drugs and the War on Drugs are forms of transnational environmental racism. In this case, global environmental justice is accomplished through the grassroots efforts of comunidades negras who expand their environmental justice networks to include scholars, activists, legal professionals, and environmentalist organizations with global reach.

The "supernatural" dimensions of environmental justice signify the power of visions and other elements of more-than-humans on socio-environmental justice outcomes. Colombia, the site of decades of armed conflict, with the largest population of internally displaced persons in the Americas, is a unique place to explore these impacts.

Figure 3 is a visual amalgamation of those two conversations and this dual intent. The perspective in this drawing is mine.[24] The artist drew the foreground based on a photograph I took while sitting on a boat behind two of the farmers on the Guapi River. On the left side of the image, there is an aerial eradication plane flying over their community, spraying the glyphosate mixture. On the right side of the image is La Tunda, hovering over the horizon, and El Duende, flowing out of the boat beneath her. While the spray is descending upon the community, the visions are emanating from the boat (i.e., from the storytellers) and outward (i.e., into the social realm). La Tunda's face is partially covered, but her expression is subject to interpretation. Is she frightening, *or* is she frightened by the prospect of her own disappearance?

MAIN ARGUMENT AND CONTRIBUTIONS: ENVISIONING GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Visions of Global Environmental Justice deconstructs the transnational myths that perpetuate the violence and environmental racism of the War on Drugs. Conversely, it argues that non/humans rendered expendable by violence and pollution are indispensable to both *the conceptualization* and *the realization* of environmental justice globally. In doing so, this book makes important contributions to the field of environmental justice studies and its emerging subfield, global environmental justice studies.

Though some people interviewed or quoted for this book may describe the supernatural visions as "myths," I intentionally utilize the terms *myth* and *myth-making* when discussing the geopolitical discourses that rationalize environmental racism. In this way I am subverting the use of a term that often connotes skepticism, if not outright disbelief. *Myth* often signifies the fantastical or not believable, and it is frequently applied by knowledge authorities such as anthropologists interpreting other cultures from a Euro-American perspective. For instance, in chapter 3 I document an interview with the US Embassy staff in which they describe misperceptions of aerial eradication as "myths" created by ill-informed Colombian peasants. This book, in turn, questions the geopolitical myths or myth-making that justify aerial eradication as a "legal" War on Drugs strategy despite its very controversial history.

Visions in the book's title, as well as in the main argument, has multiple meanings. For the most part, it specifically refers to the set of supernatural entities that provide a narrative structure to the book. In the last two chapters, however, the term is also employed as a synonym for different ways of perceiving environmental justice. In that latter context, *visions* also refers to the perspectives of communities struggling for survival in the Anthropocene. This book largely focuses on the perspectives of comunidades negras and, to a lesser extent, resguardos indígenas in the Colombian Pacific region. Historically these respective groups have not described themselves as environmental justice communities, but *Visions of Global Environmental Justice* argues that these groups, the most impacted by decades of violence and environmental racism in Colombia, *should be* considered environmental justice communities.

Environmental justice (EJ) movements and studies emerged from civil rights activism in the US South. In sharp contrast to mainstream environmentalist movements intent on saving an animal or plant or the planet, EJ movements originate in communities attempting to save themselves. Benjamin Chavis, former head of the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice, is credited with coining the term *environmental racism* after participating in protests against hazardous waste siting in a predominately African American community in Warren County, North Carolina. Chavis stated: "Environmental racism is racial discrimination in environmental policy-making and enforcement of regulations and laws, the deliberate targeting of communities of color for toxic waste facilities, the official sanctioning of the presence of life threatening poisons and pollutants for communities of color, and the history of excluding people of color from leadership of the environmental movement."[25]

Environmental justice scholars[26] broadened the scope of that original definition, drawing into question the kinds of actions that could be construed as environmental racism and the intentionality behind those actions. For example, Robert Bullard, often considered the father of environmental justice, defines environmental racism as "any environmental policy, practice or directive that

differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups or communities based on race or colour."[27] Sociologist David Pellow explains, "The EJ movement is largely comprised of people from communities of color, indigenous communities, and working-class communities who are focused on combating environmental injustice, racism, and gender and class inequalities that are most visibly manifested in the disproportionate burden of environmental harm facing these populations."[28] Bullard, therefore, defines environmental justice as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, colour, national origin or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies."[29] In other words, environmental justice movements are grassroots and community driven with the underlying conviction that *no one should have to suffer pollution*, period.

EJ movements arise where pollution is typically not identified, acknowledged, or prioritized by government agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency.[30] In fact, EJ movements often materialize because the structural racism of governance—in the form of overt segregation (e.g., Jim Crow laws), de facto segregation (e.g., redlining, racial covenants), disinvestment in urban sectors, unjust laws, nonresponsive bureaucratic agencies, lack of political representation, etc.—has been *implicit* to the formation and marginalization of communities of color.[31] Therefore, because EJ communities are often marginalized through the structural racism of governance, EJ movements often seek solutions that may look beyond, challenge, oppose, or seek to transform mechanisms of governance.[32]

The field of environmental justice studies (EJS) originated with scholarship on African American communities resisting toxic pollution in the 1980s but, as Pellow explains, has expanded to include "a small but growing group of researchers . . . focused on the ways that gender, sexuality, citizenship, indigeneity, and nation shape the terrain of ecological inequalities."[33] Historians and social scientists have also produced scholarship on the "long Environmental Justice movement," which considers environmental struggles that predate the beginnings of the EJ movement.[34]

As a leading scholar in the field of EJS, David Pellow has articulated the need for *critical* environmental justice studies to address the limitations of earlier generations of EJS. His call for a critical EJS centers around the following four concerns: (1) paying more attention to the intersectionality inherent to environmental justice struggles beyond focusing on singular categories such as race (i.e., also accounting for class, gender, sexuality, species, etc.); (2) taking a multi-scalar approach to EJS that spans the cellular to the global scale; (3) acknowledging the extent to which socio-environmental inequalities are embedded in societies, especially state power, and must be confronted; and (4) the need for theorizing the notion of "expendability" across human and nonhuman populations in the face of socio-ecological threats.[35]

Visions of Global Environmental Justice responds to all those concerns, especially contributing to the understanding of "spaces of conflict and collaboration that are not always typically defined as 'environmental,'"[36] through a narrative structured around supernatural visions. More specifically, it employs these visions to theorize the intersectional and global dimensions of environmental justice struggles.

Global environmental justice in the book's title is both descriptive and aspirational. It is descriptive because the primary focus of the book is to describe how comunidades negras leverage transnational networks to challenge physical violence, epistemic violence, and the silent violence of environmental racism. In the process, *Visions of Global Environmental Justice* emphasizes an important point made by EJ scholars such as Pellow and Julie Sze, which is that those forms of violence are interwoven and should not be treated as unrelated phenomena.[37] *Global environmental justice* is aspirational in the book's title because global environmental justice studies (global EJS) is gradually cohering into a subfield of EJS.

In my review of the literature that could potentially constitute or contribute to global EJS, I have noticed four major themes:

1. The study of globalized EJ movements
2. The study of transnational forms of environmental racism and resistance
3. The framing of the Anthropocene / climate change as a global EJ issue
4. The theorization of the spatial dimensions of EJ

The study of globalized EJ movements includes scholarship on movements with obvious connections to environmentalism that read such movements—the Zapatistas,[38] La Vía Campesina,[39] the Chipko,[40] Standing Rock,[41] etc.—through EJ lenses, even if some of those movements do not employ the term themselves. Likewise, it includes scholars calling attention to the interconnectedness of environmental justice struggles across the Global South, such as the commonalities between communities impacted by coal mining in the Guajira Peninsula of Colombia and communities impacted coal burning near Jobos Bay, Puerto Rico.[42] It also includes the reading of popular movements with strong elements of environmentalism, such as Black Lives Matter (BLM), through EJ lenses.[43] *Visions of Global Environmental Justice* conceptualizes the comunidades negras of the southwestern Pacific region of Colombia as a globalized EJ movement, even though *justicia ambiental* (environmental justice) has only recently emerged in their discourses. It also draws from EJ literature on BLM to underscore the importance of not abstracting the effects of environmental racism from the disproportionate amount of physical violence experienced by Afro-descendants in Colombia.

The study of transnational forms of environmental racism and resistance consists of scholarship on pollution that crosses political borders. For instance, the exportation of garbage and hazardous waste from countries of the Global North to the Global South not only has transferred contamination across the globe,[44] but also has polluted the oceans in the process.[45] Another example is

the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, which prompted the construction of *maquiladoras* (tariff-free factories) across the United States–Mexico border. These factories were constructed, in part, because Mexico had fewer environmental restrictions than the United States, which facilitated cheaper production. The relocation of these factories from one side of the border to the other created a situation where former factory locations in the United States are less polluted and US-Mexico-border communities are now more polluted, prompting the formation of binational EJ communities.[46] It also created a situation in which Mexican industries are blamed for polluting across the border (explained in the next section). On the surface, *Visions of Global Environmental Justice* does not appear to pertain to this category of global EJS, but it is important to note that the US military industrial complex is the single largest producer of greenhouse gases in the world.[47] Though the US Department of Defense can state that Colombia has been largely responsible for the finance and operation of aerial eradication in recent years, chapter 3 details the history of US intervention and influence on drug policies in Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru. It also explains why many people of comunidades negras understand aerial eradication as a form of environmental racism fomented by US imperialism in Colombia.

The framing of the Anthropocene / climate change as a global EJ issue is an increasingly popular approach in academic scholarship. Studies on the impacts of sea level rise conceptualize EJ communities in both islands and continental cities[48] and have prompted a recent wave of literature on climate justice.[49] Likewise, there is increasingly more scholarship on the prevalence of forest fires and hurricanes as life-threatening environmental phenomena that materialize because certain economically privileged populations do not live sustainably, with disproportionate ramifications for communities of color across the planet.[50] The disproportionate consumption habits of economically privileged populations across the world are by no means limited to the carbon footprint of automobiles, hamburgers, and unrecyclable trash. For example, the international demand for crops such as palm oil, coffee, bananas, and grapes radically transform local sustainable ecologies into export cash crop economies.[51] Unless these crops are grown organically, massive amounts of herbicides and pesticides are introduced, chemical runoff poisons water and soil, insects migrate, and animals (including humans) are subject to birth defects as well as other health issues. If the economically privileged also possess the environmental privilege of being able to eat bananas any time of year but not having to work in the plantations where pesticides are sprayed, then *is that not also a form of environmental racism?* Though the main themes of *Visions of Global Environmental Justice* are not explicitly related to the Anthropocene or climate change, chapter 3 conceptualizes the demand for coca (for the sake of cocaine production) as an unsustainable cash crop. The last two chapters of the book specifically address the importance of global EJS scholars championing pluriversal thinking (i.e., acknowledging there are other ways to exist in this world beyond the

modern Western version) for EJ communities such as comunidades negras, who are subject to both physical and epistemological violence. Such violence not only threatens these communities rendered "expendable,"[52] but also affects the entire planet, especially since many of these populations live sustainably in ways that consumption-driven societies of the Global North could learn from. Thus, *Visions of Global Environmental Justice* echoes the sentiments of EJ scholars who argue that mainstream environmentalists should pay more attention to the ongoing legacies of Indigenous peoples, whose struggles are key to living sustainably on the planet.[53] It should also resonate with EJ scholars who emphasize the importance of engaging communities harmed by climate catastrophes as a decolonial approach to climate change.[54]

The theorization of the spatial dimensions of EJ is vital because, stemming from its origins in scholarship on local struggles in the United States, EJS often overlooks the extent to which the elimination of pollution in one part of the world may result in the pollution of another part of the world. As the harm done by environmental racism is most often discussed in conjunction with the active resistance of associated environmental justice communities, for the most part environmental racism has been theorized within the domain of those specific struggles. This limited geographic emphasis makes sense, given the grassroots history of environmental justice movements and the history of mainstream environmentalists overlooking communities of color engaged in such struggles.[55] A number of scholars dating back to the mid 1990s, however, have emphasized the need to either theorize the geographic scale of EJ issues and/or articulate the tensions between environmentally privileged communities of the Global North and less privileged communities of the Global South.[56] For instance, consider the case against Exide Technologies LLC, a corporation that manufactures and recycles automotive and industrial batteries. EJS scholarship has largely focused on the circumstances of EJ communities in the United States. The EJ movements that prompted the closures of the Exide plants in Vernon, California, and Frisco, Texas, factored into Exide's declaration of bankruptcy as well as its attempt to avoid the cost of cleaning up the contamination in those and other sites throughout the country. In the wake of these closures and the rising cost of operating under stricter environmental regulations in the United States in general, Exide has sold its domestic operations and is expanding its international operations,[57] which follows a worldwide trend in the relocation of battery recycling facilities to the Global South.[58] It is therefore important to note the extent to which both the materialization of environmental racism and environmental justice movements themselves defy political and geographic boundaries. The Exide case is just one example of the ways environmental justice struggles are connected across the planet. If environmental justice movements and scholars are intent on guaranteeing "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, colour, national origin,"[59] then an environmental justice victory in one part of the world should not result in another case of environmental

racism elsewhere. *Visions of Global Environmental Justice* underscores the extent to which resistance to the US War on Drugs strategies in Bolivia and Peru eventually prompted the expansion of coca cultivation in Colombia. It also explains how successful protests of aerial eradication in the Colombian Amazon eventually prompted the spread of coca cultivation and aerial eradication to the Pacific region of the country.

Inspired by these four major themes of literature listed above and my training in the interdisciplinary field of global studies, this book *thinks toward* the development of global EJS. In doing so, I am not claiming to define this subfield, as that would merit an entire book or anthology dedicated to that topic. Rather, the first half of the book draws insights from a wide range of academic fields across the Americas to conceptualize environmental racism in a novel way (i.e., thinking about the more-than-human dimensions of ecological violence), regarding a unique topic (i.e., the impacts of the War on Drugs on a rural ethnic population in Latin America). The latter chapters of *Visions of Global Environmental Justice* raise critical questions about trends in environmentalism, both movements and studies, that are relevant to development of global EJS. And the next section addresses three questions that inspired the book, which will highlight other contributions of *Visions of Global Environmental Justice*.

OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

- Why is environmentalism so white?
- What do visions and other elements of the supernatural have to do with environmental racism and justice?
- Why are *non/human* and *more-than-human* relevant to environmental justice studies?

Why is environmentalism so white? This is a question that I get asked a lot, especially since I teach courses on environmental racism and justice. I usually preface my answer by stating, "'Why isn't environmentalism or environmental studies more diverse?' might be a more productive framing of the question." I then point out the obvious, that besides fields such as ethnic studies, most academic fields lack diversity. Nevertheless, my students—who are predominately from communities of color impacted by environmental racism—find this disheartening because environmental studies scholars and environmentalist organizations have the power to determine what environmental issues are worth addressing, who is involved in addressing those issues, and how those issues are framed. While the specific question of why environmentalism is so white has been addressed in environmental studies literature[60] and elsewhere,[61] my students have been very enthused to learn about EJ movements and studies as alternative approaches to mainstream environmentalism.

EJ movements historically have had little to do with mainstream environmentalist organizations such as the Sierra Club or Greenpeace because the health and well-being of poor communities of color is almost never a priority for environmentalists focused on saving the whales, saving the bees, saving the trees, or saving the planet. This lack of consideration can be at least partially attributed to "environmental privilege," which Park and Pellow define as "the exercise of economic, political, and cultural power that some groups enjoy, which enables them exclusive access to coveted environmental amenities such as forests, parks, mountains, rivers, coastal property, open lands, and elite neighborhoods. Environmental privilege is embodied in the fact that some groups can access spaces and resources, which are protected from the kinds of ecological harm that other groups are forced to contend with everyday."[62]

In other words, environmental privilege can be understood as an extension of settler colonialism as well as white privilege. It can also be useful to understanding why mainstream environmentalist movements often implicate communities of color (in both the Global North and Global South) in the degradation of Earth and the extinction of species that they are attempting to save. Chapter 3 explains how this logic has ironically been employed by US and Colombia drug eradication authorities who argue that aerial eradication is a form of environmental conservation. In the process they blame poor rural Latin Americans for the "major" harms associated with the cultivation of coca and production of cocaine.

Another example of the Global North obscuring accountability for pollution emanating from the Global South is at the United States–Mexico border. I currently reside in San Diego, California, where the pollution of beaches, especially the coastline closest to Mexico, is blamed on the sewage, garbage, and toxic factory runoff flowing through the Tijuana River. Both environmentalist organizations such as the Surfrider Foundation and the State of California have websites detailing the source and magnitude of the pollution. The Surfrider Foundation website[63] provides more historical context than the State of California website,[64] explaining that the implementation of NAFTA in the 1990s prompted a manufacturing and population boom that has overwhelmed the infrastructure of the city of Tijuana. Nevertheless, both websites, similar to San Diego press coverage of this issue,[65] frame the pollution as an environmental hazard that originates in Mexico and crosses the border. This framing is problematic because it perpetuates the perception of Mexico, the gateway to the Global South, as a backward place where sewage is not properly treated, garbage is not sufficiently collected, and factory waste is not regulated. A more critical framing of this environmental issue would highlight the extent to which the production of the pollution itself is transnational, a byproduct of US businesses seeking to relocate across the border because of lower operational costs made possible by cheaper rents, lower wages, weaker labor codes, and fewer environmental restrictions. Not only did NAFTA eliminate jobs from the Mexican agricultural sector to limit competition with US

agricultural goods, but it also drew millions of people to border towns to work in maquiladoras.[66] In the uncritical discourse of mainstream environmentalism, environmental privilege is not acknowledged. Mexico (i.e., Mexicans), and not the unequal socioeconomic relationship between the United States and Mexico, is to blame for the contamination of San Diego beaches, which is contextualized as a historical continuity of Baja California (the Mexican state) polluting (Alta) California (the US state).

The transformation and exploitation of ecologies of the Global South are normally the domains of political ecologists, who sometimes—but not always—center the knowledge production of communities most impacted by environmental problems. Nevertheless, political ecology can provide insights on the hierarchies of knowledge production that facilitate and perpetuate environmental racism. To outline the parameters of political ecology, it is first necessary to present a definition of *ecology*, which may be understood as "the matrix of relations that binds living entities with the complex infrastructure of their environment."[67] For the purposes of *Visions of Global Environmental Justice*, that complex infrastructure includes nonhuman beings and beings that are not considered to be "living" per the definition of natural sciences (discussed in the next two sections). Political ecology is an interdisciplinary field useful for revealing the ontological and epistemological disagreements that factor into conflicts over land, resources, livelihoods, and ways of being. Eric Wolf, an anthropologist known for his research on peasants in Latin America,[68] is credited as the first academic to popularize the term *political ecology*,[69] although other academics as well as journalists also used the term to stress the politicization of the environment in the 1970s.[70] Blaikie and Brookfield, however, are the first credited with attempting a methodology and theoretical basis for the field,[71] and they are frequently cited for their succinct definition of political ecology as "the concerns of ecology and a broadly defined political economy."[72] Following this initial effort, political ecology has been the subject of continual debates about the basis for its theory and methodology. On the topic of theory, Peet and Watts state, "From its inception, political ecology was never a coherent theoretical position for the very good reason that the meanings of ecology and political economy and indeed politics, were often in question."[73] With regard to methodology, Robbins writes, "In short, there are very few techniques, technologies, or analytics not used in political ecology, again suggesting the elusiveness of coherence in the field."[74] The most probable reason for this lack of coherence can be attributed to the diversity of scholarship that political ecology originated from, which includes critical development research, peasant studies, environmental history, cultural ecology, and postcolonial theory.[75] Of particular relevance to this book is a literature, sometimes labeled "political ecologies of difference"[76] or "contested ecologies"[77] or "ecologies of practice,"[78] that problematizes the nature-culture divide of contemporary social science and demonstrates the ways that academics, lawyers, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)

of the Global North are auxiliary to environmental justice movements of the Global South.

This book puts those two different sets of literature—environmental justice studies with a transnational focus and political ecologies of the Global South—in conversation with one another through analysis of the War on Drugs in Colombia. More specifically, it conceptualizes the War on Drugs as a transnational form of environmental racism that is resisted by environmental justice movements that leverage global agreements and networks. In doing so, this book underscores the importance of environmental studies engaging voices traditionally ignored in mainstream environmentalism as well as centering the knowledge production of environmental justice communities in these struggles. This approach, therefore, also responds to the call to "decolonize environmental justice studies"[79] by integrating decolonial theory into the analysis of environmental justice communities and supernatural visions. It also affirms EJ scholar Julie Sze's conceptualization of EJ as something that cannot be explicitly fixed in time or space because "the process and politics of meaning-making is what makes environmental justice continually relevant."[80]

Furthermore, *Visions of Global Environmental Justice* argues that the War on Drugs in Colombia is a form of "necropolitical ecology," consisting of the overt violence of extractivism and the silent violence of pollution, resisted by comunidades negras that refuse expendability through a defense of "the territory." The phrase *the overt violence of extractivism* refers to the multiple forms of harm associated with the imposition of extractive economic activities (e.g., drilling for oil or gas, mining for minerals, agriculture, or aquaculture purely for export, etc.) against the will of local populations. Those multiple forms of harm include, but are certainly not limited to, the following: massacres of humans and other animal beings, the destruction of the physical landscape (often understood as the "desecration" of Earth or territory for many Indigenous communities throughout the Americas),[81] deforestation, and the contamination of soil as well as waterways. Additionally, this book pays attention to an important postcolonial critique of Eurocentric scholars interpreting other cultures; environmental scholar Catalina de Onís cautions, "Ethnographic work seeking to make sense of and record something or someone 'there' to bring back 'here' for different audiences has at least some component of extractivism."[82] To that point, *Visions of Global Environmental Justice* attempts to present the actual words of those in the struggle for environmental justice as often as possible. Conversely, as detailed later in this introduction, I have sought to be transparent in my active role as the storyteller interpreting/inventing supernatural visions featured in the book. My engagement in environmental justice includes the activism summarized in the next section and detailed more specifically in chapter 4. I consider this activism, or scholar-activism, which includes activities that "exceed the pages of this book,"[83] a direct contribution to a global environmental justice struggle imperiled by necropolitical ecologies.

Necropolitical ecology was originally coined to describe how the surplus value extracted from Indigenous land and resources during Uganda's colonization by the British is now being used to marginalize those populations under modern-day institutions of governance.[84] Political ecologists Cavanagh and Himmelfarb explain, "Fusing the perspectives of necropolitics and political ecology—a field that seeks to understand the ways in which the political dimensions of both the symbolic and the material are articulated within socio-environmental relations,[85] we argue that a necropolitical ecology provides a fuller account of both the social meanings of colonial processes as well as their material outcomes for colonised populations."[86] Whereas political ecology could be considered "a field" that is gradually cohering, necropolitical ecology is a distinctive political ecology inquiry that has not gained much traction as a conceptual tool or framework aside from that initial publication. This book will conduct "a necropolitical ecology" of the War on Drugs following the approach outlined by Cavanagh and Himmelfarb, as well as frame the War on Drugs as a form of environmental racism. In doing so, it expands on that original conceptualization of necropolitical ecology to situate the War on Drugs within the framework of state-driven economic development models that give rise to necropolitical ecolog*ies* and transnational environmental justice communities.

Cavanagh and Himmelfarb explain that the task of necropolitical ecology is "to illuminate coercive reconfigurations of social and ecological relations, hidden as though they might be under the symbolic violence meted out by the state."[87] They build upon one of Mbembé's main critiques of Foucault, which is that his conceptualization of "biopolitics" is limited and Eurocentric. In other words, biopolitics, the administration of human populations "to ensure, sustain, and multiply life, to put this life in order,"[88] mostly refers to the development of law and order in modern European history. It has much less to do with the brutal conditions of colonization, the histories and historical continuities of violence waged by European colonial powers on their colonial subjects throughout the rest of the world. Rather, colonial states have maintained a necropolitical relationship with their colonial subjects and employ violence "to override and reconfigure the socio-environmental relations" of populations largely practicing subsistence-based ways of life. Cavanagh and Himmelfarb thus define "the state at the height of its power as a dominant spatial performance, which is undertaken by an assemblage of political and economic actors with the common objective of annexing territory."[89] In the context of their study in Uganda, the British state employed both "physical and legal violence" to establish an export-oriented cash crop economy (coffee and cotton) and to deter subsistence livelihoods by restricting access to common property areas cordoned off for the sake of forest conservation.[90] "This nexus of conservation, state formation and primitive accumulation comprises what we have called a *necropolitical ecology*, in which land, resources and the surplus value arising therefrom were

systematically extracted from indigenous populations and utilised to support their further subjugation under imperial rule."[91]

Likewise in the Americas, Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples have been subject to necropolitics since the settlement of Europeans in this region of the world. Many regions of Colombia, such as the Pacific region, are largely disconnected from the infrastructure of the Colombian state and therefore have been treated as internal frontier spaces since colonial times.[92] Since the late 1900s, Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities have sought collective land titles for their respective communities in rural spaces where they have established historical connections and situated themselves as environmental stewards. The collective titling of *resguardos indígenas* (Indigenous reserves)[93] and later comunidades negras, thanks to the struggles of their respective social movements, has inspired a mix of optimism and pessimism for the possibilities/gains and limitations/implications of rural ethnic territorial sovereignty. A primary concern of the pessimist outlook on collective land titling is that it has made these populations more "legible" and therefore more vulnerable to outsiders seeking to exploit these lands.[94] Similar to Cavanagh and Himmelfarb's theorization of the violence against Indigenous peoples in Uganda, "the Colombian state" is understood in *Visions of Global Environmental Justice* as "an assemblage of political and economic actors with the common objective of annexing territory."[95] Whether it be a paramilitary unit employed by a mining company or a criminal band seeking to plant coca or another paramilitary group working for a palm oil company or a real estate firm seeking to build hotels, these actors can now more easily target members of respective communities with bribes, threats, and violence. The unprecedented number of community council leaders and social activists assassinated in the wake of the Colombian peace agreement is testimony to this vulnerability.[96] While it is certainly true that the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) is responsible for countless atrocities of the decades-long civil war, it also operated as the de facto government in many parts of the country and in many instances provided protection for civilians against other armed groups.[97] Therefore, despite the outside perception that Colombia had resolved one of its biggest problems with the ratification of the 2016 peace accord, rural peasants, especially Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, continue to be displaced from their lands as new armed actors seek control of areas dis-occupied by the FARC.

Borrowing from Cavanagh and Himmelfarb's Marxian analysis, the surplus value extracted from resguardos indígenas and comunidades negras has facilitated the displacement of their peoples from their respective lands. The more land and natural resources that outside actors acquire through primitive accumulation, the more capital they acquire for the violent expansion of their operations. Furthermore, the forcible displacement of rural Colombians from their communities, which is part of "the process of divorcing the producer from the subsistence-based

means of production,"[98] provides a cheap labor pool to exploit. What sets Colombia apart from the case of Uganda is the way the War on Drugs intersects with the many "overlapping territorialities"[99] seeking to extract value from resguardos indígenas and comunidades negras. This intersection has birthed Killer Plants and the Two-Headed Monster representative of another kind of necropolitical ecology (discussed in chapter 3).

What do supernatural visions have to do with environmental racism and justice? Visions are fundamental to the worlds we define and the worlds we seek to create. In this book, the term *visions* refers to both the supernatural entities described in stories and the ontologies that shape our understandings of what we consider reality.

In the first place, supernatural visions provide a narrative structure to this book about environmental justice. Visions are prominently featured in the titles of the chapters, in the artwork at the beginning of each chapter, and in the graphic-novel-inspired vignettes within each chapter. These visions provide geo-historical context, figure prominently as characters within the narrative, and ultimately highlight the ontological contours of the worlds in which environmental racism and justice are taking place. In highlighting those contours, this book cites anthropological literature on the interpretation of supernatural visions in the Colombian Afro-Pacific[100] to theorize their ecological relevance. It also draws upon an emergent category of literature known as monster theory[101] and some of the scholars who are foundational to this literature[102] to reflect on the identity intersections (e.g., sex, gender, disabilities) represented in ecological visions.

Second, *visions* refers to ways of seeing and existing in the world. The supernatural visions discussed in this book are recounted and interpreted differently across time, geographic space, and cultural contexts. This book emphasizes the importance of recounting supernatural visions as an active process that shapes ecological relations, therefore also shaping understandings of environmental racism and justice. It takes a very novel approach to the interpretation of ecological visions, applying Michel Foucault's ideas about biopolitics and biopower[103] to the supernatural visions that discipline human beings to respect the ecosystems that they belong to. It also considers supernatural visions and powers as means to challenge socio-environmental injustices.[104]

Last, this book actively participates in the deconstruction of "modernizing" visions that perpetuate environmental injustices, particularly discourses that pertain to the imagination of Latin American economic development[105] and nation-states.[106] This book employs Cameroonian scholar Achille Mbembé's "necropolitics" to describe how the elimination of certain lives—especially Black lives—is a constitutive element of many modern states.[107] It extends necropolitics into the realm of EJS by conceptualizing the War on Drugs as a "necropolitical ecology"[108] forcibly displacing Colombian peasants into urban "necropolises."[109] This displacement is made possible through "racial capitalism," or the devaluation

of certain people who serve little importance to capitalist markets when their labor is not in demand. Viewed through an EJ lens, racial capitalism reveals the logic through which Black and Brown communities become expendable because of their surplus status in society.[110]

Why are nonhumans or more-than-humans relevant to environmental justice studies? "Nonhuman agency" or more-than-human agencies are a very popular subject in the social sciences nowadays but do not necessarily mean the same thing across different fields and disciplines. This book connects ecological discourses about the agency of flora, fauna, landforms (e.g., mountains, valleys, rock formations, etc.), aquaforms (i.e., bodies of water), and sacred spirits to the theorization of supernatural visions. In *Biopolitics of the More-than-Human: Forensic Ecologies of Violence*, social justice scholar Joseph Pugliese defines *more-than-human* in the following manner: "The category of the more-than-human refers to that which is other to the human without reproducing an attendant positive/negative hierarchy. The adjective *more* affirms the way more-than-human entities exceed human qualities and conceptual parameters, while the phrase itself visibly marks, through its hyphenated formation, the relational ecologies that constitute the very conditions of possibility for both human and more-than-human entities."[111]

Pugliese's intent is to decenter the human being, or the anthropocentricism of Eurocentric ecologies, to level the playing field for the consideration of other kinds of victims of war. In *Visions of Global Environmental Justice*, I alternate between discussing "more-than-humans" and "non/humans." For Pugliese, *nonhuman* connotes a categorical separation between humans and other beings that compromises his theoretical framework. I often employ the term *non/human* in place of *more-than-human* simply because it includes both humans and nonhumans (by virtue of the forward slash). I prefer *non/humans* to emphasize the collectivity of beings that constitute EJ communities and avoid using the term *more-than-humans* in that context for fear that it may confuse the reader.

The term *incommensurability* is important to bridging these conversations. It is also important to understanding why nonhuman and more-than-human agencies are a difficult subject to address within environmental studies and related fields such as environmental justice studies and political ecology. Originally a mathematical term in Ancient Greece, *incommensurable* means "no common measure between magnitudes."[112] *Incommensurability* was famously employed by philosopher Thomas Kuhn[113] to argue that there can be no objective standards for comparing theories in different scientific paradigms (e.g., Cartesian vs. Newtonian paradigms). Within the field of political ecology, *incommensurability* signals that there is no common unit of measurement when it comes to determining the value of ecological entities such as flora, fauna, bodies of water, and landforms.[114] However, for some political ecologists, incommensurability should be viewed as an opportunity because it "opens a broad political space for environmental movements."[115] *Visions of Global Environmental Justice* takes advantage of that opportunity

to theorize the relationship between supernatural visions and environmental justice communities.

In *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, French philosopher Bruno Latour argues that the conceptual divide between humans and nonhumans in Western societies is foundational to mainstream environmentalism, which seeks to conquer, control, and manage "nature" through hegemonic sciences. He frames the change in this fundamental attitude as the new task of political ecology if the planet wishes to avoid environmental disaster: "We shall indeed have to involve ourselves still more intimately with the existence of a still larger multitude of human and nonhuman beings, whose demands will be still more incommensurable with those of the past, and we shall nevertheless have to become capable of sheltering them in a common dwelling."[116]

In other words, political ecologists must conceptualize the relationships between human and nonhuman beings differently, which involves thinking about how environmental crises impact *all* beings. The phrase *whose demands will be still more incommensurable with those of the past* signifies that the imagination of humans and nonhumans as a collective has simply not been possible under the current scientific paradigm of conquering, controlling, and managing "nature" through hegemonic sciences. Latour's argument, similar to those of other scholars in other fields incorporating actor-network theory into ecological discourses, marks a transition to a new scientific paradigm where nonhuman agencies are relevant to environmental studies.

In *What Is Critical Environmental Justice?* Pellow makes a somewhat parallel but distinct argument in his call for *critical* environmental justice studies:

> Excluded, marginalized, and othered populations, beings, and things—both human and more-than-human—must be viewed as indispensable to our collective futures. This is what I term *racial indispensability* (when referring to people of color) and *socioecological indispensability* (when referring to broader communities within and across the human/more-than-human spectrum). Racial indispensability is intended to challenge the logic of racial expendability, and is the idea that institutions, policies, and practices that support and perpetrate anti-black racism intended to destroy African-American bodies suffer from the flawed assumption that the future of African-Americans is somehow de-linked from the future of white communities.[117]

Though the two are not in dialogue with each other, Pellow's argument resonates with Latour's call for a more inclusive political ecology—incommensurable with past scientific paradigms—and states that excluded, marginalized, and othered populations are *indispensable* to our collective futures. Importantly, Pellow is more direct in identifying people of color, specifically African Americans, as part of that collective. Thus, he extends the EJ mantra that *no one should have to suffer pollution* (a phrase originally intended to highlight the importance of including people of color in environmentalist discourses, struggles, and studies) across

"the human/more-than-human spectrum" that Latour is attempting to deconstruct (i.e., the divide between humans and nonhumans).

Visions of Global Environmental Justice answers both Latour's and Pellow's respective calls for inclusivity in environmental studies in two major ways. The first is a consideration of a recent trend in transnational environmentalism, the process of granting rights for natural entities (e.g., forests, rivers, lakes), which is of great importance to rural ethnic communities with collectively titled lands.[118] If a river is granted rights similar to those of a human being, then what are the implications for communities that have positioned themselves as environmental stewards as the basis for their land claims? This is a tremendously important question throughout the globe, and especially in the Western Hemisphere where Indigenous reservations and comunidades negras[119] have been established in mostly rural, isolated spaces that are increasingly more desirable to outsiders. Second, discussion of supernatural visions or agencies is very rarely a subject of analysis in any form of environmental studies,[120] though it is slowly gaining traction within environmental justice studies. If *critical* environmental justice studies seeks to be as inclusive as possible in its framing of who/what is impacted by environmental racism and justice, then isn't it worth exploring whether supernatural visions also merit consideration?

Of course, many scholars will scoff at this last question because discussion of supernatural visions or entities could stray into the realm of "pseudoscience" or the simply "not scientific." In contrast, *Visions of Global Environmental Justice* argues that analysis of supernatural visions, entities, and powers is not just relevant, but critically important to understanding the more-than-human dimensions of socio-environmental struggles. As the principal storyteller of this book, my intent is not to prove that the supernatural exists, but to convey how these floating signifiers signal expendability and indispensability within socio-environmental struggles.

SITUATING THE STORYTELLER(S)

Visions of Global Environmental Justice takes a creative approach to relating stories people have been afraid to tell as well as stories that people have been told and do not believe. As Donna Haraway explains: "Understanding the world is about living inside stories. There's no place to be in the world outside of stories."[121]

Situating knowledge is about placing knowledge production in context and revealing the biases of the storyteller.[122] It also entails using the vantage point of the subjugated to argue against "unlocatable" and "irresponsible" knowledge claims made by "objective science."[123] I have approached this book in a similar manner, sharing the stories of environmental justice communities challenging the "scientific" knowledge claims that justify environmental racism. I have done so in the spirit of Colombian anthropologist Arturo Escobar, who aims "to demystify theory that ignores subaltern experiences and knowledge of the local economy,

environment, and culture *in order to relocate their politics of place as a key to our understanding of globalization.*"[124]

When I first started conducting research on the relationship between violence and supernatural visions in 2009, there were several important methodological questions that gave me pause. How would I present myself and the intent of my research to the people I intended to interview? How was I going to verify that the violent experiences people recounted in interviews had happened? Did it matter whether they actually believe in the stories they tell about supernatural phenomena? How do I situate my own biases as the storyteller of these findings?

I interviewed displaced persons in Colombia's third-most-populated city, Santiago de Cali, about their personal histories of displacement and their experiences with supernatural phenomena. I specifically chose Cali because I read that the influx of migrants displaced to the city in the 1990s had caused a "revival" in supernatural visions.[125] I had studied the history and folklore of the Pacific region and knew that Cali, though separated from the Pacific lowlands by mountains, was sometimes described as the capital of the Colombian Pacific because of its large Afro-descendant population.

I conducted my initial interviews at a workshop for displaced women sponsored by the local branch of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). I also interviewed people in the offices of NGOs and in their homes, located in some of Cali's most dangerous neighborhoods. I interviewed thirty women and five men, ranging in age from nineteen to sixty-seven, the vast majority of whom were from rural southwestern Colombia. I interviewed an additional seven people—NGO workers, sociologists, and lawyers—about their perceptions of working with the displaced population.

I presented myself as a researcher from the United States intent on documenting their experiences because people outside of Colombia needed to hear their stories. Racially, I identify as *mestizo* (mix of European and Indigenous ancestry), which means most Colombians would ask a follow-up question when I introduced myself as a foreigner (e.g., But you are Latino, right?). My last name is an icebreaker of sorts, prompting me to explain my heritage and upbringing as a *gringo latino.*[126] Throughout most of Latin America, *gringo* is the derogatory term for a foreigner with privilege (i.e., from the Global North). This is a label often rejected by US Latinos, including myself in the past, because gringos in the United States are normally associated with mainstream white American culture, devoid of any connection to Latin America and often looking out of place within it. I referred to myself as a gringo latino or *el investigador de gringolandia* (the researcher from Gringoland).

I led with questions about where the people I interviewed had grown up and transitioned to questions about why they were displaced and what their lives were like now. I concluded with questions about supernatural visions of the countryside and whether they had heard or experienced anything comparable in their new

neighborhoods in Cali. Aside from a few academic presentations, very few people have heard these stories until now.

I used the Conflict Analysis Resource Center (CERAC), which compiles and analyzes data on violent conflicts in Colombia, to verify and find out more information about the violent incidents the interviewees described.[127] A lot of the people I interviewed were vague about certain details of their displacement, especially who was responsible. I learned that a lot of the armed groups engaged in violent conflicts in the countryside were active in the neighborhoods I visited for these interviews.

I read folklore anthologies, history books, journal articles, children's books, and websites for more information on the supernatural visions that people shared with me. I paid particular attention to popular culture platforms—tabloid news outlets, radio shows, and internet blog sites—that circulate such stories. Combing through these sources was helpful for discerning the difference between interviewees' personal experiences and what they had heard elsewhere.

After that initial investigation, I returned to Colombia multiple times to conduct more research, to visit friends, and to see other parts of the country. I am not Colombian but always feel welcome. I have spent a lot of time in many Latin American countries but have spent more time in Colombia than anywhere else, including El Salvador where my father is from. I have had some hair-raising adventures, some of which will be discussed in the chapters ahead.

I recognize that I am privileged to have had such experiences. My US passport not only allows me entry into Colombia, but also decreases the chances that my research will result in my disappearance because I am asking too many questions. I speak Spanish and can blend into most crowds without looking like a tourist. Colombians do not discourage me from doing certain activities because I am a non-disabled man. On the other hand, my being a foreigner can also be a burden for friends and research contacts who feel responsible for my safety. Though I have traveled quite a bit and can generally pass for Colombian (until my accent is detected or someone asks for my documents), I have received ample warnings about traveling alone. I kept these privileges in mind when I conducted my next major investigation on the effects of aerial eradication in comunidades negras.

Leading up to that investigation, I conducted a series of smaller research tasks that prepared me for fieldwork: quantitative analysis on the relationship between violence, the presence of armed groups, and coca cultivation in Colombia; interviews with military officers involved in the implementation of Plan Colombia at US Southern Command; an interview with Francisco Thoumi, an expert on drug policy and Colombia's representative on the United Nations International Narcotics Control Board; and participation in meetings with prominent US officials—Carmen Lomellin, US ambassador to the Organization of American States (OAS), as well as William Brownfield, assistant secretary of the Bureau of International

Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) and former US ambassador to Colombia—about US drug policy.

During fieldwork in 2015, I employed my privilege as a US citizen and visiting researcher at La Universidad de los Andes to gain access to some very important figures in US-Colombian drug policy. For instance, I interviewed the ex-director of Colombian drug policy in the National Council on Narcotics (CNE), high-ranking officials in both the Colombian Department of the Interior and the Department of Justice, the Colombian police official in charge of detecting illicit crops, and the US Embassy department in charge of overseeing aerial eradication. I also observed the process of identifying and mapping coca cultivation in the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Bogotá.

I supplemented those interviews, many more interviews, and observations with cartographic data provided by the UNODC and the national Geographic Institute Agustín Codazzi (IGAC). Using that data and quantitative datasets collected in prior research studies, I created maps to demonstrate how certain variables—coca cultivation, coca eradication, comunidades negras, transportation networks, armed group violence, and environmental conservation policies—interact with one another. Those maps inform many insights discussed in this book but are more prominently featured in policy-oriented articles I have published on the subject.

In the Pacific region, I interviewed leadership of important Afro-descendant organizations such as the national Association of Displaced Afro Colombians (AFRODES), the national Maroon movement (CIMARRÓN), Association Manos Negra (ASOMANOSNEGRA), and the Afro Cultural Activities Foundation (ACUA). Most importantly, I conducted most of my interviews through my connections with the Process of Black Communities (PCN), an organization that was fundamental to the establishment of comunidades negras. This relationship was vitally important, not only for the access the PCN provided, but also because of the organization's reputation for networking with NGOs and scholars not from comunidades negras (e.g., Arturo Escobar, Kiran Asher, and Ulrich Oslender). The presence of a non-Afro-descendant person and an unfamiliar face is attention worthy in these smaller communities where outsiders, especially of a lighter complexion, could be associated with a wide range of possibilities including government projects, ecotourism, and drug trafficking (e.g., the paisas mentioned at the beginning of this introduction). Therefore, being invited to PCN events early in my fieldwork signaled the positive intentions of a "white"[128] outsider and afforded me the possibility of visiting on my own later on once I had cultivated relationships outside of the organization. I visited several comunidades negras in the areas surrounding Guapi and Buenaventura, where I attended PCN meetings, workshops, and special events. This allowed me to interview local residents, *consejo* (council) members, clergy, and city officials. I later visited people's farm plots and homes.

I also interviewed several people whose efforts support comunidades negras, such as lawyers and NGO workers.

I initially had no idea whether people were being honest about whether they did or did not grow coca or whether the spraying occurred as they described it or whether the spraying caused the problems they attributed to it. I could verify areas that might be targeted for aerial eradication through the cartographic data provided by the UNODC and read scholarly articles for more information on the effects of the spraying. Given some of these uncertainties, as well as a wide range of theories about why aerial eradication is conducted in comunidades negras and what it has impacted, my greater focus has been how people have resisted this War on Drugs strategy.

I was eventually invited to make a direct contribution to that resistance and become part of the struggle for environmental justice. I joined a collective action court case in which 27,000 people are suing the Colombian Counternarcotics Police (DIRAN) for damages caused by aerial eradication. The comunidades negras surrounding Guapi are part of this suit, and I was asked to join the case because of my expertise on the guidelines and protocols that supposedly protect comunidades negras from wrongful spraying. My participation has granted me access to the boxes and boxes of evidence compiled by both the plaintiff and the defense. Through analysis of that evidence as well as everything else I gathered through fieldwork, I have documented how environmental racism is masked through maps and protocols. I have also demonstrated how environmental justice is thwarted by bureaucratic paperwork and the discrediting of local knowledge. Ultimately, in outlining my participation in this environmental justice case, I hope to prompt you, the reader, to think about how environmental privilege and justice are relevant to you.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER? WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? WHY SHOULD YOU READ THE REST OF THIS BOOK?

This introduction has merely outlined the context for *Visions of Global Environmental Justice*. There has been some theorization of why supernatural visions are relevant to environmental justice, but the stories throughout the rest of the book will provoke you to think differently about how you engage being(s) in your surroundings.

The chapters ahead illustrate how supernatural identities such as monsters, "witches," and "devils" materialize with real consequences for all kinds of beings. These identities demarcate relations of power, determining who is accepted, rejected, or outright eliminated from socio-ecological communities of different scales. Why was the farm lot at the beginning of this introduction fumigated? What does that have to do with the disappearance of supernatural beings from

mangroves? Do these beings migrate or disappear? What impact do these outcomes have on environmental justice?

The migration and disappearance of all kinds of beings on the planet is certainly relevant to the impending doom spelled out by the science of climate change. The irony of climate change science is that it is largely produced within societies doing the bulk of the damage to the planet, societies that then attempt to dictate how the rest of the world should go about saving the planet. As an academic field, EJS importantly questions the uneven relations of power that determine environmentalist agendas and those non/humans disregarded in the process. As a form of environmental activism, EJ struggles empower those most disadvantaged by environmental hazards to determine what justice looks like and how to attain it.

My self-appointed task as the storyteller of this book is to put accounts of the supernatural in conversation with environmental justice studies. In the process I am taking an oral tradition, the recounting of visions, out of its original context (i.e., shared exchange among community members, in this case, in the comunidades negras of the southwestern Pacific region of Colombia). I am employing these narratives—translated and transcribed into the context of academic writing—in the service of theorizing new terrain in environmental justice studies (more-than-human agencies and non/human collectives). In doing so, I have attempted to take an active role in expanding the reach of EJS, with an eye toward the development of global EJS.

The stories told in this book and the questions that they prompt are ultimately an invitation to situate your own privilege and your relation to non/human collectives engaged in environmental struggles worldwide.

THE CHAPTERS AHEAD

Chapter 1 presents a set of visions that are recounted in oral histories of the Pacific region. These visions are categorized according to those associated with playfulness (tricksters), deviousness (seductresses), and respect for the environs (ecological monsters). The greater purpose of this discussion is to introduce the "Afro-Pacific" and its communities, highlighting this geography within the greater struggles of Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations throughout the Americas. In Colombia, these struggles have been muted by decades of violent conflict, resulting in Afro-descendants' disproportionate representation in one of the largest populations of internally displaced people on the planet. This introduction argues that this violence is a form of necropolitics—the elimination of certain lives, especially Black and Brown lives—as a constitutive element of the creation of modern states. It also argues that racial capitalism, the devaluation of certain people who serve little importance to capitalist markets when their labor is not in demand, is fundamental to necropolitics. In the case of the Colombian Pacific

region, rural Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples are *disposed in, displaced from*, and *dispossessed of* their respective territories.

Chapter 2 shifts from the rural Afro-Pacific to the urban Afro-Pacific, specifically Santiago de Cali, Colombia's third-largest city and a major recipient of Afro-descendants displaced from the countryside. Following the model established in the previous chapter, the supernatural visions are organized according to categorizations: those associated with counter-Christian morals (devils), supernatural powers (witches), and necropower (narco-monsters). This chapter highlights the struggle for survival in neighborhoods "where it is the live ones, not the dead ones, that you should worry about at night" (*de noche, son los vivos los más bravos*). Drawing from necropolitics, it theorizes that the persistence of discrimination in Cali—especially in the forms of anti-Blackness and anti-immigrant sentiment—has transformed part of the city into a necropolis. This chapter ultimately argues that this necropolis is both the product of and the rationalization of violence and environmental racism.

Chapter 3 frames the War on Drugs as a transnational environmental justice issue. It first analyzes a set of public service announcements created by the Colombian government to discourage the cultivation of coca plants (killer plants). These video advertisements, narrated by a child's voice and animated in the style of a Sunday cartoon, bear an uncanny resemblance to the visions found in children's books throughout Colombia. The second half of the chapter describes the Two-Headed Monster, a monster I invented to describe the US demand for cocaine and its imperative to stop the Colombian supply of it. This chapter argues that this Two-Headed Monster is the product of "necropolitical ecologies," a term that describes how the surplus value extracted from Indigenous land and resources during colonization is now being used to marginalize those populations under modern-day institutions of governance. This Two-Headed Monster, the manifestation of transnational pressure to modernize Colombia in a global economic system, is presented as the genetic mutation of related extractivist ecologies in the Colombian Pacific (e.g., oil, gold, biogenetic material).

Chapter 4 theorizes comunidades negras as "global" environmental justice communities, employing visions to outline the ways that these communities' struggles traverse political boundaries and ontologies. Though other chapters touch upon International Labour Organization Convention 169, chapter 4 provides greater historical context for "prior consultation" as a legal instrument for collectively titled Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. Then, grounding this discussion in the context of post-peace-agreement violence in Colombia, it connects this explanation to a strategy gaining steam in environmentalist movements across the globe, which is the designation of waterways, landforms, and ecosystems as entities with "natural rights." Does this strategy benefit EJ communities such as comunidades negras? Or is "nature with rights" the perpetuation

of the nature-city binary problematized in critical social science theory? How does the conceptualization of earth spirits, such as Mother Earth, inform these debates?

Chapter 5 summarizes the main themes and arguments of the book and then transitions to some additional observations on the implications of *Visions of Global Environmental Justice* for global EJS. It reflects on how the book has employed supernatural visions, necropolitical theory, political ecology, and the lessons of comunidades negras in the service of EJS. It also provides some basic guidelines for global EJS and suggests different areas of need for future scholarship.

1

Tricksters, Seductresses, and Eco-Monsters

This chapter theorizes the human and more-than-human relations of socio-ecological communities communicated through the oral tradition of stories about supernatural visions. Afro-Colombian scholar and poet Alfredo Vanín Romero eloquently outlines the spatial dimensions of life and the supernatural in the Pacific region, in the following quote:

> Two spaces compete for and complement the life of the Pacific: the shamanic, non-cultured space (the jungle, the depths of the water), enabler of the creatures of the underworld, of the visions, souls, monstrosities, shadows and powers of witchcraft; and the cultured space, where man's chores, fishing, agriculture take place, and where man recognizes himself with his fellow beings. It is the underworld where terrible beings spring from, but at the same time create limits so that man does not transgress the laws of nature and be destroyed. Myths and legends carry these prohibitions and at the same time prolong the spirituality of shamanism.[1]

This chapter is about how those two spaces of the Pacific region, the difficult-to-describe space of the supernatural and the more recognizable space of human relations/activities, are impacted by the multiple conflicts that fall under the umbrella term *the Colombian conflict*. The visions presented in this chapter are emblematic of both attitudes about socio-ecological relations and the violence of war inscribed in the rural landscape. These visions also figuratively transport the reader to a specific cultural context, the comunidades negras of southwestern Colombia, where oral traditions are highly valued. Such traditions are constantly being shaped by changing circumstances, including socio-environmental injustices. The recounting of visions is therefore emblematic of multiple aspects of the push for "critical environmental justice studies": (1) the importance of recognizing the



FIGURE 4. The cultured and non-cultured spaces of the Pacific region (illustrated by Jose E. Arboleda).

knowledge production of environmental justice communities as these stories transmit knowledge about socio-ecological relations and injustices across generations and geographic spaces; (2) the importance of continuing that tradition as a means of community building because unity and open dialogue are fundamental to the mobilization against injustice; and (3) the importance of acknowledging the more-than-human dimensions of environmental justice communities, which are articulated in these stories through the agency of the visions and other nonhumans.[2]

Figure 4 illustrates Vanín Romero's quote, with the realm of cultured space or human activities depicted above and the underworld below. Symbols of the cultured space include bananas (a sustenance food crop), a rosary (symbol of Christianity), a snake (a wild animal also sometimes associated with Christian sin), an AK-47 rifle (a symbol of death and war), a home (a symbol of community), and vegetation (life). Symbols of the underworld include skulls (death) mixed with roots (the beginnings of life) and fire (a symbol of destruction within the context of war or, alternatively, a metaphor for the oral tradition that must be fed fuel to persist). Supernatural visions notably bridge these two worlds, emphasizing that there is not always a clear divide between these spaces. There is also a shaman bridging these two worlds, holding an insect (likely for a potion) and demonstrating a unique relationship with the natural world (the frog perched upon his head). The full moon on the horizon is frequently associated with the manifestation of supernatural phenomena, such as the witches flying into the foreground. Do people really see such things?

ORAL TRADITIONS AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Pablo,[3] a sixty-four-year-old gentleman who now lives in Cali, had not personally witnessed any visions in his lifetime. He associated the visions with the tales his grandmother shared with him when he was growing up in Charco, Nariño. Pablo described the visions as "the old stories."[4] I asked him if he had heard about any visions lately and he explained, "The youth no longer believe in such stories.[5] I asked him if he was sad about that- and to my confusion, he said he was not. He associated the visions with the loss of other folkloric traditions of the Afro-Pacific such as *cantos y arrullos* (songs and lullabies), *currulao* (a musical genre), and *décimas* (poetry recited orally). While I thought that Pablo would be sad that these traditions were fading, he thought I was implying that these traditions make people sad. Pablo then started reciting lines of a décima from memory: "I come from the other world . . ."[6] He completed the décima by emphatically stating, "It is an honor to know these traditions."[7] His pride stemmed from the fact that he was actively keeping these traditions alive, serving as a memory bank and resource for the next generations.

In her book on the oral traditions of the Afro-Pacific, Colombian anthropologist Nancy Motta González makes the following observations:

> Oral narration has existed on the Pacific Coast since its Black population settled in these American lands and its heritage is magical and ancestral. Orality as an

> expressive source and form of direct communication, refers to a set of cultural manifestations, to the daily acts of each moment of life and death, to traumas, uprooting and ethnic anguish, to proposals and answers about events and future becomings.
>
> . . . the meaning of what is told or referred to, and the contrast with what is simply spoken or commented, allow ordinary possibilities to be surpassed and grant access to a semantics of enchantment, which of course goes beyond linguistics and language itself.
>
> Consequently, in the historical process of the formation of Black communities in the different ecosystems of the Pacific Region, the narrator has occupied an important place in the heart of the communities.[8]

In other words, the storyteller is powerful because they establish ancestral connections, communicate ideas, process traumatic events, and generally make sense of the world. Furthermore, the words they utter possess magical or transformative qualities unto themselves.

Chapter 1 will make three interrelated arguments about supernatural visions and violence: (1) as supernatural tales, visions discipline people to ensure the survival of their socio-ecological communities, operating as a kind of biopower; (2) as supernatural entities, visions and ghosts remind peasants of their expendability, which is a necropolitical continuity that began with the colonization of Latin America; (3) as subjects of environmental justice studies, visions and ghosts remind scholars that violence against communities of color is inextricable from environmental racism, affecting all beings within socio-ecological communities. However, to understand how visions have come to represent these different aspects of socio-ecological relations, it is important to consider their origins.

DIABOLIC ORIGINS

José was raised in the comunidad negra of Zacarías Río Dagua near Buenaventura. Growing up he had heard stories about visions such as *La Mano Peluda* (the Furry Hand), *La Viuda* (the Widow), and *El Hombre Sin Cabeza* (the Headless Man), but he claimed to have seen three other visions in person, specifically *El Duende* (a seductive trickster goblin), *La Tunda* (a seductive forest spirit), and *El Diablo* (the Devil). As a child José spotted the Devil near a brook that bordered his family's farm plot. I asked him what the Devil looked like, whether it had any features of a goat. "No, it was human form, a Black man with gold teeth."[9] José's account surprised me in two regards. In the first place, every other account of the Devil I had come across in Colombia painted the picture of an entity that was half human and half beast, usually with at least some characteristics of a goat (e.g., horns, tail, hooves). I was so caught off guard by his response that I failed to ask José how he knew that this person was the Devil. Second, I found it odd that José had mentioned this devil in the context of the other visions he had heard about or

seen. I was curious about how anthropologists and folklorists would view the devil mentioned in this context.

In his article about a legendary conflict between a priest, a marimba player, and the devil in the Pacific coast of Colombia, French anthropologist Michel Agier specifically explains how the visions came to be associated with the devil:

> Unlike in Cuba, Haiti or Bahia, there was in Colombia no pantheon of African or syncretic origin that organized beliefs, rites and dances into a whole system, but the devil first and foremost occupied a symbolic mediating role. . . . Starting from his intermediate position, the devil became a paradigm that facilitated the revival and, in a way, the organization of a set of pagan figures (the *visiones*, whose most ancient origins are themselves extremely heterogeneous: Spanish, Amerindian and African) to which were added "paganized" Christian entities. The devil was in this way considerably multiplied in form.[10]

The "'paganized' Christian entities" identified in the article are Catholic saints. In other words, both devils and saints are the subjects of oral storytelling, which means that their attributes are sometimes adapted to serve the purposes of the storyteller. It is believed that *the* devil and his minions, the visions, roam the earth during Holy Week when Jesus Christ is not on earth, especially Good Friday and Holy Saturday, the days preceding Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday. Many people will recite prayers in the name of God or invoke Catholic saints to protect themselves from these entities.

For example, José also mentioned La Tunda, a vision associated with the comunidades negras of the Pacific coast of Colombia and Ecuador. She is frequently described as an ugly woman with one foot in the shape of a *molinillo* (whisk or grinder) and a pungent body odor. La Tunda takes the form of loved ones or ex-lovers to deceive her victims, which include unbaptized infants, disobedient children, and unfaithful partners, both men and women. While taking the shape of that trusted person, she convinces her victims to follow her into the forest, where she feeds them a shrimp concoction and puts them under her spell by releasing her strong odor. Those under her spell, *los entundados*, fall in love with her and abandon their relationships with everyone they know. Search parties comprised of the person's godparents, a priest, relatives, and friends enter the forest banging drums, igniting gunpowder, and shooting guns to scare off La Tunda.[11] They sprinkle holy water and recite verses of prayer such as this one:

> *Santo Dios* (Holy God),
> *Santo Fuerte* (Powerful God),
> *Santo Dios imortal* (holy immortal God),
> *Librános, Señor* (deliver us, Lord),
> *de todo mal* . . . (from everything evil . . .)[12]

It is worth noting that such prayer verses are uttered not just to appeal to God, but also for the animals and spirits of the forest to conduct God's will (i.e., break La Tunda's spell by contributing to the commotion caused by the search party).[13] Yet, to describe these visions as overtly evil or scary would be misleading. For instance, Miguel described El Duende as relatively harmless. He told me the story of the time he was fishing with a friend and thought that El Duende was playing tricks on him. He saw a light in the water and felt something pulling. Yet when he pulled the line out of the water, there was nothing there. Miguel and his friend ran, but the shrieks of El Duende followed them. On a separate occasion he was walking home alone and crossing a bridge when he spotted El Duende. It was dark but he made out the figure of a white-skinned man with hunched posture, wearing a large sombrero. He called to the man, but the man did not respond. Miguel walked to the place he had seen the man, but he had disappeared. He then heard the shrieking of El Duende and began to run. "He scares you but does not do any harm."[14]

While the origins and descriptions of El Duende vary regionally throughout Latin America, many explanations identify this vision as an angel expelled from heaven:

> God preserved the Luzbelline angels who played the *tiple* [small acoustic guitar]. Those angel-musicians could leave and enter heaven with complete freedom and took the opportunity to come to earth to party. They took longer and longer to return, until one day they found the heavenly gates closed. God did not want to let them in anymore and the wandering angels returned to earth. Here they became duendes, small beings dressed in colors that wear a large hat, linked to music, in particular to the tiple. The divinity or evil of these enchanted beings is connected to the attitudes people have with their fellow human beings or with the natural environment, of which they are guardians, causing hunters not to be able to see their prey despite having them in front or surrounding them or enveloping them in the forest so that they cannot harm the vegetation and the beings that live there.[15]

This excerpt explains why duendes, fallen angels who got stuck on earth because they were having fun, are sometimes described, or perceived, as harmless creatures.

It also may explain why Miguel never caught that fish. Perhaps El Duende was protecting the fish's life and wanted to scare Miguel away. Stories about duendes and other visions not only communicate ideas about morals but also about biological control.

ECO-MONSTERS

I did not ask Daniel, from Buenaventura, anything about visions or other elements of the supernatural, but the subject came up anyway. I was interviewing him about how the aerial eradication of coca was impacting the food supply of the southwestern Pacific region of Colombia. Daniel worked for the Association of Food Producers and Marketers of the Pacific (ASPROPACíFICO) and listed

several impacts of aerial eradication (discussed in later chapters). During the interview, he made sure to emphasize the importance of social gatherings for his organization:

> We not only focus on this issue of food, income generation, and the social component, but here we have some community meetings, rather neighborhood meetings, where we begin to share experiences. So, if I have this banana plant and X plague is attacking it, like the screw worm, then these families begin to tell what it would be like to control it. Biological control without using the chemical because not everyone has the money to buy a kilo of it to control that screw worm. So we begin among the same farmer, the neighbor, to talk about how to control this pest. . . . We begin to talk about La Tunda, La Patasola, La Madre de Agua, El Duende. . . . So, we begin to tell those stories precisely in those moments. That is the social importance of this organizational component. To have these conversations we need to empower the people in our territories with a prior knowledge of our history. And this is carried on from generation to generation.

While Daniel raised the subject of social gathering in the context of the importance of his organization, his commentary clearly speaks to the importance of oral traditions as a form of producing and conserving knowledge. The fact that he mentioned both agricultural techniques to manage pests and the oral tradition of telling stories about visions in the same response is noteworthy. Both represent forms of "biological control."

French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–1984) theorized that techniques of biological control underwent a major shift when European societies transitioned from monarchies to the modern state system. Kings and queens had the power to take life for the sake of the order of the people. In contrast, governments and organizations of the modern state system maintain order through the management of human bodies, social bodies, and the reproductive capacities of those bodies.[16] Foucault explains, "Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself; it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body."[17] Foucault termed this form of control "biopolitics," which he defined as a political rationality "to ensure, sustain, and multiply life, to put this life in order" and to guarantee the survival of human species and societies.[18] He theorized that biopolitics operates through "biopower"—"power that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavours to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulation."[19] Biopower operates through different channels or networks of administration and ultimately organizes how people live.

By conceptualizing these terms, Foucault challenged mechanisms or technologies of biological control that are taken for granted because they are thought to be objectively neutral and/or beneficial to greater society. He paid particular

attention to the articulation, regulation, criminalization, and incarceration of "insane" persons displaying "deviant" behaviors.[20] In tracing the lineage of terms such as *lunatic* or *homosexual*, Foucault called into question both the language and the institutions that discipline human bodies, corporally as well as psychologically. His underlying point was not that biopower is inherently bad, rather that biopolitics can be dangerous if a society is not vigilant about the power it surrenders when a paradigm shift facilitates new forms of biological control.[21]

The management of the COVID-19 pandemic exemplified modern-day biopolitics and biopower. Each nation-state made decisions about how it would handle the pandemic according to its own biopolitics (i.e., whose lives were prioritized and what was the best way to ensure survival of those lives). Travel restrictions, mask mandates, and vaccination requirements are examples of the exercise of biopower through different channels, some government-related and others that are not but follow the biopolitics of state institutions. Biopower circulates through the administration of government agencies and laws as well as through people disciplining themselves to follow certain rules and to adhere to certain patterns of behavior, which become normalized over time. In the United States, there were some federal government regulations to manage the COVID-19 pandemic, but individual state governments, city governments, businesses, and communities were the primary conduits of biopower. For instance, some businesses discontinued the employment of people who refused to get vaccinated. Likewise, in places where there was no mandate to wear a mask in public, the pressure to get vaccinated, wear a mask, or distance oneself from others stemmed from social ostracism. In other words, biopower materializes through a multiplicity of channels including organizations, laws, and norms of social behavior. While it is not possible to ask Foucault what he thinks of the biopolitics of the COVID-19 pandemic, he did describe how the spread of the plague was managed in Europe at the end of the seventeenth century. Towns were closed, people were quarantined inside their homes, authorities registered the status of residents, and people who violated those rules were subject to death. The plague and the recent COVID-19 pandemic, therefore, provided opportunities for governments to exercise new forms of human surveillance and biological control.[22]

Returning to the context of *Visions of Global Environmental Justice*, the terms *biopolitics* and *biopower* are useful for contrasting the mechanisms of biological control employed by comunidades negras with those articulated through national security politics and transnational drug policy. In other words, in this book these terms identify the ways that biological control operates through socio-ecological communities defined at different scales (i.e., comunidades negras, the nation-state of Colombia, the global community defined by transnational drug policy, etc.). Extending this analogy further, the oral tradition of recounting visions operates as a form of local biopolitics in comunidades negras (i.e., a type of rural socio-ecological community). El Duende and La Tunda enforce social norms through

fear. Raise your daughter to be virtuous or she might succumb to the charms of El Duende. Don't let your kids wander into the forest or they may be kidnapped by La Tunda. As Vanín Romero notes, these stories "reinforce norms of conduct in the face of nature, for example that children respect water and do not take risks until they acquire skills. The internalization of the norm guarantees individual and ethnic survival."[23] While the visions themselves may be considered harmful or threatening to people who witness them, the stories about visions are representative of the biopolitics or "political rationality" intended to maximize life and relationships between people.

Drawing this analogy out further, the visions told within these stories possess biopowers that impact not only human bodies, but also other species as well. For instance, *La Patasola* (the One-Legged Woman) has just one leg because, according to the legend, her husband chopped off one of her legs with an axe when he found her cheating with another man. Left for dead in the wild, this spirit appears in the form of a beautiful woman to seduce men and, once she has captured her prey, transforms into her actual self, a one-legged woman with red eyes and fangs. In some descriptions, she also has extremely long arms, which propel her forward as if they were crutches. As with La Tunda, her story discourages infidelity (i.e., cheat on your significant other and you might be chopped to pieces).[24] However, La Patasola also serves an important ecological role: "She is the mother of the animals of the forest, in charge of erasing the tracks or traces of the animals pursued by others, but for this operation to be carried out, she must walk backwards. La Patasola is therefore a unipedal being. Her only leg is joined by the two thighs. It is said that she is a friend of almost all wild animals, which she defends tooth and nail from other animals and humans, especially hunters, walkers, and settlers."[25]

Similar to El Duende, La Patasola defends wild animals from being hunted. Conversely, domesticated dogs warn their human owners that she is near and are sometimes employed to hunt her down.[26] Thus, La Patasola discourages humans and animals aligned with humans from encroaching on the territory of wild animals.

Furthermore, many communities, especially those rooted in ecologies of difference, such as the comunidades negras of the Pacific region, include visions that exercise biopower *through* the forces of nature. This is especially evident with *La Madremonte* (the Mother of Wilderness), whose appearance is often described as a fusion of woman, forest, and wetland.

Her mission is to take care of forests, jungles, and nature in general. It is because of her that ferocious winds, storms, and floods destroy crops and seedlings. Likewise, she lets out shrill, infernal screams, preceded by furious moans when tree cutters and hunters invade her grounds. It is said that she easily attracts wood collectors who seek their livelihood on trails and roads; while they listen to her deafening screams, it seems that a hypnotic force orders them to follow her footsteps into the wild, which takes them off course for days, weeks, months. There she

dismembers them and, finally, eats them, leaving only a pile of misshapen bones as a residue.[27]

La Madremonte literally thwarts the spread of agriculture through extreme winds and rain. She disorients and dismembers men whose livelihoods involve the destruction of forests. La Madremonte exercises biopower in the defense of the flora and fauna that belong to those ecosystems, thus promoting the survival of the *entire* socio-ecological community.

When conceptualized as fictional stories, these supernatural visions have much in common with other legendary monsters such as werewolves and vampires. The emergent literature of "monster theory" signals that so many of the monstrous entities that frighten are simply misunderstood.[28] The werewolf, for example, incites fears about hybrid bodies (half human and half beast) and can be interpreted as a monster that elicits fear of nonconforming sexual identities. "It oscillates between the city—with the sociopolitical recognition that comes with it—and the forest, which represents lawlessness, chaos, bestiality. This relates to the fact that the monster exists as a kind of criminal, the banished 'other' that refuses to conform."[29] Likewise, the vampire is traditionally portrayed as a being who has transgressed the bounds of life and death, a repressed human soul with an insatiable appetite running amok in civil society.[30]

Through the lens of monster theory, tales of visions such as La Tunda and La Patasola could be conceived as a category of "eco-monsters" whose hybrid feminine bodies invoke fear and respect for socio-ecological norms and boundaries. Vanín Romero explains that these stories have "enforced prohibitions of transgression of nature (excessive felling of trees, fishing beyond consumption capacity) so as not to overload ecosystems."[31] In the case of La Patasola, her transgression of social norms in the human realm (i.e., infidelity) factored into her transformation into a frightening spirit aligned with undomesticated (i.e., free-spirited) animals. La Madremonte, whose feminine body is literally fused with elements of the forest, disrupts, disorients, and/or devours men who advance the frontiers of human settlement. These eco-monsters exercise their biopowers to define the spatial limits of ecosystems, what beings belong to those ecosystems, and who survives in those ecosystems.

Whether the stories of these visions are shared with others, especially subsequent generations, is a matter of preference, rooted in personal experience and informed by desired outcomes. Zenón, a fifty-nine-year-old man, mentioned that El Duende, La Tunda, La Patasola, and La Madremonte were the visions that most people told stories about in Zabaletas, Buenaventura. He said it was normal for people from his region (i.e., the Pacific lowlands), and from the Colombian countryside in general, to engage in this form of storytelling. Zenón thought that it was strange that he never saw any visions, because he started working at the age of seven and had the kinds of jobs—namely, tree cutting and agriculture—where one would expect to encounter such things. I asked him if he

was going to share those stories with his grandchildren who were being raised in cities. "Yes, I will tell them those stories and, ideally, tell them about my life in the countryside. They know nothing about the countryside."[32]

Angélica, a twenty-eight-year-old woman originally from Puerto Tejada, Cauca, did not know much about visions until she moved to Sidón, Nariño, which she described as "a little town of ghosts."[33] She encountered *La Bruja* (the Witch), El Duende, and La Madremonte in Sidón and stated, "Those things I believe in because I lived them. . . . I am not going to tell my children about those things because, for me, it was very traumatic. I am someone who gets scared easily. It would be traumatic for them."[34] I asked Angélica why there were more visions in Sidón than in Puerto Tejada, and she replied, "It is the evil of the past."[35]

CONFLICT, COCAINE, AND DISPLACEMENT

In the most general terms, "the evil of the past" refers to a problem endemic to much of Latin America and the Caribbean, the precarity of rural peasants who do not possess title to the land they occupy nor the means to defend themselves from armed groups. The monopolization of land and resources by Latin American elites and foreign capitalists has been the root cause of devastating civil conflicts such as the Mexican Revolution, the Guatemalan Civil War, the Cuban Revolution, and the Salvadoran Civil War. The United States has interfered in these and so many other conflicts throughout the region because the redistribution of land and resources sought through these popular uprisings has been perceived as a threat to private business interests and "democratic" ideals (i.e., fears of socialism and communism).

The peasants I interviewed about their displacement shared similar details about their lives in *el campo* (the countryside) before armed groups arrived in their communities, no matter which part of Colombia they came from. For instance, almost every person I interviewed lamented that they used to be able to provide for themselves in ways that they cannot now. Zenón complained, "You have to pay for everything in the city!"[36] They also lamented the fact that their interpersonal relationships used to be more meaningful. Mirabel from Cajibío, Cauca, commented, "People in the countryside are more connected."[37] Lucía from San Juan, Chocó, stated, "Coexistence is different . . . the truth is, before the armed groups arrived . . . life was very good. I am sixty-nine years old with three grandchildren and I cannot find work. I do not have worth in Buenaventura like I did in the countryside."[38] While it is often natural to idealize a place and time where/when everything was better, the people I interviewed were definitive that their lives were relatively peaceful until armed groups arrived.

In Colombia, most historians signpost *la Violencia* (1946–1960), a period of violent disorder that began with the presidential election of 1946, as the catalyst for the conflicts still happening today. In the 1946 election, the Liberal Party split

its support among two candidates and the Conservatives claimed the presidency. One of these Liberal candidates, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, embodied the marginalized working class's best hope for popular reforms in the 1950 election.[39] That is, until he was murdered campaigning in 1948, triggering a wave of urban violence that would not subside until the 1960s.[40] Colombian legal scholar Rodrigo Uprimny Yepes notes, "More than anything else, the Violence symbolizes in many ways the failure of collective action in Colombia. For it resulted in . . . the failure, in sum, of politics as the collective construction of a democratic order and a modern state."[41]

In the 1960s guerilla groups, rooted in histories of agrarian struggle and catalyzed by the shock waves of a Cuban Revolution felt throughout the Americas, emerged to declare their opposition to the Colombian state.[42] The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) originated from a tradition of peasant self-defense movements that preceded la Violencia.[43] The National Liberation Army (ELN) developed from a mix of disenchanted university students and college graduates active in la Violencia.[44] While these movements had ideological differences, both advocated for the rights of the rural poor by opposing the privatization of Colombia's natural resources and the dispossession of peasant lands.[45] The guerillas originally predominated in the peripheral regions of Colombia's colonization, where they became de facto regional governments, asserting social control over the regulation of property and production. Later their presence expanded to cattle lands and oil regions, where they extracted income through the use and threat of violence.[46] Because most of the displaced people I interviewed were from the countryside, *la guerrilla* almost always referred to the FARC.

In the 1970s, emerald traders, contraband traffickers, and the first drug cartel bosses purchased massive haciendas throughout the country.[47] These new wealthy landowners were particularly vulnerable to the FARC. Though still a relatively marginal armed group, the FARC was financing its insurgency through extortion, kidnappings, and threats to local authorities and civilians.[48] Government peace negotiations with the guerillas in the 1980s handcuffed the military's capacity to wage an anti-subversive campaign and rankled military leadership. In response, the Colombian military secretly sponsored the formation of private regional peasant armies that sought to physically exterminate guerilla leaders and their political supporters.[49]

In 1982 the drug cartels sponsored the creation of Death to the Kidnappers (MAS), a death squad that specifically targeted guerilla fighters and their families and later converted into a private security force contracted by large landowners. Similar paramilitary organizations appeared elsewhere throughout the country where the cartels conducted their business.[50] Meanwhile as part of the negotiated peace plan with the Colombian government, the FARC had formed the Patriotic Union (UP), a political party consisting of demobilized soldiers. Though the party made some gains in the ensuing years, Colombian historians LaRosa and Mejía

explain it was "systematically eliminated by a number of webs of mysterious forces including the military, hired murderers/paramilitary forces, members of leftist organizations, and, increasingly, powerful drug cartels."[51] Eventually this violence extinguished any hope for a negotiated settlement and fostered a general sense of distrust in government authority and its military backing.[52]

The cartels' rise to prominence in the 1980s coincided with the national government turning a blind eye to these extrajudicial killings. As the cartels became wealthier and more violent, they transformed the State itself, as evidenced when Pablo Escobar—head of the powerful Medellín cartel—was appointed an "alternate" member of congress in 1982. The assassination of numerous government leaders, including Colombian Minister of Justice Rodrigo Lara Bonilla in 1984 and presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán in 1989, factored into a growing resistance against the cartels.[53]

Through a combination of internal rivalry, domestic pressure, and US insistence, the two major cartels—Medellín and Cali—were dismantled by the mid-1990s. The vertical drug-trafficking structure, in which the big cartels controlled the entire process, from cultivation to international distribution, was replaced by a more horizontal formation in which hundreds of smaller operators specialized in different phases of drug production and distribution.[54] Guerilla and paramilitary groups seized the opportunity to get involved in the trafficking business, forming alliances with Mexican and Brazilian organizations facilitating exportation.[55]

Prior to the 1990s Colombia drug traffickers mostly purchased coca paste from Bolivia and Peru. However, a combination of circumstances—the collapse of the Cali cartel (that bought paste from Peruvians), a Peruvian fungus infestation known as *el gringo*, and Peruvian President Fujimori's increased interdiction efforts against illegal flights leaving Peru and Bolivia for Colombia—factored into Colombia becoming the world's largest coca cultivator by the end of the 1990s.[56] In 1990 Colombia cultivated 19 percent of all Andean coca, whereas by 2000 Colombia cultivated 72 percent of all Andean coca.[57]

Guerilla groups—historically active in areas neglected by the Colombian government—taxed the production and distribution of illicit drugs. These taxes were initially collected from traffickers and middlemen and later collected from peasant farmers themselves.[58] This included taxes on the following: the weight of goods cultivated or processed, the laboratories where the ingredients were processed, the airstrips where planes landed and took off, and drug shipments.[59] One study estimates that between 1991 and 1996, the FARC and ELN generated $2.4 billion in earnings, roughly 44 percent of which was derived from drug trafficking.[60] This income allowed the FARC to significantly expand its operations in Colombia, especially in what became known as the coca belt of southern Colombia, which contained 80 percent of all coca grown in the country by 1999.[61] In 1986 the FARC numbered 32 battalions and approximately 3,600 soldiers, and by 1995 their forces had essentially doubled with 60 battalions and 7,000 soldiers.[62]

In the 1990s paramilitary groups began challenging the guerillas' dominion over coca-producing regions and drug-trafficking corridors to finance the purchase of black market weapons. These groups terrorized, massacred, and forcibly displaced rural peasants throughout the country from regions controlled or thought to be controlled by guerilla forces. In 1996, seven regional paramilitary groups formed a federation known as the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), which expanded the paramilitary offensive in regions controlled by guerillas.[63] In the face of domestic and international pressure, the AUC's coalition of thirty-seven groups was eventually demobilized by 2006 under President Uribe's administration.[64]

The Colombian government refused to label the successor groups that followed the AUC as "paramilitary" or "neo-paramilitary" groups even though many of these groups are composed of the same individuals, have conducted the same activities as the AUC, and are equally violent against the civilian population. Nevertheless, Human Rights Watch has noted, "Some are more closely linked to the conflict between the Colombian security forces and FARC and ELN guerillas than others," and the government has deemed these groups "newly emergent criminal bands," or BACRIM.[65]

Most of the people I interviewed described the soldiers who arrived in their communities as *grupos armados* (armed groups), which could mean any combination of the FARC, paramilitary soldiers,[66] and the national military. Lucía fled San Juan, Chocó, with her three grandchildren because the FARC and a paramilitary group had arrived in her community. José had to flee his community near Buenaventura because he was threatened by both FARC and paramilitary soldiers. Pablo, who was the president of his community council in Charco, Nariño, was also threatened by both groups. Five members of his family were killed, including his son, his brothers, and an uncle.

Some of the people I interviewed were part of *desplazamiento masivos* (mass displacements) in which many people abandoned their homes at the same time. For instance, Mirabel fled Cajibío, Cauca, with people from four *veredas* (small villages or hamlets) in 2000. She described the cause of this displacement as "the scourge of everything"[67] and was not sure which groups were responsible. Both her brother and her uncle were killed. Zenón explained that the FARC arrived in his community of Zabaletas near Buenaventura in 1993, and paramilitary forces arrived seven years later in 2000. The paramilitary soldiers wanted to know who had been collaborating with the FARC and had the entire hamlet of 200 people line up outside. They picked out 12 people they accused of working with the FARC and executed them in front of everyone. I asked Zenón what kind of collaboration with the FARC merited death, and he described what sounded like a no-win situation: "They paid people in town for services or stuff like gasoline . . . very difficult to say no to that when you do not have money and the guy has a rifle."[68] The entire vereda left for the city of Buenaventura the next day.

Multiple people I interviewed fled violence between the FARC and the Colombian military. For instance, Mónica from the community of Rio Tapaje near Charco, Nariño, asked me, "Do you know why the armed groups entered town?

Because of injustice!"[69] She distrusted Colombian soldiers the same as any other armed group: "They can kill you and then claim afterwards that you were a guerilla fighter. They did that to an older lady."[70]

THE NECROPOLITICS OF THE COLOMBIAN CONFLICT

The concept of "necropolitics" is useful to understanding modern warfare and why many nation-states wage violence against their own populations. It is also useful to connecting many conflicts happening throughout the world to historical continuities and disrupting the notion that certain conflicts are isolated events of violence. Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembé articulated the concepts of necropolitics and necropower as critiques of biopolitics and biopower. He asked, "Is the notion of biopower sufficient to account for the contemporary ways in which the political, under the guise of war, of resistance, or of the fight against terror, makes the murder of the enemy its primary and absolute objective?"[71] Mbembé argues that Foucault's theorization of biopolitics and biopower was so focused on European history that it overlooked the extent to which death and destruction became normalized through European colonization of the Global South. For instance, Mbembé states, "Any historical account of the rise of modern terror needs to address slavery, which could be considered one of the first instances of biopolitical experimentation."[72] Furthermore, he notes that many of the mechanisms that protected Europeans in their respective homelands did not apply to colonized peoples, "the colonies are the location par excellence where the controls and guarantees of judicial order can be suspended—the zone where the violence of the state of exception is deemed to operate in the service of 'civilization.'"[73] Mbembé argues that the colonial occupation of Palestine is emblematic of modern necropower, "subjugation of life to the power of death,"[74] because not only does the Israeli state dominate through violence and destruction, but it also legitimizes its presence through a narrative that establishes that Israel has "a divine right to exist."[75]

The murder, torture, and forcible displacement of Colombian peasants also fits the description of modern necropower, while the necropolitics of the Colombian conflict is the rationalization of that violence through transnational aid and geopolitical discourses. The regions that have endured the brunt of this violence exist at the margins of the country's transportation network and other aspects of infrastructure such as electricity grids, schools, and hospitals. In many of these places, armed groups tax the local populations for those services. These areas can be understood as frontier spaces that were never successfully colonized by the Spanish or their successors who primarily settled in the more temperate climates of the Andes mountains.[76] Extending Mbembé's theory to this geo-historical imagination of Colombia, these spaces are subject to necropower because they exist beyond the limits of a modern state.

The Pacific region is particularly subject to necropower for three major reasons. In the first place, the state no longer holds a monopoly over the right to kill, because

"war machines" have emerged in places where the postcolonial state's authority does not exist: "The extraction and looting of natural resources by war machines goes hand in hand with brutal attempts to immobilize and spatially fix whole categories of people or, paradoxically, to unleash them, to force them to scatter over broad areas no longer contained by the boundaries of a territorial state."[77]

While Mbembé specifically referenced the "war machines" of Africa in his theorization, there are strong parallels in the Pacific region and Colombia in general. Armed groups finance themselves through the control of extractive industries such as oil and gold as well as plantation economies such African palm and coca. The brutal attempts at the immobilization and spatialization of peasant populations have resulted in Colombia having one of the largest populations of internally displaced persons in the world, at 9 million people according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.[78]

Second, the Colombian state's war against insurgents (i.e., the FARC and ELN) and narcotics (i.e., the various groups involved in the production and traffic of illegal drugs) implicates everyday people in huge swaths of the country not under the control of the Colombian military. Similar to prolonged civil conflicts such as the Vietnam War, peasants could easily be implicated as guerilla fighters or supporters without judge or jury. Peasant death, suffering, or displacement has been rationalized under military objectives—such as "counterinsurgency," "counternarcotics," or, after 9/11, "counterterrorism"—financially and technically supported by the Plan Colombia agreement with the United States.[79]

Finally, the modern-day terror experienced by comunidades negras today cannot be abstracted from the historical context of slavery in the Pacific region. Distrust of the military, of the police, and of the state in general did not originate with the Colombian conflict and is not a unique perspective among other Afro-descendant populations of the Americas.[80] Comunidades negras and their counterparts throughout the Americas are concrete reminders that human beings did not want to be subjugated, tortured, mutilated, raped, and murdered while laboring for long hours without pay. *Palenques,*[81] *quilombos,*[82] and other maroon societies throughout the hemisphere proliferated during the colonial period because they offered an escape from that inhumane treatment. Those societies persist in the present, under a variety of terms, such as *comunidades negras*, because they continue to offer what geographer Bledsoe terms "spaces free from assumptions of black inhumanity and the varied concrete manifestations of these assumptions."[83] Implicit to that spatial imagination is a desire to protect comunidades negras from necropower and to reject the necropolitics that rationalizes harm against Black bodies. So, while a Colombian government official or military officer might lament an incident of violence or pollution in the Pacific region as an unfortunate turn of events, many prominent Afro-descendant leaders I spoke to might view the same incident as an intentional means to fracture, eliminate, or displace their communities.[84]



FIGURE 5. The evil of the past (illustrated by Jose E. Arboleda).

HAUNTED BY THE EVIL OF THE PAST

This necropolitical history of the Pacific region is fundamental to understanding why Angélica stated that Sidón, Nariño, was haunted by "the evil of the past." While she was not exactly certain when this evil transpired, Angélica did believe that the town was haunted because it was in a *zona coquero* (an area where coca is cultivated). Figure 5 depicts how her father-in-law, who was a city government official in the town, and others were murdered. The FARC had been present in the area for a long time when the Colombian military arrived to drive them out (image on the left). Military officers asked for help from city officials to find accommodations and other necessities in town. Once the military left town, the FARC murdered Angélica's father-in-law for his role in assisting their enemy (middle image). She explained, "People from there told me . . . that they were chopping people down with machetes. Heads were rolling because of machetes. In other words, blood was flowing from the hills. You understand what I am saying? Massacres, the guerilla would toss their bodies into the river" (image on the right).[85]

For Mbembé, the massacre represents an instrument of modern-day warfare in the era of globalization and the ultimate expression of necropower: "If power still depends on tight control over bodies (or on concentrating them in camps), the new technologies of destruction are less concerned with inscribing bodies within disciplinary apparatuses as inscribing them, when the time comes, within the order of the maximal economy now represented by the 'massacre.'"[86]

Extending Mbembé's analysis to Angélica's description of Sidón, the ghosts that haunt the town are the inscription of this ultimate expression of necropower on the collective psyche of those left behind. In other words, the ghosts remind the living that peasants are expendable in the necropolitical order of the Colombian conflict.

Miguel of Cajibío, Cauca, experienced a similar haunting while traveling to different parts of the Colombian countryside as part of his job. He remembered how he could never sleep while working in the mountainous southern area of the Bolívar *departamento* ("department," which translates to state or province). Miguel slept in a tent located near a *quebrada* (ravine), and every night he would

hear people—whom he described as soldiers, policemen, and civilians—right outside of his tent. "I heard screams and saw shadows, but when I got out of the tent there was no one there."[87] He later found out that he was camping in a site where numerous murders had taken place, and he refused to go back. Southern Bolívar is exceptional in that regard, as it has been a site of struggle between guerillas and paramilitary groups vying for control of gold mines, coca cultivation, and most recently, African palm plantations.[88] US anthropologist Mary Crain, who conducted research on encounters with death and the spirit world in the Ecuadorean Andes, writes, "In folk cosmology, geography has an important moral dimension, and many places that form part of the natural landscape are believed to be endowed with both positive and negative qualities."[89] Perhaps it is merely coincidence, but Crain notes that Ecuadorian peasants avoid sites such as "ravines, irrigation canals, waterfalls, lakes, high mountain plains, and places where rainbows appear" late at night when alone because they could be inhabited by evil spirits.[90]

Miguel's cousin Mirabel told me that she was haunted by the ghost of one of her friends who was murdered on their farm in Cajibío, Cauca. She said she knew it was him because she would see shadows and feel a cold sensation. "I would ask him what he wanted."[91] Mirabel would shut her curtains to block him out of the house, but he would continue bothering her, hiding her things and laughing. She expressed a sensitivity to the spirit world and said, "I am now accustomed to such things, it has become routine."[92]

Hearing those stories reminded Gabriela, Mirabel's teenage daughter, of the tale of a soldier that no one could kill in Cajibío. In exchange for his immortality, he was said to have sold his soul to the devil. This story appears to be an adaptation of the vision *El Ayudado* or *El Ayudao* (the Assisted One): "He is a mysterious character who seems to have a pact with the devil to come out of fights undefeated. He does not get hit by a bullet, nor a machete, and he disappears from key places, as if by magic, before the astonished gaze of those present. It is said that he becomes invisible when he wants, reduces his body size when he wants to and can disappear through the smallest crack in a door or a room."[93]

In his description of the animism of "old African cognitive worlds," Mbembé comments, "Human beings were never satisfied with simply being human beings. . . . One was always transacting with some other force or some other entity just as one was always trying to capture some of the power invested in those entities."[94] Following that logic, El Ayudado "prolongs the spirituality of shamanism"[95] in a manner that also prolongs his own life.

Although Gabriela did not go into detail about the exploits of this vision, this tale bears some resemblance to devil pacts elsewhere in Colombia and Latin America.[96] Another possible interpretation is that the armed groups vying for control of the countryside (i.e., the Colombian military, the FARC, or a paramilitary group) are diabolic. The soldier makes a living through violence, and nothing good will ever come of his line of work. Furthermore, these devil pacts only reap

short-lived profits for the person willing to sell their soul: "El Ayudado, according to the experts, can obtain or possess whatever they want, as long as they sell their soul to the devil. The money they get, for example, they double, triple or quadruple as many times as they want, under the condition that they have to spend it the same day or if not they are turned to stone or dry leaves and the devil rips out their souls with a trident."[97]

Gabriela said nothing about this supernatural figure financially profiting from the devil pact, but it is worth noting this detail because these armed groups profit from controlling access to natural resources.

I interviewed a few other people who mentioned El Ayudado over the years, and I also met someone who escaped a violent death more than once. It was 2019 and I was vacationing on the coast of the Chocó, the largest department of the Pacific region, which lies north of where I conducted my fieldwork. I searched the internet for different activities to do there and came across a turtle conservation farm with my grandmother's name. My grandmother had passed away a few years before, and all my life I had never known of another person with her name. It seemed like a sign that I should go to this place. I met the owner's son, Danilo, in the nearby town and reluctantly got on the back of his motorcycle for the journey down the beach to the farm. About thirty seconds into the trip, he made a right turn and we both fell off the motorcycle. The front tire jammed and would not rotate anymore. Dismayed, Danilo got on the phone and called a friend, "Hey, can you take a client to the farm? This fat gringo who weighs like 240 pounds made us crash the bike."[98] I was amused that he thought that I weighed that much and thankful that we were not hurt. His friend arrived shortly and took us all on another bigger motorcycle. I eventually got to learn about their efforts to conserve sea turtles by collecting the eggs from the beach, incubating them, and then releasing them into the sea. Danilo had lined the fence surrounding the farm with rubber sandals (almost all Crocs) that had washed ashore. He wore a mismatched pair himself as part of his efforts to repurpose the huge amounts of plastic garbage on the beach. I asked him where it came from, and he said that the trash mostly fell off shipping boats leaving the port of Buenaventura. I did not get back on a motorcycle to return from the farm, because it was high tide and there was too much driftwood on the beach for a motorcycle to make it through. Danilo and I walked back to the town with the midday sun beating on us for the next forty-five minutes. I told him about my research in Colombia, and he began to tell me stories about his life.

Danilo was an ex-soldier and ex-police officer who, by his account, had escaped death on multiple occasions. He mentioned seeing visions such as *El Riviel* (a malicious spirit that attacks fishermen and travelers lost in the wilderness), but those stories paled in comparison to other events in his life. I had interviewed both Colombian police officers and soldiers during different phases of my research, but I had never spoken with an Afro-Colombian police officer or soldier. Many people

I interviewed from comunidades negras did not trust the police nor the military, so I was very curious about how Danilo ended up on that career path.

He told me that he joined the military because service is mandatory for males in Colombia, with exceptions for those fortunate enough. Danilo was trained in counterintelligence tactics and was part of an operation to collect information about how the FARC extorted money from civilians they stopped on buses. He was stationed in Quibdó, the capital of the Chocó, and operated undercover (in civilian clothes). One day he was traveling on a bus that was halted by FARC soldiers on the road. A FARC soldier announced that they knew there was a military soldier on board and threatened to start killing passengers unless that person turned themself in. Everyone got off the bus and lined up. It just so happened that there was another soldier on board who decided to run once they got outside of the bus. He was immediately gunned down. Danilo thought he had evaded danger until a female FARC soldier noticed him and suspected he had "the look of Colombian military."[99] He was tied, blindfolded, and transported to a remote location. Danilo was under the supervision of this female FARC soldier, who gave him a limited timeline to confess what he knew before she would execute him. When she was not paying attention, he managed to escape and jumped into a nearby river. Danilo said he let the current of the river carry him for several hours before he went ashore.

He eventually completed his duty with the military and became a police officer stationed in Buenaventura. Danilo and his partner were part of a covert operation in Buenaventura that involved the collection of very confidential data on drug trafficking. He made it a point to state that he reported to only one superior officer who knew the objective of their operation. They were scheduled to meet with this officer at Danilo's residence, which he noted was unusual, very early one morning. He went outside right before the meeting was to take place, and a grenade exploded in his residence. His partner was killed in the explosion. Danilo showed me a scar from where shrapnel from the explosion penetrated his own body. Convinced that the police were complicit in the destruction of evidence, the murder of his partner, and the attempt on his life, he quit the force. It was surreal to find out that the person I had just seen gently handling baby turtles had narrowly escaped becoming a ghost himself.

MEMORYSCAPES OF THE ECOGENOETHNOCIDAL MATRIX

The recounting of supernatural visions is an oral tradition that is fundamental to how beings connect to each other, to the world(s) they inhabit, and to the world(s) they seek to create. As Franz Fanon reflects in *The Wretched of the Earth:*

> The atmosphere of myth and magic frightens me and so takes on an undoubted reality. By terrifying me, it integrates me in the traditions and the history of my district or of my tribe, and at the same time it reassures me, it gives me a status, as it were an identification paper. In underdeveloped countries the occult sphere is a sphere

> belonging to the community which is entirely under magical jurisdiction. By entangling myself in this inextricable network where actions are repeated with crystalline inevitability, I find the everlasting world which belongs to me, and the perenniality which is thereby affirmed of the world belonging to us.[100]

This chapter has transitioned from conceptualizing the oral tradition of visions as a form of local biopolitics to theorizing visions and ghosts as inscriptions of the necropolitics of Latin American land conflicts. It is important to remember that the stories told in this chapter were specifically selected to elucidate those arguments. The beauty of the oral traditions approximated in writing in this book is that they are by no means static. If you were to ask about some of these visions in the Pacific region of Colombia, elsewhere in Colombia, or elsewhere in Latin America, there is a good probability that specific details would vary or that you might hear about some of the hundreds of other visions not discussed in *Visions of Global Environmental Justice*. The adaptability of this oral tradition is testament to the fact that the culture of the Pacific lowlands itself is, as Colombian ethnohistorian Motta González describes, "a communion, between the real and the spiritual, between the practical and the fantastic, between thought and spoken word, between the sacred and the profane; in sum, it is a living culture with a sense of identity that is manifested orally."[101]

While many of the visions or elements of the visions discussed in the chapter can be traced to Indigenous or European visions, comunidades negras explicitly draw from their African heritage to articulate ancestry, settlement in the Americas, resistance to slavery, and the importance of defending *el territorio* (the territory of comunidades negras)[102] against modern forms of anti-Black terror. *El Proceso de Comunidades Negras* (the Process of Black Communities, also known as the PCN) is an organization that has been fundamental to the establishment of comunidades negras and the affirmation of those ancestral ties. It promotes those connections through the following: using the iconography of Africa (see figure 6) as a demonstration of solidarity between various comunidades negras; organizing the different branches of the PCN through regional *palenques* (maroon societies);[103] conceptualizing palenques as the first truly democratic societies of the Americas because they not only escaped and resisted slavery but also allowed the free expression of African culture;[104] and discursively connecting the violence of slavery to the current destruction, dispossession, and displacement of comunidades negras by the market-driven demands of state development.[105]

It is important to note that the genocidal violence of the transatlantic slave trade impacted not only human bodies but also how Africans related to supernatural spirits. Rosalind Shaw, anthropologist and author of *Memories of the Slave Trade*, describes how this shift in perception transpired in Sierra Leone. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a relatively peaceful time period, "ubiquitous neighborly spirits" were a presence in everyday village life. Over the next few centuries, as the slave trade commenced and villages were being raided for captives to be sold



FIGURE 6. Banner inside the office of the Process of Black Communities (photo: Author).

as enslaved people, the same spirits that used to live alongside villagers were banished to the bush. They became rogue spirits that had ceased to be benefactors and had transformed into assailants. Shaw writes, "In their metamorphosis and their exclusion as external beings, they integrate the violence of the Atlantic and legitimate trades into place and space, turning the landscape into a memoryscape."[106]

The violence of overlapping land conflicts (e.g., between guerillas and the military, between guerillas and paramilitaries, between criminal organizations and the police) is now part of the Colombian memoryscape in ways that transcend language. The "evil of the past" is not just the stories of people being threatened, kidnapped, tortured, murdered, and massacred; it is the spatial inscription of fear in the places where these incidents took place. Angélica did not hear about many visions growing up in Puerto Tejada, Cauca, but reasoned that she witnessed many visions in Sidón, Nariño, because it was part of a coca-producing region with a violent past. Miguel heard the voices and screams of soldiers, policemen, and civilians right outside of his tent in southern Bolívar but did not see anyone when he stepped outside. Once he learned that his work had brought him to camp at the site of numerous murders, he knew to avoid that place in the future. His cousin Mirabel interpreted the shadows she saw and the chills that she felt in her home in Cajibío, Cauca, as her murdered friend visiting her. She literally asked

her friend what he wanted so that he would leave her alone. For Danilo, the ex-soldier and ex-police officer from the Chocó, his memoryscape of violence includes the site where he was taken prisoner by the FARC and the apartment where his police partner died in an explosion. The fact that he is now teaching turtle conservation to overweight tourists like me instead of working as a soldier or police officer (i.e., the careers he trained for) suggests that he still fears the necropower of armed groups in Colombia, including the police itself.

"The evil of the past" is also by no means limited to the experiences of people who have been threatened, kidnapped, tortured, murdered, and massacred. This violence transcends the boundaries between human beings and their environs. For this reason, Afro-Colombian anthropologist Santiago Arboleda Quiñonez invented the term *ecogenoethnocide* to better describe the implications of this violence and the implications of not viewing this violence holistically:

> Considered as a whole, internal displacement, refuge, selective assassinations, massacres with their spectacle of cruelty, poisoning of rivers, lagoons contaminated by mercury from gold mining, and destruction of food sources and sociocultural fabric together constitute an ecogenoethnocidal matrix, with its respective social practices and comprehensive effects of death and elimination. But they have been carried out and have been presented as if they were isolated strategies and actions, veiling the complementarity of these fronts of expulsion and cultural destruction, which reduce the "others" to the formulas of the capitalist market, to folkloric specters.[107]

In the first place, Arboleda Quiñonez emphasizes that the violence suffered by comunidades negras is inseparable from the environmental damages caused by the exploitation of their territories. Second, and very important for environmental justice studies scholars, *to think of* or *attempt to address* these issues as if they were unrelated is irresponsible. These problems are inextricable from one another, but government agencies, social scientists, nongovernmental organizations, and human rights lawyers are conditioned to view these problems and work toward resolving these problems as if they were unrelated. Arboleda Quiñonez argues that this framing is especially problematic because it is transpiring in the context of the "post-civil conflict" of the 2016 negotiated peace settlement between the Colombian government and the FARC. He contends that the reconstruction of the collective memory of the Colombian conflict is subject to "a single canon of neocolonial truth imposed from the whitewashed elites."[108] To situate these problems within the ecogenoethnocidal matrix is to prevent the invisibilization of the traumas endured by Afro-descendants during the civil conflict *and* to call attention to the need for reparations for slavery *as well as* the need to decolonize Colombian history.[109] To proceed as many of these well-intentioned actors have been doing, in his opinion, is to maintain the status quo of following state-centric models of development that conceptualize comunidades negras as ghosts of a traditional past.

This argument has some parallels in what David Pellow argues for in *What Is Critical Environmental Justice?*—that we cannot view the police brutality that the Black Lives Matter movement has addressed as something separate from the contamination of Black communities. Both issues stem from the fact that Black people have largely been expendable since the foundation of the United States. Pellow rejects this expendability as the product of white supremacy and explains that this mentality is counterproductive: "The destruction of people of color is as illogical and self-defeating as a vision of an economy and a nation state premised on the destruction of ecosystems. In a sense, this observation reflects a reality of social systems as ecosystems, and vice versa: that everything in the universe is hitched to everything else, so that what affects one member or element affects all of them."[110]

A critical approach to environmental justice considers the extent to which environmental racism is an extension of violence against communities of color, especially Black populations, versus an unrelated environmental issue to be solved by environmental scientists, lawyers, and government officials.[111] It also considers the extent to which violence impacts all members of socio-ecological communities, conceptualized at different scales. Environmental justice studies has theorized environmental racism in a variety of forms such as historical segregation,[112] toxic labor conditions,[113] environmental privilege,[114] inadequate disaster preparedness,[115] and wastelanding.[116] Critical environmental justice studies should also take into account how state-sanctioned violence, narcopolitics, and modern-day war machines constitute transnational forms of environmental racism that devastate entire socio-ecological communities.

The next chapter focuses on how people displaced from the countryside, especially Afro-descendants, adjust to the violence and environmental racism of a major "necropolitan" center, the city of Cali.

2

Devils, Witches, and Narco-Monsters

What does the title of this chapter have to do with environmental justice? "Devils," "witches," and "monsters" are generally regarded as entities of supernatural origins and/or entities that have acquired supernatural powers. Their presence and capabilities incite fear among the masses, which is why the stories of many visions are interpreted as metaphors for different kinds of people that have been othered. This chapter deconstructs accounts of these visions within the historical context of Colombia's third-largest metropolis, Cali. It draws from hundreds of years of stories about devils, witches, and monsters to highlight how the continual displacement of rural peoples, particularly Afro-descendant and Indigenous, has factored into the racial geography of this metropolis. In doing so, this chapter continues an argument from chapter 1, which is that the silent violence of environmental racism is inextricable from the overt violence related to struggles for the control of Colombian territory (i.e., the armed conflict and illicit activities such as drug trafficking). This chapter also presents this history as a means of relating Cali's settler colonial history to an entirely different form of environmental racism, which is the myth of overpopulation.

For most of its nearly 500-year history, Santiago de Cali, situated between the Pacific Ocean and the Andes mountain range in the Cauca Valley in southwestern Colombia, has been an isolated colonial settlement. Sebastián de Belalcázar, a Spaniard who accompanied Columbus on his third trip to the Americas, is credited with founding the city on July 25, 1536. The first part of the city's name honors the Apostle Santiago, patron saint of Galicia, Spain, traditionally celebrated on July 25. The origins of "Cali," the frequently used abbreviation of the city's name, are uncertain but often attributed to several Indigenous dialects.[1]

The forgotten origins of "Cali" reflect the settler colonialism[2] of the city's founding, which entailed both the physical erasure and the cultural and historical erasure

of pre-Columbian Indigenous groups such as the Chibcha-speaking peoples.[3] Colombian anthropologist Rodríguez Cuenca explains, "Upon their entrance in the 16th century to the Cauca River Valley, the Spanish hosts in their quest to appropriate the native gold left the land devastated, the houses and crops destroyed, heads, hands and noses cut off . . . with dogs fed on Indigenous bodies, in the greatest ethnocide of its time."[4] The complete name "Santiago de Cali" therefore represents the historical consciousness of a population assured of its Spanish heritage but violently detached from its Indigenous roots.[5]

It is a city with many nicknames, including *la sucursal del cielo* (the branch of heaven), a term that originated in the 1984 song "Cali Pachanguero," which translates to "The Partying City of Cali."[6] Penned as an anthem for one of the city's annual celebrations (La Feria de Cali), the song proclaims, "Barranquilla port of gold, Paris the city of light, New York capital of the world and from heaven, Cali its branch. . . . Everything else is just hills."[7] To put this homage in perspective, it is just one of at least 500 songs paying tribute to one of the most festive cities in all of the Americas.[8] It is worth noting that the vast majority of these are salsa songs, as Cali prides itself on being the salsa dance capital of the world. It is also worth noting that this particular tune is from Cali's most famed salsa group, Grupo Niche, which was originally comprised of Afro-descendant musicians from the Pacific coast.[9]

Jairo Varela, legendary composer and cofounder of the band, chose the name Grupo Niche to assert Black pride in an anti-Black nation.[10] Ethnomusicologist Waxer notes that the term *niche* signifies "someone of African descent, but among Afro-Colombians [is] also used to mean 'brother' or 'pal.'"[11] As reported in the *Miami New Times*, Varela later spent three years in prison on drug charges that he believed to be racially motivated: "At the time of his arrest in 1995, the musician owned a modeling agency, a two-million-dollar discotheque in Cali, and a $250,000, 48-track, state-of-the-art recording console. He also invested generously in the campaigns of aspiring Afro-Colombian politicians, a move Varela thinks did not go unnoticed by the nation's power elite. He is convinced that his wealth and influence got him into trouble with the law in a country he believes is not ready to accept a successful black man."[12]

Despite this incident, Varela maintained his iconic status as local legend, international musical star, and champion of Black culture until his passing in 2012.[13] His legacy is representative of the Afro-descendant experience in Cali and the greater Americas, celebrated as part of the cultural identity of a place but not fully accepted in that place.[14]

This process of exclusion began with the transatlantic slave trade but continues in the present. Colombia's principal port in the colonial era—Cartagena de Indias, situated on the Atlantic coast—received 1,800 African enslaved people per year between the years 1560 and 1650.[15] By the beginning of the nineteenth century roughly 3,000 enslaved people had been brought to the Cauca Valley, primarily to work in haciendas, ranches, and mines.[16] Slavery was abolished in 1852, and some Afro-descendants occupied lands at the margins of the haciendas

in exchange for tribute to hacienda owners. Others sought out *tierras baldías* (unoccupied lands) along the Cauca River or in the mountainous areas of its valley.[17] In the early twentieth century many of those Afro-descendants without land eventually found employment harvesting sugarcane and settled in unoccupied lands in Cali.[18]

As in many major Latin American cities, Cali's population exploded during its industrialization in the second half of the twentieth century. Though it was founded in 1536, by 1910 the population was still just 26,358 inhabitants.[19] Roughly a hundred years later its population is nearly a hundred times larger, and it is the city with the third-largest population in Colombia, currently estimated at 2.25 million inhabitants.[20] For most of this history, the primary economic activities were plantation agriculture (tobacco and sugar) and ranching. Cali historian Édgar Vásquez Benítez credits its exponential population growth in the latter half of the twentieth century to the following reasons: increased connectivity to the region's transportation networks (railroads and highways), an influx of foreign capital (an opportunity for regional industrialization during World War II), and a steady stream of migrants seeking employment (often fleeing conflicts in rural Colombia).[21] These transformations connected Cali to the most important port city on the Pacific coast, Buenaventura, and facilitated its rise as the economic, political, and cultural center of the region.[22]

Vásquez Benítez also notes that, during this population boom, Cali became two different cities. The first city or "the included," comprised of migrants who arrived before or in the early phases of the population boom, occupies the geographic core of the city and has consolidated access to important public services and utilities. The second city or "the excluded," comprised of more recently arrived migrants, exists at the margins of the city and is more reliant on informal economic activity for survival. This tension between the included and excluded plays a large part in determining what aspects of the city's expansion are deemed "legal" or "illegal."[23]

This tension between the included and excluded also outlines the racial geography of a city that both celebrates and rejects its own Blackness. The 2005 census ranked Cali as the city with the most Afro-descendants in Colombia at twenty-six percent of the total population. However, it is currently estimated that at least half of the city's population is Afro-descendant, in large part because half of all migrants displaced to the city in recent years have been Afro-descendant.[24]

THE GEOGRAPHY OF A NECROPOLIS

The rest of this chapter analyzes how different phases of this displacement, and Cali's settlement in general, are reflected in the supernatural visions of the city (depicted in figure 7). Each vision frames a discussion about societal issues related to the changing demographics of the city. The chapter ultimately argues that the persistence of discrimination—in the forms of anti-Blackness, anti-immigrant

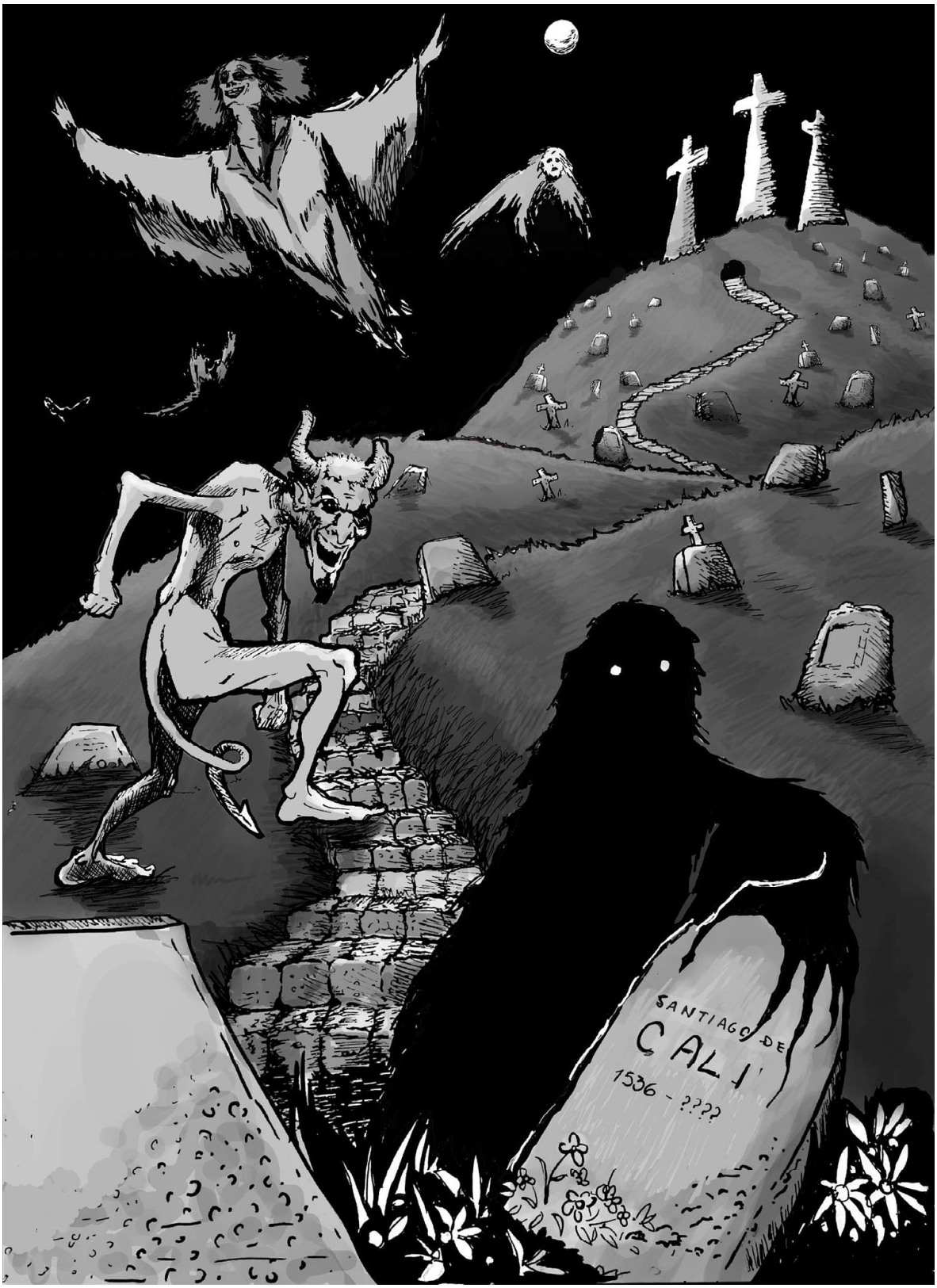


FIGURE 7. Visions of the necropolis (illustrated by Jose E. Arboleda).

sentiment, environmental racism, and misogyny—has transformed the domain of the excluded into a "necropolis."

The Greek word *necropolis* literally translates to "city of the dead," though its conventional definition is "a large elaborate cemetery of an ancient city."[25] *Necropolis* in the context of this chapter refers to the geographic imagination of what Mbembé calls a "death-world." Mbembé's original definition of *death-worlds* describes war-torn spaces where the death and destruction caused by modern weapons have been normalized, giving rise to "new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*."[26]

Applied to the context of Cali, Colombia, *necropolis* or urban *death-world* refers to the violent conditions conferred upon those existing at the margins of the urban metropolis. The displaced are the living dead in this scenario, so many of whom have been displaced from one death-world (the violence of the civil conflicts in the countryside), only to find themselves in another (the urban death-world). However, this second death-world, the necropolis, is much less associated with these conflicts because the violence is concentrated in the poorest sections of the "second city." As Cali historian Diana Vinasco-Martínez notes, "Likewise, these spaces end up representing a utility, since the urban problems of the city are attributed to them, freeing the State from its role as a reproductive agent of socio-spatial violence."[27]

Therefore, the necropolis also refers to "the uncanny capacity of the state to draw racial lines and inscribe domination over bodies and geographies through and in death while at the same time celebrating racial difference" or what anthropologist Jaime Alves terms "macabre spatialities."[28] While Alves's original theorization of these spatialities applied to São Paolo, Brazil, the quote is remarkably appropriate for Cali, Colombia, a city violently delineated by racial difference that at the same time professes a great deal of pride in its connection to Afro-descendant culture.[29] Alves notes that in both cases, "these necropolitical practices not only produce the very topographies of violence the state aims to control, but they also illustrate the limits of the rule of Law in dealing with certain zones and bodies seen inherently as outlawed."[30]

THREE CROSSES TO EXORCISE THE DEVIL

Whether considered real or merely hoaxes, a number of visions are foundational to the history of Cali. This passage from a book on Cali's history comments on the presence of the supernatural in the early days of the city's settlement: "On dark nights and because of a lack of streetlights, nerves or fear made it so that the few people walking the streets at night saw and felt witches and ghosts."[31]

One of the most popular of these visions is related to the three large wooden crosses that overlook the city from a hilltop (see figure 7). Nowadays hiking to the top of this hill is a popular activity on weekend mornings when the sun is less intense for *caleños* (residents of Cali) and tourists seeking exercise as well as

a spectacular view of the city. However, throughout much of Cali's history, it has been an ominous site associated with unusual sights, sounds, and smells. One version of the vision is that the devil himself, dressed as an elegant horseman, frequented the spot and that the crosses were erected to scare him off and invoke the protection of god.[32]

However, another version of this story portrays the devil as *Buziraco*, a demon creature with the torso of a man, the wings of a bat, the tail of a reptile, and the horns of a goat (depicted in the center of figure 7). The origins of this figure are contested in oral histories, as some believe Buziraco was a demon displaced from Spain during the conquest of the Americas, while others believe Buziraco arrived in the Americas on a slave ship from Africa.[33] In both accounts Buziraco was worshipped by Indigenous and maroon Afro-descendants in Cartagena during the 1500s.[34]

Cartagena, apart from being a key port city in the transatlantic slave trade, was also one of multiple sites of the Spanish Inquisition in the Americas. It is therefore not surprising that this story originates in one of the main battlegrounds for stamping out non-Christian beliefs during colonization. It is also not surprising that the devil's expulsion from Cartagena bears much resemblance to what later happened in Cali; a cross and a church were constructed to exorcise Buziraco from a hill overlooking the city where Indigenous and Afro-descendants supposedly conducted blood rituals, orgies, and dances in its honor.[35]

According to Colombian writer/historian Silva Holguín, once Buziraco was driven out of Cartagena, it made its way to Cali accompanied by a group of Afro-descendant cumbia dancers, witches, and heretics. These were individuals not successfully baptized by the (now) patron saint of enslaved people, Father Pedro Claver, during Cartagena's Inquisition. Just as Buziraco wrecked havoc on Cartagena, it is said to have subjected Cali to droughts, famines, pests, and smallpox. On dark nights without moonlight, one could reportedly see the silhouette of Buziraco hovering over the hilltop, smell the sulfur, and hear the indecipherable chants of Afro-descendants accompanied by drums.[36]

Cali's exorcism of Buziraco occurred in phases that spanned a hundred years. Father Alfonso Hurtado Galvis, who was present on the day this exorcism was completed, recounts this history in a video interview with *El País*, a Colombian news outlet. In 1837 three crosses made of *guadua*, a local thorny variety of bamboo, were carried to the hilltop by friars from the municipality of Popayán. The crosses commemorate the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (the taller middle cross) as well as the two thieves that were crucified on either side of him (both slightly shorter crosses) (see figure 7). According to legend, the original crosses were destroyed and replaced on multiple occasions, eventually culminating in the tradition of replacement every three years on May 3, also known as the Day of the Cross throughout Latin America. Begun in 1937 and completed in 1938, the permanent concrete crosses one sees today were constructed of materials imported from Europe and blessed by a Colombian priest trained in France.[37]

The subject of oral histories, novels, and nowadays even video games, this legend has been interpreted as a struggle for dominance of the city: the triumph of Christian over pagan (i.e., non-Christian) beliefs; the triumph of European over Indigenous and Afro-descendant cultures;[38] and/or the triumph of modern industrialization (i.e., crosses forged in European concrete and iron) over agricultural economies (i.e., bamboo crosses subject to destruction and replacement).

However, most caleños have never heard of Buziraco and only know that the three crosses were erected to chase the devil away. In recent history, another devil legend has garnered more attention.

THE DEVIL OF JUANCHITO

Curious about how violent displacement from the countryside impacted rural migrants who relocated to Cali, I conducted my initial fieldwork in Colombia in 2009. It was an ideal location because I had read a lot about the history and lore of the Colombian Pacific, and I knew that many migrants from the region had relocated to Cali. I was also interested in finding out whether forcible migration and new forms of violence experienced in a major city affected people's beliefs in supernatural visions.

While I conducted research on the visions of Cali, it was common for people to recite stories that they had come across in television news, radio programs, and tabloid newspapers. For those who had witnessed visions as children or otherwise professed a strong belief in the supernatural, media coverage of visions served as legitimate proof that these entities were indeed real. One such vision that has made its way into the popular imagination of Cali is *El Diablo de Juanchito* (the Devil of Juanchito).

In the 1990s, it is said, the devil appeared at the salsa club Agapito in Juanchito, an area of nightclubs just outside the eastern city limits, on Holy Thursday of *semana santa* (Holy Week). Cali prides itself on being the world's capital of salsa and the home of the most beautiful women in Colombia. Legend has it that a tall, handsome, well-dressed man appeared at the popular nightclub and wowed the crowd with his flashy dance moves. In one version of the story, a woman dancing with him was in awe of this handsome man and his incredibly fast moves. She looked at his feet and screamed when she saw that the lower half of his body was invisible. The devil left in a cloud of sulfur, and everyone evacuated the club. The woman had to be hospitalized for three days because of the shock of the incident.[39] In the extended version of this story, the club goers ran outside and got into their cars to drive away, except none of their cars would start.[40]

In a slightly different version of this story, recounted by people I interviewed, the devil danced with a beautiful *caleña* (woman from Cali) who matched his dazzling ability step for step. The devil eventually faltered on a dance move toward the end of the night, and the woman noticed he had hooves for feet. He subsequently

turned into a beast and roared with laughter, disappearing in a cloud of sulfur. The caleña, enamored of the devil, followed him out of the club.

The common features in multiple versions of the tale are the devil's good looks, charm, and ability to dance. The description of the devil as a highly skilled and dashing performer is reminiscent of the devil documented by French anthropologist Michel Agier in a Colombian port city near the border with Ecuador. Agier explains how the devil may take many forms but several legends from Tumaco, Nariño, portray the devil as a supremely talented *marimbero* (marimba player) or the best dancer. When someone plays the marimba or dances exceptionally well, locals comment that that person must be the devil.[41] Just across the border in Esmeraldas, Ecuador, there exists a similar legend of the devil as an ordinary man who had seduced many of the women at a party with his dancing. At midnight, a young boy noticed that the man—who was dancing with the boy's mother—had the crest of a rooster and the hooves of a goat. The devil eventually transformed into a tiger and ran off after being confronted by a wise old man.[42]

Roughly thirty years later, these stories continue to circulate and the Devil of Juanchito has become part of the iconography of the city of Cali (see figure 8). While a good number of caleños find the story utterly ridiculous, there are those who believe that the devil did appear in Juanchito. For instance, José—who claims he saw the devil as a child near Buenaventura (the Pacific port closest to Cali)—recalls that a child lifted the devil's shirt and saw his tail.[43] The devil ran off with a woman, whom he later killed, and he remains on the loose in Cali. For José, the fact that the Devil of Juanchito was finely dressed and stepped out of a luxurious car suggests that he is a *narcotraficante* (a drug dealer, member of a cartel).

That affiliation makes sense based on the time and setting of the devil's appearance. During the 1990s the drug cartels of Cali were in full force and the *salsatecas* (nightclubs that exclusively play salsa) of Juanchito were popular hangouts.[44] Narcotraficantes have a reputation for attracting the most beautiful caleñas (or simply taking them from their significant others) and taking care of their every need.[45]

In his 1994 book *Dancing with the Devil*, José Limón documents the story of a devil that bears an uncanny resemblance to the Devil of Juanchito. Although the setting is quite different (Limón's fieldwork was completed in South Texas in the 1970s), the devil of this dance hall was handsome, well dressed, a good dancer, with goat hooves for feet, and also disappeared in a cloud of smoke. The elderly generation perceived the presence of the devil as an indication of the changing nature of the dance hall and the erosion of morality. Men, particularly married men, viewed the appearance of the devil as testimony to the fact that women always want more. This devil of South Texas was white and affluent, providing material wealth in an area dominated by Mexican American men of more modest means. As for the young women, who were most often the ones to tell stories about encounters with the devil, Limón observes that they described the devil as "a sexually charged site of admiration, delight, and playfulness."[46]



FIGURE 8. The Devil of Juanchito at a salsa theater production in Cali (photo: Author).

One potential interpretation of this vision is that it represents Cali in the 1990s—salsa, beautiful women, and cartels—understood through the lens of an Afro-descendant migrant from the Pacific. As in Limón's observations in Texas, the narcotraficante devil in Cali represents a figure that is both morally disreputable and desirable. The narcotraficante has the power and disposable income to attract attention, yet the stigma of his profession would make him the subject of moral opposition. As in any story repeatedly told, the details have been exaggerated with time. And for some believers, such as José, the story continues because he believes the devil remains on the loose in Cali.[47]

Ultimately, these accounts of different devils of Santiago de Cali are reflective of its history, particularly the necropolitical strains of environmental racism fundamental to its establishment. The first strain, and undoubtedly the most devastating, is settler colonialism. As in virtually every other city throughout the Americas, the savage erasure of Indigenous peoples was fundamental to the founding of

Santiago de Cali. This erasure was so profound that historians can only speculate about the meaning of the second part of the city's name. The Spanish imported enslaved peoples from Africa to Colombia to replace the free labor they had lost in the process. The survivors of both genocides, the Indigenous and the transatlantic slave trade, have been demonized ever since. The visions recounted by their descendants reflect the different forms of physical and ecological violence inherent to Cali's "second city," the necropolis.

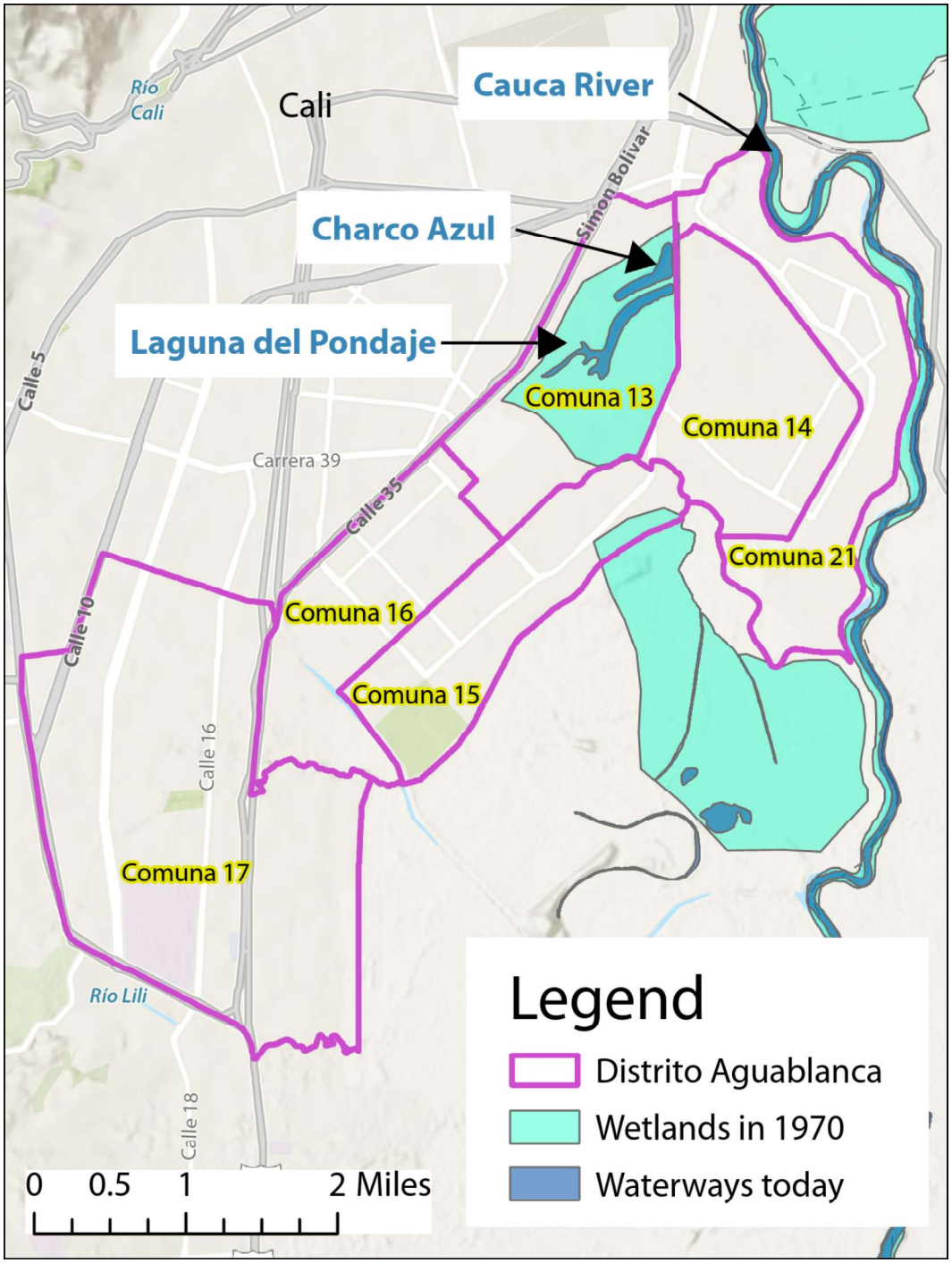
THE MONSTER OF THE BLUE LAGOON

Apart from the Devil of Juanchito, most people I interviewed had not heard of any new visions specific to the city. And because everyone I spoke to had migrated to Cali recently, or at least in the last few decades, no one mentioned *El Monstruo de los Mangones* (the Monster of Vacant Lots). In 1963 and 1964, the corpses of at least fourteen boys were found throughout the city in vacant lots and alleyways. Many of the bodies were drained of blood, and some were found nude, fueling a rumor that the monster was a kind of sadistic vampire. Though some suspects were arrested, the monster was neither seen nor captured.[48] Caleño cultural scholar Ponce de León-Calero describes the popular imagination of the monster as a response to the city's rapid economic growth, changing morals, and geographic expansion (i.e., the once-respected traditional elite became perceived as vampires feeding off the populace).[49]

The lack of discussion of visions in the city was in stark contrast to what I found in the countryside, where every single person I spoke to (with one exception) had personally witnessed or heard stories about visions. There were mixed opinions about the reasons for the relative lack of visions in Cali and the implications for this difference. The most-cited reason for why there was less talk of visions in the city was that today's youth do not believe in such things.

The violent conflicts in the city are directly related to those in the countryside between state, guerilla, paramilitary, and drug-trafficking forces. In fact, the armed groups that have battled for control of the countryside over the last few decades have played a major role in the organization, training, and leadership of many gangs that have plagued Cali during this time.[50] This dynamic has been especially treacherous for forcibly displaced migrants who fled violence in their rural communities only to face similar concerns for their safety in their new urban setting.

The displaced population of Cali is concentrated in some of the most dangerous and marginalized neighborhoods of the city. *El Distrito Aguablanca* (the Aguablanca District), which borders Juanchito in the eastern section of the city, is one such area where many displaced migrants have resettled (outlined in pink in map 3). However, as Vinasco-Martínez explains, it is first important to point out that the name *Aguablanca District* delineates a socio-historic imagination of this part of Cali and not an actual political jurisdiction.[51] Cali is officially divided into



MAP 3. Map of Aguablanca District (created by Author).

sectors referred to as *comunas* (commons) rather than *distritos* (districts), and the Aguablanca District is comprised of six such commons (13–17 and 21). The name originally referred to the eastern part of the city that was intended for agricultural development (drawing water from the wetlands shaded in the color teal on the map) and subject to flooding by the Cauca River (labeled on the right side of the map). Despite those plans, it has largely been settled by rural immigrants unable to find affordable housing elsewhere in the city. The Aguablanca District has therefore become synonymous with high rates of poverty, crime, and Blackness, given the fact that seventy percent of people in this part of the city are Afro-descendant.[52]

In 1969, two lagoons were constructed to regulate flooding in this part of the city, *el charco azul* (the blue lagoon) and *la laguna del pondaje* (the overflow wetland). They channel water from the Cauca River and are separated from each other by a narrow strip of land (found within Comuna 13 on the map). The land surrounding this area was initially attractive to migrants relocating to the city from the countryside, providing a source of clean water to bathe and fish in. *Invasiones* (squatter homes) were constructed without the purchase of land and without regulation by city agencies,[53] eventually making this the fastest-growing part of Cali.[54]

As in the rest of Cali, sightings of visions were more common when the Aguablanca District was less populated. Visions such as La Llorona, *La Viuda* (a crying widow who often preys on drunk men), and *El Caballero sin Cabeza* (the Headless Horseman) were sometimes seen late at night by local residents.[55] For instance, Valeria—a long-time resident of the neighborhood named *Charco Azul* (Blue Lagoon)—recalled the story of *El Monstruo* (the Monster).

During the 1970s and 1980s approximately one hundred human corpses were found at the bottom of the blue lagoon. It was rumored that a woman who lived in the surrounding marsh was responsible. The Monster would wander the streets of the neighborhood at night and seduce young men. She would then drag these men into the water by their testicles and drown them. The dead men were never from the neighborhood, although they might have had friends there.[56]

Agier describes the monster as a synthesis of various visions from the rural Pacific of Colombia: La Tunda (a vision that attacks wayward travelers in virgin forests and marshes), La Viuda (the Widow, a vision known for seducing men and then killing them), and *La Madre de Agua* (the Mother of Water, a vision that drowns its victims). The one hundred men found in the lagoon were victims of the drug cartel wars. Similar to El Monstruo de los Mangones, this monster was "a defense formed in the imagination of the people confronted with these serial killings."[57] During a very violent period of Cali's history, the Monster also allowed the inhabitants of Charco Azul to disassociate themselves from the bloodshed of the drug wars by attributing the responsibility for the crimes to an external agent. *El Monstruo del Charco Azul* (the Monster of the Blue Lagoon) was the embodiment of violence being brought to the neighborhood by outsiders.[58]

But why was this monster feminized, especially in consideration of the fact that these men were killed by other men? Though he described the origins of the visions that likely inspired this monster, Agier never directly addressed this question. In linguistic terms, similar to other romance languages, Spanish is a very gendered language. The name of the monster itself, *El Monstruo*, is masculine, but many of the terms relevant to its description are feminine words in Spanish, such as *sobrenatural* (supernatural), *muerte* (death), *incertidumbre* (uncertainty), *naturaleza* (nature), and *agua* (water). Perhaps a nature-bound supernatural entity of uncertain origins that resides in water and drowns its victims to death was destined to be feminine in this patriarchal society.

The detail of the victims being pulled into the water by their testicles suggests that male bravado contributed to their demise. Perhaps this vision is emblematic of the "monstrous-feminine," which horror film scholar Creed describes as the patriarchal fear of woman as a castrated being, invoking "castration anxiety in the male spectator."[59] The "monstrousness" of this monster stems from the fact that its existence disrupted the social order, bringing death to a place that many people migrated to hoping to find peace.

In summary of this account of the Monster of the Blue Lagoon, a second strain of environmental racism contributing to the construction of Cali's necropolitan area is the facilitation of extractivist ecologies, which has resulted in Colombia becoming the country with one of the largest populations of internally displaced persons in the world. As Vanín Romero notes, "people emigrate because the paradise they lived in has collapsed and their space has been invaded."[60] These extractivist ecologies (the necropolitical ecologies to be discussed in chapter 3)—which include gold mines, palm oil plantations, oil pipelines, shrimp farms, and coca fields—are disproportionately situated within the boundaries of those rural Indigenous and Afro-descendant lands. Thus, rural Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations, whose spaces have been invaded, are disproportionately represented in the most dangerous parts of rapidly expanding cities where these migrants eventually settle. At the same time, their migration to cities such as Cali is often perceived as a socio-ecological burden, even a source of pollution.

SQUATTERS, POLLUTION, AND DEAD FISH

In 1971 Cali hosted the Pan-American games, and rowing trials were staged in the crystalline waters of the blue lagoon.[61] Nowadays the lagoon is more of a gray-green hue, thanks to runoff contamination by roadways and mounds of trash piling up along the banks. In 2000 a government agency, La Corporación Autónoma Regional del Valle del Cauca, commissioned the restoration of the lagoon and wetland.[62] They were failing to serve their original purpose and had begun overflowing during heavy rains, flooding major streets and homes in the surrounding neighborhoods.[63]



FIGURE 9. Inside of a home near the lagoon and wetland (photo: Author).



FIGURE 10. Garbage near the lagoon and wetland (photo: Author).

Projects to restore these areas have been slowed by several issues, including the continued presence of unpermitted residences along the banks of these areas (see figures 9 and 10). An engineer from Emcali—the state-owned company that provides water, telecommunications, and electricity services to the city—explained that trash illegally dumped drifts into the water and then clogs drainage pipes and prevents the lagoons from properly draining (see figure 10).[64]

One reason completion of the cleanup project has been slow is that the city has attempted to force those residents to relocate away from the banks of the lagoon and wetland.[65]

In 2013, over 300 dead fish were found floating in the blue lagoon, prompting one local news outlet to issue "an environmental alert."[66] The following year, over 400 dead fish were found floating in the reservoir lagoon, and the same news outlet declared "an environmental emergency."[67] These reports emphasized the mysterious circumstances under which the fish died (no signs of discoloration), the hardiness of these two breeds of fish (catfish and tilapia), and the fact that local residents had never seen anything like this happen before.

A YouTube video produced by a group of students at La Universidad del Valle, Cali's largest public university, provides a brief history of the lagoon and wetland and then identifies the root of the problem—those squatter settlements. Set to dramatic music ("O Fortuna" by Carl Orff), the video shows images of what these areas originally looked like before it transitions to images of dead fish, makeshift homes, and mounds of trash. Of the handful of comments posted below the video, the most "liked" states, "And the Blacks came to fuck Cali over and invade it."[68]

Once again, dead corpses—fish bodies instead of human bodies this time—had been credited to an external threat. In this case, displaced persons "invaded" the city and ruined a habitat originally engineered to prevent flooding. Similar to the portrayal of many environmental issues throughout the world, depictions of this particular news story are narrowly focused on the symptoms of the problem (i.e., human settlement and waste disposal in a rapidly growing city) rather than the histories (i.e., colonialism, genocide, slavery, civil wars, drug wars) and structural inequalities (i.e., unequal access to waste management, a lack of affordable housing, etc.) that contributed to this situation. Without this context, this news story has become another opportunity to demonize displaced persons, the vast majority of whom are dark-skinned.

The portrayal of this issue also relates to a wider discussion about whether people who migrated to a polluted place are to blame for making a bad choice or whether they are the victims of environmental racism. In describing the need for a "Critical Environmental Justice Studies," sociologist David Pellow argues that scale is undertheorized in environmental studies scholarship. There is far too much emphasis placed on the sites of contamination, which are termed "sacrifice zones" because of the specific impacts experienced in those spaces by devalued populations.[69] This emphasis is problematic because these populations are viewed as expendable, no matter where they reside: "The implication of a 'sacrifice zone' is that one could

presumably move away to safety, but the implication of expendability is that there is no escape. Critical EJ Studies makes this theme explicit by arguing that these populations are marked for erasure and early death, and that such ideological and institutional othering is linked to the more-than-human world as well."[70]

Thus, forcibly displaced Colombians are often "marked for erasure and early death" no matter their location. They are subject to the violence and environmental racism of their new environs as well as haunted by the "evil of the past."

In summary of this account of the blue lagoon, the third strain of environmental racism contributing to the creation of the necropolis is the myth of overpopulation. Malthusian concerns about finite resources and exponential population growth are relevant to many geographic scales apart from the global. Cities, states, and nation-states are geographically bounded by borders and other forms of political boundaries (e.g., city and state limits). Displaced migrants were blamed for the ruin of the lagoon and wetland in the Aguablanca District because their presence is an unwelcome reminder that Cali's population is continuing to grow. And not only is it growing, but its demographics are changing, forcing a city that benefits from the commercialization of Blackness (especially evident in the increasing commercialization of the Petronio Álvarez Festival of Afro-Pacific music) to reconcile its own anti-Blackness.[71]

Therefore, the disproportionate amount of violence, death, and suffering that happens within Cali's excluded second city, the necropolis, can be rationalized as a form of population control: *It is their fault that this city floods! Let those animals kill each other!*

SURVIVAL IN A MAJOR NECROPOLITAN AREA

I asked Alfredo, who moved to Cali in 2007, if he had heard about any other ghosts or visions in his neighborhood, and he responded that it is the living ones you need to worry about at night.[72] Human corpses continue to appear in the lagoon and wetland every so often. Why? The Aguablanca District, much like poor regions of rural Colombia, continues to be the domain of the excluded.

The collapse of the Cali drug cartel, founded in the late 1970s and dismantled by the late 1990s, did not end the drug trade, nor did it end violence in the Aguablanca District. Similarly, the demobilization of paramilitary forces from 2003 to 2006 removed some violent actors from the landscape but eventually spawned new organizations known as *bandas criminales* (criminal bands) (BACRIM).

More recently, the 2016 peace agreement may have ended the decades-long conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), but it has not improved the safety or well-being of those who were the most vulnerable prior to the agreement. If anything, the unprecedented number of activists and community leaders murdered, as well as the increasing number of forcibly displaced, suggests that peace has been accomplished in theory but not in practice.[73] Politicians and media outlets might celebrate these events as peaceful change, but the cycle of

violence eventually resumes. The persistence of violence in the aftermath of these events is a reminder that other actors, or often the same actors with new affiliations, are ready to fill in vacated ranks in these organizations when the opportunity presents itself.

These rotating actors are responsible for recruiting teenagers into gangs connected to international drug trafficking. It is said that in the 1990s gangs in the Aguablanca District operated with a code of ethics that included rules such as not attacking one's enemy from behind.[74] In recent years, drug traffickers have begun selling drugs locally, and the gangs no longer operate by the same code of ethics, resulting in more violence and greater disregard for rival gang members as well as local residents.[75] This "micro-trafficking"—characterized by fear, threats, extortions, and contract murders—has stationed dark-skinned teenage youth at the bottom of drug hierarchies with faceless bosses.[76]

In 2008 *Las Águilas Negras* (the Black Eagles), a drug-trafficking organization primarily comprised of demobilized paramilitary soldiers, began conducting *limpiezas sociales* (social cleansings) in the Aguablanca District in order to limit micro-trafficking.[77] These social cleansings are often announced beforehand, posted in public spaces in the form of pamphlets warning residents to stay off the streets at a designated time when threats to the social order (e.g., delinquents, drug users, sex workers, transgender individuals, etc.) will be removed (i.e., murdered).[78] Though advertised as the restoration of social order, these cleansings have the underlying intent to eliminate activity that might increase police presence and jeopardize the operations of the group conducting these cleansings.[79] Similar to the dynamics of contested spaces in rural Colombia, the homicide rate usually declines once one of these groups has solidified its control over a neighborhood.[80] However, that is not to suggest that those neighborhoods are safer than other parts of the city, because even in recent years when the homicide rate decreased for the entire city (2014–2017), the Aguablanca District still accounted for roughly forty-five percent of the total number of homicides in Cali.[81]

The residents of the Aguablanca District I initially spoke to in 2009 and 2010 tended to view these initial rounds of social cleansing as a needed form of social control. Ignacio, living in the neighborhood of Los Lagos, had been mugged several times, a couple of times near his own block and in broad daylight. Zarina, living in the neighborhood of Los Robles, was terrified of the drug abuse and gangs in her neighborhood. Her two daughters had already been traumatized by the threats against their lives and the murder of their grandmother in Tambo, Cauca. In addition to the violence and crime of the streets, Zarina found out that her neighbor was a *sicario* (assassin for hire) and was more afraid than ever for her family's safety. Interestingly, multiple people I interviewed recited the same prayer used to repel El Duende (discussed in chapter 1) to protect themselves from these *delincuentes* (criminals).

I made a return visit to Cali a few months after my initial fieldwork trip and was told not to call Elena, a woman with whom I had chatted before but never formally

interviewed. Her son had just been murdered. Elena had been part of a group of displaced women, and her friend Mónica was aware of threats by the Autodefensas (a paramilitary organization whose name means "self-defense") against the lives of multiple colleagues because of their visible involvement in local politics. Although very active in the movement to support displaced women, Mónica was wary of the attention it draws and attempted to keep a lower profile. She opted not to attend an event celebrating the implementation of a law in favor of displaced women.

Understandably, many other people I interviewed about their displacement were reluctant to talk about their experiences. Ana, living in Marroquín I, and Zarina commented that they had seen members of the FARC in their respective neighborhoods. Zenón, living in Villa del Lago, commented that paramilitary soldiers followed his children from their community in the countryside to Buenaventura.

Many displaced persons are caught in the conundrum of needing assistance but fearing that recognition as "forcibly displaced" in public records can compromise their personal safety. In 1997, the national government acknowledged the crisis of internal forced displacement by creating Law 387, with the subtext, "A law employing the means for the prevention of forcible displacement; the attention, protection, consolidation and socioeconomic stabilization of internally displaced persons affected by the violence in Colombia."[82] The consensus opinion of the academics, social workers, and displaced persons I interviewed at the time was that the law was merely lip service and little money had been allotted to ensure its implementation.[83]

Displaced persons are not only continually concerned by threats of violence against them, but also faced with the challenge of meeting basic requirements for food and shelter under dramatically different circumstances than in the rural context. Government assistance to the "forcibly displaced" is available in the form of a meager allowance for three months' food and rent. The waiting period for such assistance is normally six months to a year. A high incidence of fraudulent claims of displacement has necessitated a lengthy verification process for government-determined forcibly displaced status. Aside from fears that their safety will be compromised, many displaced victims never declare forcibly displaced status, out of embarrassment or a lack of sufficient paperwork to identify themselves or the loss of their property. Often, the best assistance that the displaced population can find is within the complicated web of nongovernmental organizations dedicated to the cause.[84]

Unfortunately, many displaced persons are unaware of all the options at their disposal, and there exist many individuals and organizations that prey on a population desperate for assistance. Corrupt officials, exploitative agencies, and impostors (fake officials or agencies) will sometimes charge displaced persons fraudulent fees for processing paperwork and securing services never realized. In 2008, a special research group of *Acción Social* (Social Action), a government agency founded

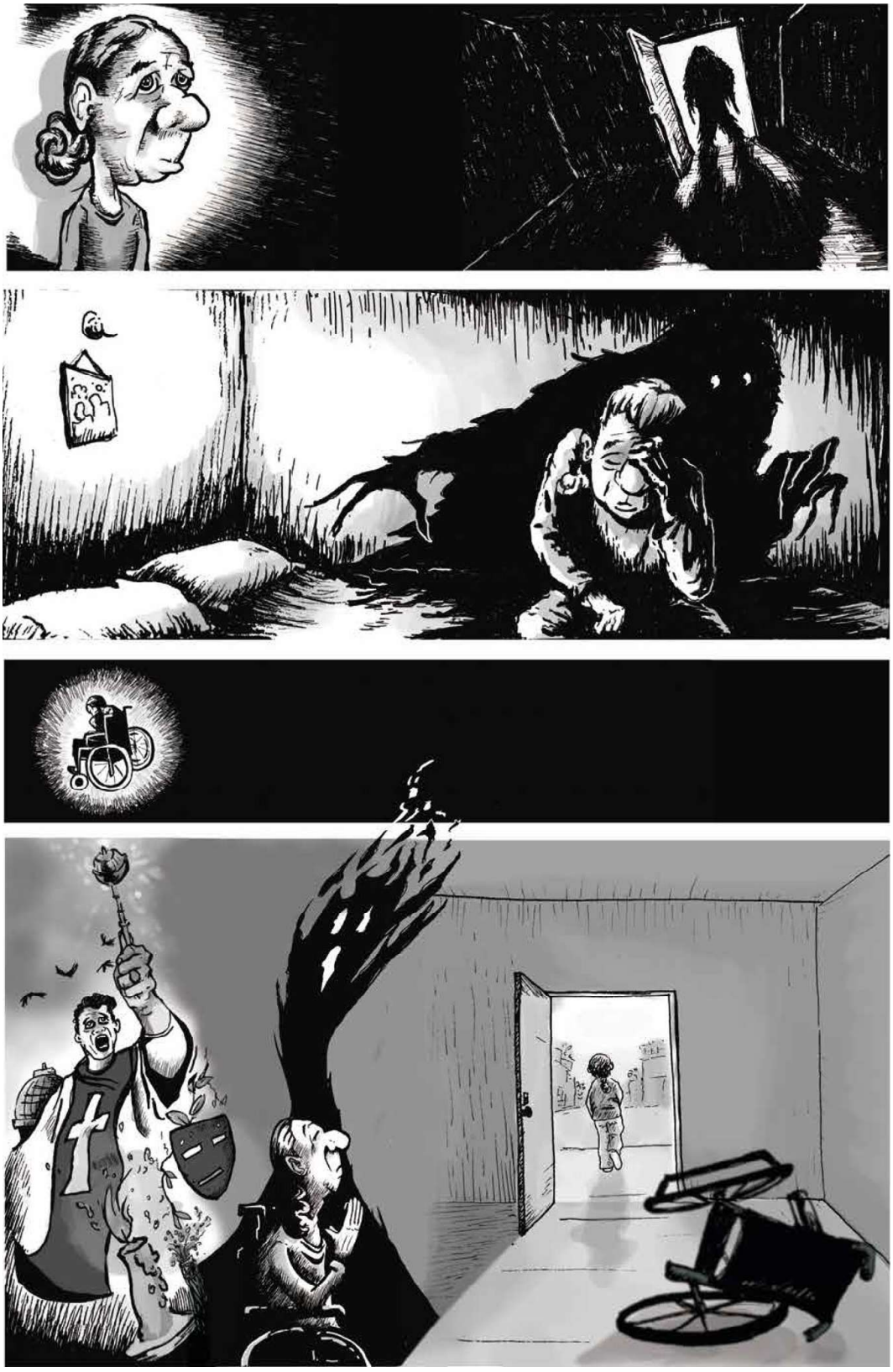


FIGURE 11. Nidia and the destructive spirit (illustrated by Jose E. Arboleda).

to work with victims of violence and poverty in Colombia, recorded 887 cases of fraudulent behavior against displaced persons.[85]

THE CUMULATIVE EFFECTS OF DISPLACEMENT

Sometimes the stress of displacement and the various challenges of the city are overwhelming, even for those who migrated to Cali many years ago. Nidia, displaced from a town in Nariño in 1979, came to Cali because three of her brothers were murdered by the FARC, and her father had been threatened as well. Her father died a poor man after abandoning his farm without compensation. Nidia relocated to Barrio Sucre in Cali and eventually bought her own house in an area known as *la Olla* (the Pot). La Olla is adjacent to downtown Cali and is another notoriously crime-plagued area in the city, with high rates of drug abuse, gang activity, and homicide. Nidia has four children and because of her bad knees spent five years unable to work, occasionally begging for help. Due to her lack of income and some bad investments, Nidia lost her home and was forced to move in with her brother.

Once Nidia had her knees repaired, she felt her luck changing for the better, but for a time she was convinced that an *espíritu arruinador* (a destructive spirit) was harming her. Nidia never saw the spirit, nor had she witnessed any other visions during her lifetime (although she had heard stories from her neighbors and grandparents). Her young daughter and her daughter's friend saw the apparition of a tall man standing in her home on several occasions. Adults who visited the house confirmed that a malevolent spirit was present. She made several attempts to remove the spirit from the house, even paying a priest, but the spirit remained (story illustrated in figure 11).

Out of that house and free of the destructive spirit, Nidia says that she no longer believes in supernatural phenomena.[86] She is content to place all of her faith in god and is confident that she will have a brighter future because of it. The destructive spirit had become a manifestation of the stress of her life. Confined to a wheelchair for five years and living in one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in Cali, she felt that there had to be an explanation for why her life continued to be difficult after she had already endured so many hardships. The destructive spirit was the embodiment of her financial woes, her physical ailments, and her inability to remove herself and her family from the violence of la Olla.

WITCHES, OUIJA BOARDS, AND SPELLS

There are mixed feelings about the implications of the relative lack of visions in Cali compared with the countryside. Some view the difference as a natural progression because not every cultural tradition can survive the passage of time and the shift to a new environment. Some feel that the contrast signifies the loss of rural community values and a breakdown of communication with the youth. Others

are simply indifferent and uninterested in any talk of the visions and the supernatural. In some cases, the indifference may be a feigned attitude. Mirabel, for instance, originally stated that she did not believe in visions. In actuality, Mirabel has seen many visions in her life, but she is hoping that not believing in visions and the supernatural will make the sightings stop. Others cited their religion or commitment to god as reasons why they do not believe in elements of the supernatural.

Although the popular sentiment is that many young people are disinterested in the stories their parents and grandparents tell, there is a recent obsession with the supernatural among Colombian youth that has caused quite a stir all over the country. Ouija boards, the famous board game that allows its participants to communicate with the dead, are in vogue and the subject of various news reports.[87] In most of these news stories, large groups of adolescents are possessed and often require hospitalization after Ouija sessions where they summoned spirits. Concerned adults call on priests, psychologists, and police to dispel the hysteria. Cristina, one year removed from secondary school, commented that her former school and others in the Aguablanca District had banned the use of Ouija boards. Students were using them to communicate with their dead peers, especially dead sicarios. She also mentioned that problems arise because these young people do not know how to properly end the Ouija session and close the portal between the living and the dead.

Juan, Cristina's father, eventually connected the conversation to *brujas* (witches), commenting that witches have the ability to separate their spirits from their bodies. Witches typically torment people through *hechicerías* (spells) and intrusion into their dreams. They can also shape-shift and take the forms of animals to disguise their identity.[88] The first day I interviewed Juan, his family had found giant black and yellow worms with unusual antenna-like protrusions inside Cristina's room. The worms appeared in the middle of a cement floor on three consecutive days, and when Juan held a candle near the worms, they exploded. Cristina was convinced that this was a spell cast by a neighbor, a witch. She believed that her neighbor was envious because Cristina was much better looking than her neighbor's daughter. Cristina also woke up on several occasions with her hair braided and with bruises from bite marks on her arms and neck—all telltale signs of *brujería* (witchcraft).[89] She acquired an amulet to protect herself from the witch, a stone that she eventually discarded because she did not have much faith in its power. Cristina also visited her church in an effort to rid herself of her problems with this witch.

Juan and his wife Nancy have lived in the neighborhood of Manuela Beltrán in the Aguablanca District since their displacement in 1988. They recently began their own foundation to assist the displaced population and were formerly the proprietors of an *arepa* (ground maize dough) stand that they operated in the front of their home. Juan and Nancy sensed that the idea of their foundation was not well received by all their neighbors, arousing feelings of *envidia* (jealousy).

They specifically mentioned Andrea, an Afro-descendant woman from the Chocó, because she verbally expressed discontent with the foundation at a neighborhood meeting. Juan and Nancy claimed that this woman, a witch, attacked their home on two separate occasions. On one occasion a large amount of salt fell into the kitchen from an opening in the roof, ruining a meal Nancy was preparing. They also believed Andrea transformed herself into a black cat, which they witnessed enter their home in the middle of the night. This cat, tracking in dirt from the cemetery, broke a pane of glass and, after being spotted by Juan, fled the house holding a large piece of broken glass in its mouth.

I was told that Andrea lives near the sports field of the local school—the same sports field where other informants (of no relation to Juan and Nancy), during a separate interview two months prior, had mentioned that a witch appears every so often. Part of the reason Nancy is convinced that Andrea is the witch responsible for the incidents, besides Andrea's local reputation for witchcraft, is that Andrea no longer greets Nancy on the street, a gesture that Nancy interprets as a sign of hostility.[90]

The attacks by witches and accusations of jealousy are reminiscent of anthropologist Peter Wade's discussion of *chocoanos* (people from the Chocó) who relocated to Medellín. Jealous community members use witchcraft to damage the business of more successful persons who are believed not to be reciprocating their fortunes properly.[91] According to Juan and Nancy, both witches have attacked their family as a result of envy. The accusations also highlight the ethnoracial tensions in the neighborhood and distrust between migrant communities of different origins. When originally discussing witches in his neighborhood, Juan mentioned that those from the Chocó and Tumaco (predominately Afro-descendant areas in the Pacific region) have a proclivity for black magic. Cristina made a similar remark about *indios* (Indigenous) from Putumayo (an area with a large Indigenous population in the Amazon basin) being heavily involved in witchcraft.

As is the case with many of the visions of Cali, accusations of witchcraft are not unique to the displaced population. Witchcraft is common among people of the same ethnic backgrounds in both rural and urban settings. The witch accounts mentioned here are examples of intrapersonal violence that exists at the community level. This type of violence is symbolic of the greater distrust that exists when elements of the urban and rural worlds collide in rapidly growing neighborhoods such as those of the Aguablanca District.

Accusations of witchcraft also call attention to the intersection of race, gender, and power in the Americas. Is it clearly not a coincidence that Afro-descendant and Indigenous women—two groups heavily marginalized within racist patriarchal Latin American societies—are consistently associated with witchcraft. This association, however, is not necessarily the problem. After all, for many practitioners being a witch is a source of pride. Witchcraft is a form of esoteric knowledge passed on from one generation to the next that may enable one to protect, heal,

or help one's community. The association with Afro-descendant and Indigenous women becomes problematic when rooted in the assumption that witchcraft is inherently malevolent.

The Netflix series *Siempre Bruja* addresses this assumption by featuring an Afro-Colombian witch protagonist, named Carmen, who is powerful but does not practice witchcraft for malicious reasons.[92] The title of the show (*Always a Witch*) refers to the fact that Carmen escaped slavery by time traveling to the present, making this identity timeless. However, *Always a Witch* can also be read as the typecasting of Afro-descendant women as witches. While the Colombian showrunners have been lauded for casting a charismatic Afro-descendant woman as the lead, they have also been criticized for only superficially attending to race and gender in a society with a long history of discriminating along those lines.[93]

WHAT DO THESE "DEVILS," "WITCHES," AND "MONSTERS" HAVE TO DO WITH ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE?

Cali is a magical place for me and not just because I have interviewed people about supernatural phenomena. It is my (humid) home away from home. It is a place that has welcomed me with open arms since the first time I visited and every time thereafter. Displaced people I have interviewed, people of the most modest means, have invited me into their homes and insisted on feeding me. On multiple occasions people I have barely just met have walked blocks with me to make sure I caught the right bus or found the way home. I've often heard that I get treated this way because I am a foreigner and not a Colombian. Perhaps it is because I am not viewed as a threat to overpopulate this branch of heaven.

The supernatural entities discussed in this chapter reflect different aspects of the environmental racism implicit to the geography of the city. As in most big cities throughout the Americas, poor Black and Brown people are concentrated in the most violent and polluted parts of Cali.

The devil visions discussed in this chapter (Buziraco, the Devil of Juanchito) are narratives about social control of those populations. Both devils, amalgamations of human and animal parts, horrify because they blur the boundaries of what is socially acceptable. Buziraco defies Christianity and racial purity, making a grand entrance into Cali accompanied by cumbia dancers and rhythms from Cartagena (cumbia is the amalgamation of European, Indigenous, and African musical traditions). The Devil of Juanchito, charming but dangerous, bewilders those beholding its spectacle. How could someone be *that* good a dancer? *They must be the devil*. How could someone leave a nightclub with *any* woman they want, even if that woman was already with someone else? *They must be in a drug cartel*. As much as these devils have horrified, they have never been fully vanquished by the settler

colonial imagination of Cali because the continual influx of rural Colombians is part and parcel of the city's history.

The Monster of the Blue Lagoon and spirit testimony (the destructive spirit) discussed in this chapter are narratives that allowed migrants to rationalize the death and suffering of their displacement to a violent city. The destructive spirit was literally debilitating, breaking down Nidia's body and compromising her ability to carry on with her life. Was she confined to her home by the spirit or by the cumulative effects of everything happening outside of her home? The Monster lured drug cartel members to their deaths at the bottom of the blue lagoon. During the initial phase of displaced migrants settling in the Aguablanca District (1970s–1990s), the bodies were those of men not from the neighborhood. This is likely because the murderers did not want to attract police presence to the places where the murders were taking place. The blue lagoon literally became a cemetery for unlucky cartel members. Both the Monster of the Blue Lagoon and the destructive spirit remind migrants that the forces competing for control of the Colombian countryside have been replicated in their new neighborhoods in Cali.

More recently (1990s–present), the Aguablanca District has transformed into a different kind of cemetery, a necropolis. The hundreds of dead fish floating in the blue lagoon were initially blamed on people from the Pacific region constructing shanty homes too close to the lagoon and contaminating it. This framing is part of a longer historical trend of blaming poor people for overpopulation and the consumption of the finite resources of finite geographic space (e.g., the neighborhood, the city, the nation, the world). This framing of the dead fish is also problematic because it obscures the reasons why so many people have been forcibly displaced to Charco Azul. And whereas the Monster of the Blue Lagoon allowed the residents of the Aguablanca District to dissociate from the death brought to their neighborhoods, *the necropolis* describes the external imagination of a violent place with violent people: *Death and destruction happens in the Aguablanca District because poor, dark-skinned people are violent*. While the bodies initially found in the lagoon were cartel victims not from the area, many of the dead bodies found nowadays are victims of neighborhood social cleansings. These deaths are rationalized as the transgression of a social order established by criminal bands, the latest iteration of a drug-trafficking organization. For those who subscribe to the myth of overpopulation, the social cleansings are thought of as a means of eliminating the least desirable members of society: *It is better to kill off some of these criminals because there are already too many people here*.

The testimonies about the witches discussed in this chapter are testament, not only to the powers attributed to supernatural forces and beings, but also to the epistemic power of categorization itself. While the few testimonies documented in this chapter interpret witchcraft as a form of interpersonal violence between neighbors, the second layer of violence is the stigmatization of Indigenous and Afro-descendant women as beings prone to shape-shift into malevolent creatures.

Testimonies about Indigenous and Afro-descendant witchcraft, therefore, express part of a historical continuity: *Those witches, heretics, and cumbia dancers that accompanied Buziraco from Cartagena to Cali still roam the city to this day!*

From a critical environmental justice perspective,[94] the "devils," "witches," and "monsters" of this chapter represent *anxieties about* as well as *the anxieties of* those rendered "expendable" by the colonial present[95] and accumulation by dispossession.[96] However, these categories also represent the potential for critical environmental justice to think, with Pellow, "beyond the category of the human to include the more-than-human world . . . as subjects of oppression and as agents of social change."[97] Thus, chapters 3–5 answer this call by conceptualizing more-than-human and other nonhuman entities, as Pellow describes, as both "subjects of oppression and agents of social change."[98]

The next chapter lays the foundation for this argument by conceptualizing the War on Drugs as a form of transnational environmental racism as well as an example of a necropolitical ecology fueling Colombia's armed conflict.

3

Killer Plants and the Two-Headed Monster

The title of this chapter refers to creatures whose origins are distinctly different from those of the supernatural visions discussed up to this point in the book. Respectively, "Killer Plants" and the "Two-Headed Monster" are creatures born of geopolitical and critical social science imaginations of the War on Drugs. The intent of this chapter is to explain the following: (a) why US imperialism in Latin America is fundamental to the genesis of these creatures, (b) how these creatures are implicated in the environmental racism of the War on Drugs, (c) how these creatures thwart the efforts of environmental justice communities resisting the War on Drugs, and (d) why these creatures are emblematic of the "necropolitical ecologies" that displace, dispossess, and erase peasant communities such as comunidades negras.

KILLER PLANTS

La mata que mata (the plant that kills) was a counternarcotics public service announcement (PSA) sponsored by the National Narcotics Board (DNE) that aired on Colombian television and radio from 2008 to 2010.[1] Narrated by a child's voice, it argued that if Colombians stopped cultivating illicit crops (marijuana, opium poppies, coca), the countryside would be cured of many problems in the following ways: "explosive landmines would disappear" (depicted by balloons emerging from the ground and a rainbow rising from the background), "blood would be removed from the rivers" (depicted by a river changing colors from red to blue), and "the lead-filled rain would end" (depicted with a family huddled together under an umbrella that they put down once bullets stop raining down on them). It then continued:

People would cry tears of happiness.
The dark nights would end.
Displaced people would return to the countryside.
People would grow healthier crops.
Coca, marijuana and opium poppies kill. Don't cultivate plants that kill.

A parallel PSA ran during the same time period (2008–2010) but was set in an urban landscape. The central character of this *La mata que mata* announcement is the very same anthropomorphized marijuana plant of the other PSA (depicted in the lower half of figure 12).[2] The video begins with the marijuana plant appearing as a burden on a man's back, one so heavy that the man is hunched over as he walks down a dark street. The man shakes off the monstrous plant while the same childlike narrator from the other PSA states:

If you stop trafficking the plant that kills, you will notice a change.
You will look different, with your forehead much higher, your hands cleaner . . . you will see straight.
[The man sheds the dark trench coat he has been wearing and appears to glow while walking into a much sunnier neighborhood. He reaches his suburban home, where his wife and daughter are excited to see him.]
You won't be scared anymore.
You will come home to bliss.
Your sleepless nights will be over.
Coca, marijuana and opium poppies kill. Don't traffic plants that kill.

The fact that these PSAs clearly appeal to children is notable for three principal reasons. In the first place, the PSA criminalizes plants, the substances produced from those plants, and the people implicated in the production process. The underlying message is *the people who engage in these illegal activities should free themselves from the spell of these evil forces!* Second, children do not cultivate coca, marijuana, or opium poppies. This announcement, similar to Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" campaign of the 1980s, seems as though it were meant to plant the seed in children's minds (pun intended) that this is bad, criminal behavior. A declaration from the Colombian Department of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development confirms that the DNE created this announcement to spread awareness about the dangers associated with the cultivation of illicit crops and trafficking of illegal drugs:

The DNE, interested in informing society and the community in general, both nationally and regionally, and especially in informing the communities in the areas being aerially fumigated, has carried out campaigns for radio, television and print in order to influence, through the mass media, in the construction of the culture of legality and to delegitimize practices associated with illicit crops and drug trafficking; in the same way, the DNE developed the campaign "La Mata que mata," to inform public opinion and delegitimize the illicit business of trafficking and the cultivation of coca, opium poppies and marijuana, as well as to demonstrate the benefits of participating in legal activity.[3]



FIGURE 12. Killer Plants and the Two-Headed Monster (illustrated by Jose E. Arboleda).

These PSAs posit this "construction of the culture of legality" as the solution to Colombia's violent conflicts. In other words, if peasants simply stuck to growing legal crops and sustaining their livelihoods through legal economic activities, the country would not be mired in bloodshed.

This underlying message is problematic because it obscures the main reasons why violent civil conflict has persisted in Colombia for decades. These reasons include the following: the myth that nation-states have or should always have exclusive power within their boundaries, which is an element of what geographer Agnew has termed the "territorial trap";[4] the fact that many communities in these marginal areas *do not feel protected by* and/or *lack confidence in* the Colombian armed forces;[5] the fact that most peasants do not possess title to the land they live on, which makes them more susceptible to displacement and makes it exceedingly difficult to provide evidence of displacement when they are forcibly driven from their homes;[6] and the limited legal economic opportunities for peasants disconnected from national or international markets because of the lack of transportation infrastructure outside of the Andean highlands.[7] Therefore, in the terminology of necropolitical ecology, the "La mata que mata" PSAs obscure the "coercive reconfigurations of social and ecological relations" of Colombia's violent civil conflicts, "hidden as though they might be under the symbolic violence meted out by the state."[8]

The third notable reason why these PSAs appeal to children is that the aesthetics are remarkably similar to the children's books and videos that depict the supernatural visions of Colombia. The marijuana plant is anthropomorphized with serpentine eyes, a sharp set of bloodied fangs, and a long tongue (illustrated in the bottom half of figure 12). It looks angry, evil, and intimidating. The creation of this menacing plant with human and animal features, however, is not the product of oral traditions of Europe, Africa, and the Americas. It is the offspring of a much larger monster with origins in the United States–driven War on Drugs (the two-headed monster in the top half of figure 12, shown traversing the Americas).

FROM LICIT TO ILLICIT: HOW COCA LEAF TRANSFORMED INTO COCAINE POWDER

The cultivation of coca was only recently criminalized in the grand scope of human history. Coca has been present in the Andean region of South America for thousands of years, though historians disagree about whether coca was exclusively consumed by the Incan nobility or more widely consumed across all social classes.[9] When the Spanish conquistadors arrived, coca was consumed in a part of the Incan empire, which spanned from present-day Bolivia to southern Colombia, as well as by other Indigenous peoples of Colombia. During the colonial period coca consumption became a point of contention between Indigenous who used coca ceremonially and believed it abated hunger and made them stronger; Catholic missionaries who perceived the ceremonial use of coca as an obstacle to converting

Indigenous to Christianity; and Spaniards who eventually supported Indigenous coca consumption because it enabled their labor force to work long hours without food.[10] Despite the missionaries' efforts, coca consumption persisted and remains an important part of Andean culture, especially in Bolivia and Peru, both countries with large Indigenous populations.

Coca leaf consumption in the Andes was considered a minor domestic policy issue until the US prohibition movement of the 1920s, which led to several international conventions and agreements that attempted to ban the use of psychoactive drugs.[11] In the 1940s, Andean medical professionals launched a paternalistic anti-coca movement on the grounds that coca consumption had negative effects on the Indigenous population. This movement eventually morphed into a 1980s–1990s movement that viewed coca consumption as a public health issue. Coca leaf consumption, however, has never been a high-priority policy issue in Latin America.[12]

Coca leaf became relevant outside of the Andean region because of a growing interest in its energizing qualities. US and Peruvian physicians exchanged scientific notes and samples in the 1860s to learn more about the coca leaf's properties. Historian Gootenberg explains, "Erythroxylon coca, a mild yet complex stimulant comparable to tea or coffee, became embraced therapeutically by a range of American 'eclectic' herbal physicians and drug companies for the treatment of a broad range of ailments, real and imagined."[13] Corsican chemist Angelo Mariani mixed coca leaf with Bordeaux wine to create *Vin Mariani*, a luxurious tonic endorsed by numerous celebrities of the day, including Pope Leo XIII.[14] The North American affinity for coca leaf began when Atlanta pharmacist John Pemberton began selling Coca-Cola, a syrup medicine that contained coca leaf, in 1886. By the 1890s the United States imported 600–1,000 metric tons of coca leaves annually.[15]

Cocaine, the crystallized derivative of coca leaf, was discovered around 1859 when scientists isolated alkaloid from the leaf.[16] It was initially lauded as a revolutionary anesthetic for painful operations and was later employed for a variety of bodily and mental ailments such as cholera, hay fever, opiate addiction, and depression.[17] By the end of the nineteenth century, US pharmaceutical companies were marketing five to six tons of cocaine per year. Austro-Swiss medical practitioners also participated heavily in the cocaine industry (e.g., ophthalmologist Dr. Karl Köller and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud were two famous proponents), and German mercantilists took an active role in Peruvian cocaine production. Peru—with connections to the US pharmaceutical industry, the Coca-Cola Company, and those German mercantilists—was the primary exporter of coca leaf in the late 1800s. By 1900 coca became Peru's fifth-biggest export as the country produced two million pounds of coca and more than ten metric tons of cocaine.[18]

Coca plants, however, are not restricted to the Andean region and have been grown elsewhere in the world. Colonial powers wanting to challenge the Peruvian-German monopoly on coca founded alternative growing sites, decimating the market for Peruvian coca from 1920 to 1940.[19] The Dutch East Indies Company

established large-scale coca plantations in Java (now part of Indonesia), the British experimented with planting coca in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), and the Japanese established plantations in Formosa (now Taiwan).[20] Today the vast majority of coca is cultivated in three countries—Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru—while marginal amounts are cultivated in Ecuador, Venezuela, and Brazil.[21] Coca could certainly be grown in other tropical areas of the world (the Congo is often rumored) if eradication efforts in the Andean region ever provoked alternative sites for cultivation.[22]

THE CRIMINALIZATION OF COCA LEAF AND COCAINE

Political economist and Colombia's representative on the United Nations Narcotics Board Francisco Thoumi describes the eventual criminalization of coca leaf and cocaine production as the product of a "moralistic American model" shaped by religious values and xenophobia as well as the complicated history of US health professions. The moralistic model espoused a punitive approach to the popular drugs of the time (namely alcohol, cocaine, and opiates) based on the perception that these drugs were addictive and caused costly social problems.[23] By the end of the 1890s, US physicians were concerned about the dangerous side effects of cocaine, especially for "cocaine fiends" who were injecting and snorting the drug recreationally.[24] In the early 1900s health professionals became more organized and achieved a monopoly over the practice and prescription of medicine. Two months after the Eighteenth Amendment was signed, however, the Supreme Court ruled against physicians' rights to prescribe psychoactive drugs for "drug addiction maintenance," which effectively criminalized the drug supply.[25] From the 1910s to the 1930s, US diplomats attempted to push anticocaine legislation in different international conventions established by the League of Nations. Gootenberg explains, "The United States, as the principled, mobilized crusader for drug controls, assumed the universalist stand that all abusable manufactured drugs merited a global control."[26] These international drug agreements were largely ignored in Peru, however, which had already dropped out of the League of Nations.[27]

After World War II the United Nations Council on Narcotic Drugs established a more inclusionary approach to drug control than the League of Nations, integrating countries such as Peru into the American antidrug agenda.[28] In 1961, the United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs designated both coca leaf and cocaine as Schedule I substances, which means that the drug has no medical use and that it possesses a severely high potential for psychological and physical dependence.[29] Article 26 stated that wild coca plants were to be uprooted, and illegally cultivated coca plants were to be destroyed, while Article 49 stipulated that coca leaf chewing was to be abolished within a 25-year period.[30] Drug historian Paul Gootenberg notes that cocaine policy was a "sideshow" of the convention,

as the main drug concerns in the Western Hemisphere were Mexican opium and marijuana.[31]

Following the 1960s—a decade marked by a renewed interest in psychoactive drugs and a weakened respect for authority—President Nixon appointed a National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse in 1971 and declared a "War on Drugs" in 1972.[32] US cocaine consumption, however, had faded considerably since the 1940s. Ironically this hiatus in consumption may have contributed to its resurgence because, as Gootenberg explains, "Americans retained no collective cultural memory of cocaine, or its perils, when it reappeared around 1970 as a prestigious and pricey sin."[33] Middle- and upper-class consumers fueled the "cocaine epidemic" of the 1970s, a trend that reversed toward the end of the decade because of the social disruptions associated with cocaine abuse. In the 1980s the introduction of crack created a lower-class market for cocaine that was largely African American and Latino. The "crack cocaine epidemic" triggered the implementation of repressive drug policies and an unprecedented increase in the number of people incarcerated in the United States.[34] President Reagan declared illicit drugs a national security threat in 1986.[35]

The framing of illicit drugs as a threat to US national security was by no means limited to the criminalization of drug production and trafficking within US borders. This War on Drugs eventually expanded, serving as a justification for US military presence abroad, especially in Latin America, contributing to the growth of the Two-Headed Monster depicted in figure 12.

THE TWO-HEADED NECROPOLITICAL MONSTER

Latin American philosopher Enrique Dussel coined the term *global coloniality* to explain how Eurocentric knowledge obscures the presence of the "non-European Other" throughout the globe.[36] Colombian anthropologist Arturo Escobar explains that in addition to the struggle for resources in lands occupied by ethnic minorities, global coloniality involves "the defense of white privilege worldwide. By *white privilege* I mean not so much phenotypically white, but the defense of a Eurocentric way of life that worldwide has historically privileged white peoples (and, particularly since the 1950s, those elites and middle classes around the world who abide by this outlook) at the expense of non-European and colored peoples. This is global coloniality at its most material."[37]

Global coloniality, therefore, applies to a War on Drugs that is largely being fought in the sites of production and transit—Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean—while profits are largely kept in the sites of cocaine consumption—primarily the United States and Western Europe.[38] Aerial eradication is a viable option in Colombia, but it would not be if coca were cultivated in the United Kingdom, nor would it be an option in the continental United States.[39] The same dichotomy can be found within the United States and other



FIGURE 13. The Two-Headed Monster (illustrated by Jose E. Arboleda).

western countries where cocaine processing and trafficking, activities predominately conducted by people of color living in inner cities, are severely criminalized while middle- and upper-class consumers are merely slapped on the wrist.

For Escobar, global coloniality in Latin America operates hand in hand with imperial globality, which describes how mechanisms of US imperialism have evolved since the first Gulf War, facilitating "the rise of an empire that increasingly operates through the management of asymmetrical and spatialized violence, territorial control, sub-contracted massacres, and 'cruel little wars,' all of which are aimed at imposing the neo-liberal capitalist project."[40] In distinction to prior iterations of US imperialism in Latin America (e.g., the Monroe Doctrine or Theodore Roosevelt's Big Stick policy or Cold War coup d'états involving the Central Intelligence Agency), imperial globality connotes the US imposition of neoliberal capitalist expansion through indirect means. Escobar explains, "The new empire thus operates not so much through conquest, but through the imposition of norms (free-markets, US-style democracy and cultural notions of consumption, and so forth)."[41]

These dual forces, global coloniality and imperial globality, have converged with extreme consequences for the comunidades negras of the Pacific region of Colombia. As the primary focus of his scholarship, Escobar notes: "The case of Colombia and of its Pacific region, thus, reflects key tendencies of imperial globality and global coloniality. The first tendency is the link between the economy and armed violence, particularly the still prominent role of national and sub-national

wars over territory, peoples, and resources. These wars contribute to the spread of social fascism, defined as a combination of social and political exclusion whereby increasingly large segments of the population live under terrible material conditions and often under the threat of displacement and even death."[42]

Colombian elites who benefit from such violence have bought into visions of development and modernity that Escobar describes as "inherently displacement-creating processes."[43] Thus imperial globality and global coloniality describe a global variant of necropolitics in which US foreign policy is *implicit to* but *no longer directly associated with* the violence mandated by such transformations.

The Two-Headed Monster is a metaphor I have invented to explain how imperial globality and global coloniality materialize as a drug-related form of environmental racism (see figure 13). The Two-Headed Monster embodies the demand for illegal drugs and the War on Drugs, both of which wreak havoc across species, ecosystems, and ways of being. The head on the right is drug production and trafficking, largely mobilized to satisfy the demands of US and Western European consumers. This head is composed of nonstate armed actors, corrupted state actors, cultivators, violence, chemicals, and many other components that factor into the drastic transformation of what Escobar terms the "biophysical and cultural landscapes" of drug-producing regions.[44] In the image, this head is literally inhaling elements of the landscape (people and trees) through a nostril. The head on the left is the War on Drugs, the "Euro-Americanist"[45] framing of narcotics as an external threat emanating from the "third world" and therefore a mandate for US intervention in Latin America. Out of its mouth spew elements of violence (tanks, soldiers, guns) and criminalization (aerial eradication planes, handcuffs) that are scorching a populated landscape. Though this monster's origins predate Nixon's declaration of a War on Drugs in the 1970s, it did not become a global menace until this war was militarized in the 1990s.

THE MILITARIZATION OF THE WAR ON DRUGS IN THE ANDES

Prior to 1990, US drug policy took a back seat to the fight against communism in Latin America. Since the end of the Soviet Union, however, illegal drugs and international organized crime have largely replaced communism as threats to national security.[46] The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1989 established a new precedent, granting the Pentagon a legislative mandate for counternarcotics operations.[47] In the same year, President George H. W. Bush's administration launched the Andean Initiative to reduce the supply of drugs—mostly cocaine and heroin—by limiting drug production and seizing drug shipments from source countries, primarily in Latin America and the Caribbean.[48] Youngers and Rosin, of the Washington Office on Latin America, noted, "The centerpiece of the Andean Initiative was to empower Latin American military and police forces to carry out

counterdrug initiatives, and significant US training and support was provided to those willing to collaborate."[49] In the first place, US policymakers believed that militarizing the War on Drugs was necessary to confront heavily armed drug traffickers and to bypass corrupt local police forces.[50] In the second place, this militarization provided opportunities for the US military to develop relationships with Latin American military forces.[51]

Winifred Tate, author of an ethnography of US policymaking in Colombia, describes how the revival of the term *narcoguerilla*—widely used by US government officials at the end of the Cold War to discursively link communist groups with criminal drug trafficking—was instrumental to the militarization of the War on Drugs. The word *counterinsurgency* fell out of favor in Washington, DC, after the 1993 deployment of Marines to Somalia ended in disaster. From then on, Congress took the difference between *counterinsurgency* and *counternarcotics* very seriously, limiting the amount of military counternarcotics aid available to combat guerilla organizations. The *narcoguerilla* moniker solved this dilemma by opening a new avenue of funding to combat insurgent movements.[52] Narcoguerilla discourse "delegitimized such movements' political claims by categorizing them as criminal organizations, and it justified the escalation of military aid to their opponents by alleging the narcoguerrillas' access to the nearly limitless resources of the drug trade."[53]

In Bolivia, US Special Forces personnel had trained Bolivian counternarcotics paramilitary police squads since 1983. These squads reported to the Law Enforcement and Narcotics Affairs Section of the US Embassy (NAS) and the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). In 1990 the signing of the US-Bolivian Anti-Narcotics Agreement signaled the official entry of the Bolivian military into the War on Drugs.[54] At the time, critics, such as political scientist Waltraud Morales, questioned the effectiveness of this new partnership because "historically, the Bolivian military has been no friend to democracy or to drug enforcement; indeed, many consider the military to be the problem rather than the solution."[55] In 1997 the election of former dictator General Hugo Banzer to the presidency paved the path for the further expansion of Bolivian military counternarcotics operations.[56]

In Peru, the end of the Cold War signaled a new relationship with the Peruvian military, which formerly had ties to the Soviet Union and had been receiving payoffs from drug traffickers to thwart the Peruvian police.[57] In fact by the early 1990s, the Peruvian military effectively replaced the Shining Path as intermediaries between local coca growers and drug traffickers.[58] Despite this situation, in 1992 Congress approved funding for US military officers to train the Peruvian military in counternarcotics tactics.[59] These efforts seemed to pay off, as by the mid-1990s Peru's coca exports decreased dramatically under President Fuijimori's strong-arm approach to counternarcotics.[60]

In Colombia, the War on Drugs has been mobilized by the criminalization of drug production and trafficking, which historically has been conflated with the

counterinsurgent objectives of its civil conflicts. US policymakers worried that the rise of the cartels was jeopardizing the security of a democratically elected government closely allied with the United States. The Colombian military was initially resistant to participating in United States-led counternarcotics operations, which were tasked to the Colombian Counternarcotics Police (DIRAN), established in 1981. However, Ramírez explains, "The Colombian police are a national body responsible to the ministry of defense, in effect an additional branch of the armed forces," and DIRAN is part of the National Police of Colombia.[61] More importantly, Ramírez states: "As the war on drugs took on a counterinsurgent and counterterrorist focus, US policy came to mesh with the internal security discourse of the Colombian armed forces with regard to the struggle against the insurgency, now redefined as narcoterrorist and narco-guerilla. Colombian officers found this version of the war on drugs much more appealing, and the armed conflict intensified during Plan Colombia."[62]

In distinction to Peru and Bolivia, both with longer histories of recognizing legal coca cultivation and developing alternative strategies in lieu of forceful eradication, the Colombian version of the War on Drugs has resulted in, according to anthropologist María Clemencia Ramírez, a "blanket stigmatization and criminalization" of drug-producing and trafficking regions associated with the FARC.[63] For instance, in the context of her case study on the *cocalero* protests of the 1990s, Ramírez explains, "Seen from the Colombian center, Amazonia is an internally homogenous region, 'the Other Colombia' according to the state, or 'the New Colombia' in the discourse of the FARC, reflecting its own presence and control."[64] The criminalization of newer peripheral drug-producing regions such as the Pacific region, therefore, became the basis for the denial of citizenship, displaced person status, and basic human rights. This relates to what political scientist Nancy Fraser refers to as the "membership principle," in which "justice is by definition a *political concept*. Its obligations apply only to those who stand to one another in a *political* relationship. So, determination of the 'who' of justice depends on what exactly counts as a political relationship."[65]

THE GEOPOLITICS OF PLAN COLOMBIA

The criminalization of coca cultivation, cocaine production, and drug trafficking eventually intensified under the Plan Colombia agreement. By the end of the 1990s, the US State Department committed to stabilizing a Colombian government that appeared on the brink of becoming a "failed state." According to the "continuum of states" established by Robert Rotburg, former president of the World Peace Foundation, "weak states" may become "failed states" and, ultimately, "collapsed states."[66] In Latin America, as is true elsewhere in the world, these designations have legitimized US intervention and influence in foreign states.

In the geopolitical imagination of US foreign policy analysts and military strategists, Colombia is a key ally in South America. Geographically, it is the gateway between Central and South America, with access to both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. Surrounded by socialist-leaning governments leery of US imperialism (Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia), Colombia is seen by US foreign policy analysts and military strategists as vital to the stability of the region. "Stability," in the geopolitical sense, represents comfort with the status quo, in knowing who your allies and enemies are, and in knowing how to interact with foreign states. In his 2014 posture statement about drug trafficking in the Latin American and Caribbean region, John Kelly, commander of US Southern Command, warned Congress, "The spread of criminal networks is having a corrosive effect on the integrity of democratic institutions and the *stability* of several of our *partner* nations."[67] Likewise human rights scholar Elhawary noted, "The Colombian government, with U.S. support, has in fact adopted the language of *stabilisation* and is implementing an 'integrated approach' as a means to defeat the guerrillas and consolidate the state's legitimate presence throughout its territory."[68]

The 2000 Plan Colombia agreement established the parameters under which the United States would assist Colombia with this stabilization. The original purpose and history of the plan, however, are very much contested, especially in Colombia, where the final version of the plan was never debated in the congress, never formally introduced to the public, and never published in Spanish.[69] In a round of peace negotiations with the guerillas in 1998, President Pastrana described his "Plan for Peace in Colombia," which he likened to the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Europe after World War II.[70] Pastrana linked this new vision to the implementation of Colombia's Plan for National Development: "Plan Colombia is a collective of alternative development projects that channel the joint efforts of governments and multilateral organizations together with Colombian society. Its benchmarks for success will be the transformation of the areas where 80% of the world's coca and opium poppies are cultivated. . . . Plan Colombia is orientated towards regional development, the strengthening of departments[71] and the promotion of initiatives and energies of the most vulnerable populations."[72]

Realizing that the Colombian state had limited financial means to pursue these objectives, President Pastrana sought international cooperation in the form of an alliance between drug-producing nations and drug-consuming nations.[73]

In January of 1999, Pastrana's administration conceded the FARC a demilitarized zone with the intention of advancing the latest round of peace negotiations. This zone in southeastern Colombia was the size of Switzerland and contained some of the main coca-producing areas in the country, and it was pivotal to the FARC in expanding its participation in the drug trade.[74] At the behest of concerned US State Department officials, Pastrana visited Washington, DC, to share his vision of the bilateral agreement. The State Department insisted that Pastrana revise his plan to take a tougher stance with the FARC, by intensifying counterinsurgent military

campaigns and by ramping up counternarcotics operations meant to erode the FARC's finances. Therefore, the version of Plan Colombia that the US Congress passed in 2000—favoring military and counternarcotics funding over investment in economic development—is dramatically different from what Pastrana had been proposing in Colombia up until that point.[75] US–Latin American relations scholar Shifter critiqued, "Of the original $860 million Colombia received, $632 million was devoted to military and police assistance. The remaining $227 million went to the general categories of economic development, displaced persons, human rights and administration of justice."[76]

The original plan called for US financial and technical support to phase out within six years when Colombia became a highly stable democracy, capable of conducting counternarcotics operations on its own.[77] Wary of entanglement in a "Vietnam-style quagmire," Congress initially limited the use of donated helicopters, other hardware, and a Colombian battalion of 3,000 soldiers trained by US Special Forces to counternarcotics operations.[78] In addition, the 2000 Plan Colombia agreement limited US presence in Colombia by capping the number of US soldiers and restricting their primary roles to that of noncombatant advisers and trainers for the Colombian military. However, this cap did not include the network of pilots, private security types, and other contractors that work for the US and Colombian governments without the accountability of government employees.[79] Furthermore, some of the original limitations on Plan Colombia were lifted after the 9/11 attacks when the United States began assisting Colombia in the struggle against "narco-terrorism."[80] Shifter noted, "No longer would U.S. resources have to be directly tied to the drug question. Now they could be used in combating the FARC, Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), and AUC—all of which were considered terrorist groups by the U.S. government."[81]

Plan Colombia quickly became a lightning rod for criticism of US-Colombian relations, which can partially be attributed to confusion about what Plan Colombia actually represents. As Tate explains, "There is this idea that it is some vast orchestrated project but Plan Colombia doesn't exist as such."[82] Since 2000 the original plan has been extended under successive US and Colombian administrations and *Plan Colombia* has become something of an umbrella term for a number of different US aid packages to Colombia totaling nearly $10 billion.[83] What is often understated in discourse about Plan Colombia is the extent to which the Colombian government has sought out US support. Within Colombia some scholars term this "the internationalization of the Colombian conflict," the process by which the United States was explicitly invited to participate in domestic policy, which began with President Pastrana (1998–2002) and intensified under President Uribe (2002–2010).[84] Furthermore, what is often misunderstood about Plan Colombia is the fact that the Colombian government has assumed most of the responsibility in restoring its authority. In financial terms Colombia has invested much more than the United States. For instance, Colombia tripled its defense expenditures between 2000 and 2009 to the tune of nearly $12 billion.[85]

Nevertheless, the concern with US involvement has been that, at certain junctures, the Colombian government may have lost control of its ability to limit the influence of more powerful international actors such as the United States.[86] The principal criticisms of Plan Colombia have been that, in the words of *The Economist*, it is "too skewed towards trying to win the unwinnable war on drugs by spraying coca fields from the air, and too compromised by giving money to an army stained by human-rights abuses."[87]

RULES AND PROCEDURES

I had the opportunity to speak to a few different drug policy officials and military officers about their perspectives on Plan Colombia and the reasons why aerial eradication became the most favored method to eradicate illicit crops. For instance, in 2014 I asked William Brownfield, former US ambassador to Colombia and director of policy in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), the following question at his presentation on drug security in Latin America:

> *I'm conducting research on aerial fumigation in Colombia, particularly how communities are affected by the spray. I was wondering what your take on fumigation was moving forward, is it going to be phased out? Colombia is the only country where it's conducted still. Where could a researcher like me find the guidelines for how it's conducted and whether the guidelines are followed?*

Brownfield responded:

> First, the argument for aerial spraying or aerial eradication is more or less as follows: The economic argument, which is to say, it costs a lot less to fly one aircraft to say spray 500 acres in the course of a day than to deploy 300 to 400 human beings who individually plant by plant will eradicate by hand. There's the economic. Then there's the security argument. You put 300–400 humans out there and start pulling the plants up, there's gonna be some grumpy people. They're the people whose living obviously depends on that coca or opium poppy remaining in the field. And when they get grumpy enough, they will start to shoot at you. And in fact, at a minimum on an individual-by-individual basis kill some people and in a worst case scenario as we have seen, the community will rise up and push back.
>
> These are the two basic arguments for aerial eradication. I myself don't . . . from my perspective eradication is the key. The ideal is voluntary eradication. And voluntary eradication I acknowledge, you don't just say 'please do it because it's the right thing,' you have to find a way to make it in the interest of the individual *campesino* [peasant] or subsistence farmer in Afghanistan to understand why he or she wants to eradicate. They've got to get something, whether it's alternative development, an additional livelihood, schools, clinics, paved

> roads, water, sewage, electricity, something! They have to have some reason to understand why it is in my interest to eradicate this stuff even though I know that if I grow corn, I'm only going to make twenty-five percent as much as I'm making by growing opi . . . uh, coca. Or if I grew wheat in Afghanistan, I'm going to make ten percent of what I make by growing opium. The second choice is, I acknowledge, manual eradication; it is actually far more thorough. Believe me, if you pull that sucker out by the roots and you burn it, it ain't coming back. Aerial eradication has a percentage, and it can be in some places a rather high percentage, of what in fact will survive the eradication process.
>
> I'm the son, grandson, and great grandson of West Texas farmers. By the way, we've been spraying for a long time. I mean, the fact that its eradication, that's what we do as well. Crop dusting has been around since there have been airplanes. It's hardly a new science. What is new of course is the involuntary nature of it when you're doing coca or opium poppy aerial eradication. My own theory is that the Colombians have it about right, as they have put it into their own proposed peace agreement. Which is to say, first choice, voluntary eradication. Second choice, manual eradication. If one and two don't work, then we'll come back and do it exactly the way we've been doing it for the last fifteen years.
>
> Where will you find data and information on this? One, you can reach out to us directly at the INL. But let me tell you about a database that is publicly available, would be the database from the government of Ecuador's now terminated suit in the International Court of Justice against the government of Colombia where they argued that, due to drift, much of the chemical spray that was being used for eradication was drifting into Ecuador. Personally, I doubt that, since they never sprayed closer than ten kilometers to the border. But that doesn't matter now because the case has been terminated. But there is in fact a substantial written record on that, and you would find that, including our procedures, and our rules of whatever, of operation in the various findings in the case of Ecuador vs. Colombia, International Court of Justice.[88]

Brownfield's response features four assertions that clarify why aerial eradication is a form of environmental racism and the product of a necropolitical ecology. In the first place, despite the grave socio-environmental concerns and international outrage about aerial eradication (referred to as "aerial fumigation" in my question), it remains a viable option because if other strategies do not work, Brownfield responded, "we'll come back and do it exactly the way we've been doing it for the last 15 years." In other words, *not* eradicating coca and opium poppies *is not* an option. This line of reasoning reflects the coercive relationship between the United States and Colombia, often framed as a partnership by authorities in both

countries. Did he mean the United States or the US-Colombian partnership when he stated "*we'll* come back"?

Second, Brownfield sought to normalize aerial fumigation, something practiced in Texas for generations that is "hardly a new science." The implication of this assertion is that aerial fumigation has been around long enough to be perfected. In the very next sentence, however, he acknowledges "the involuntary nature" of aerial eradication. Understood through the lens of necropolitical ecology, the harms of the coercive US-Colombian relationship are not distributed equally across Colombia, resulting in an uneven geography of what Cavanagh and Himmelfarb term the "reconfigurations of social and ecological relations."[89] This uneven geography is accentuated by the fact that aerial eradication takes place under much more stressful conditions, with a greater potential for errors than the aerial fumigation of farm plots in Texas or elsewhere.

In the third place, while aerial eradication threatens the subsistence and livelihoods of peasants and causes health problems for a multitude of organisms, Brownfield describes it as a means to save the lives of 300–400 humans at a time who might otherwise have to pull illicit plants out under very dangerous conditions. The danger of those conditions is indisputable. Many coca fields are protected by explosive land mines and snipers. In fact, I interviewed a manual eradicator who recounted the time he was shot in the leg by a sniper. He knew other eradicators who had been hit by exploded mine shrapnel and described other dangers such as tropical diseases that one is exposed to while working in those fields. *What is disputable* is the way the situation has been framed. Obscured within Brownfield's assertion is the fact that Colombian lives are being put in danger, whether manual eradicators or peasants impacted by aerial spraying, because of the mandate to stop drugs from reaching the United States. The omission of that mandate in his explanation makes his assertion a necropolitical one. It is a failure or refusal to acknowledge that Colombian lives, especially poor rural people of color, must be sacrificed to prevent cocaine from being consumed in the United States.

Finally, in Brownfield's fourth assertion that speaks to aerial eradication as a form of environmental racism and the product of a necropolitical ecology, he casts doubt on the findings of the court case between Colombia and Ecuador. Underlying his assertion that aerial eradication was probably never conducted within ten kilometers of the Colombian border with Ecuador is a conviction that rules and procedures were followed. In his call for "critical environmental justice studies," David Pellow argues, "Environmental justice movements would be better off seeking social change through institutions and practices that rely less on the state in order to achieve their goals."[90] In making this argument, Pellow, in the footsteps of other EJ scholars,[91] recognizes that one of the reasons environmental racism happens is *because* state institutions are not only complicit, but, oftentimes, fundamental to different forms of racism. The fact that Ecuador eventually dropped its legal case against Colombia after reaching a settlement is not proof that aerial eradication was conducted according to the specified guidelines on the border

between the two countries.[92] It is proof that Ecuador had enough evidence and international legal support to prod the Colombian government into a settlement. State institutions and officials can absolve themselves of blame for many situations because *there are rules and procedures in place* to prevent injustices from happening. In such situations, environmental justice communities must prove that rules and procedures were broken. But where are the rules and procedures explained? Brownfield referred me, a PhD candidate researching aerial eradication at that time, to the Ecuador vs. Colombia case to find out more about the rules and to the INL directly for data on this topic. What about communities such as resguardos indígenas and comunidades negras that are supposed to have a say about what kinds of activities are conducted on their respective lands? *How do these communities, with no access to US drug policy officials and virtually no interaction with Colombian drug policy officials, find out the rules and procedures?*

Around the same time, while preparing for my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to interview an officer in the Colombian army who was temporarily stationed at US Southern Command. The US military has divided its presence over six regions that span the entire globe. US Southern Command, located in Doral, Florida, is comprised of officers from every branch of the armed forces and is responsible for "providing contingency planning, operations, and security cooperation in its assigned Area of Responsibility," which includes Central America, South America, and the Caribbean.[93] I asked the Colombian officer their opinion about US influence on the War on Drugs in their country, specifically the controversy affiliated with aerial eradication. They stated that aerial eradication is a "counternarcotics strategy," *not* a "counterpeople strategy." They explained that one of the main reasons that aerial eradication is preferred over other eradication strategies, such as manual eradication, is that the armed groups that protect and control coca fields often plant explosive land mines in the ground to protect their harvests. Furthermore, they said that sprayings must be conducted with the prior consultation of the communities to be affected, especially resguardos indígenas and comunidades negras. The officer explained that the strategies employed to eradicate illicit crops are decided at periodic meetings with community leaders, local mayors, and the governor.[94] Similar to Brownfield, the officer expressed confidence in the proper execution of rules and procedures.

PRIOR CONSULTATION?

The primary rule or procedure that resguardos indígenas and comunidades negras can employ to protect their respective territories is known as *consulta previa* (the right to prior consultation). Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 169, authored by the International Labour Organization (ILO), establishes that state-recognized ethnic territories throughout the world need to be consulted before the extraction of resources, the implementation of projects, or any other activities that might jeopardize residents' rights to occupy their land and practice local

traditions.[95] Even though Colombia ratified Convention 169 the same year as the new Colombian constitution (1991), consulta previa was never made an explicit law within the constitution. However, consulta previa has materialized through jurisprudence, meaning that is has been invoked in constitutional courts on behalf of resguardos indígenas and comunidades negras.[96] For instance, constitutional court decision 383 of 2003 determined that because many Indigenous communities consume coca leaf as part of their traditional culture, aerial eradication without prior consultation was a violation of their right to cultural identity.[97] According to Leonardo Correa, technical director of Project SIMCI (of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime that monitors coca cultivation), all Indigenous communities in Colombia had the right to be consulted prior to aerial eradication, as US and Colombian counternarcotics authorities did not keep a list of which communities consumed coca leaf as part of their traditions.[98]

In contrast, comunidades negras were not consulted about the aerial or manual eradication of coca in their territories, because of the distinction between cultures that consume coca as part of their traditional practices and cultures that do not (i.e., every other ethnoracial group in Colombia aside from specific Indigenous groups). I met with Pablo Rueda-Saiz, the former director of consulta previa in Colombia (2012–2013), and he was vehement that comunidades negras also should have been consulted about any counternarcotics operations taking place in their territories: "My argument was that if it is directly affecting them, if it is being carried out within the territory, comunidades negras should have the same right as Indigenous communities that are not consumers of traditional [coca] crops as those who are. It may be that the rights involved are different rights, but they should have the right to prior consultation."[99]

Pablo explained that while there were officials in his branch of the government, the Ministry of the Interior, who felt strongly about guaranteeing the right of previous consultation to comunidades negras, there were officials in the Ministry of Justice who believed that comunidades negras *should not be granted prior consultation under any circumstance.*[100] Farid Benavides, the former vice minister of criminal policy in the Ministry of Justice, was of the opinion that if Colombia guaranteed consulta previa for comunidades negras, a group that does not consume coca leaf as part of its traditional practices, then it would have to guarantee consulta previa for *every* rural peasant community.[101] Pablo considered this logic to be contradictory to the 1991 constitution, which presented Colombia as a multicultural nation intent on preserving its ethnic diversity. He noted that prior to 1993, which is the first year comunidades negras were recognized by the state, the government refused to acknowledge that these communities were culturally different from the rest of Colombia. Pablo felt that those in the Ministry of Justice opposed to granting comunidades negras consulta previa were clinging to a racist mentality in which "the only difference is a phenotypic difference and not cultural . . . it was *not* considered a different culture that is worth preserving or protecting."[102]

Julián Wilches, Colombia's former director of drug policy, was very forthright about the fact that the rules and procedures set forth for the previous consultation of Indigenous communities had not always been followed during the period between 2011 and 2014, for the following reasons: such consultations were rarely carried out; when consultations were carried out, there was not always an agreement reached, because of distrust between Indigenous communities and government authorities; and in instances when Indigenous communities should have been financially compensated for transgressions of their territorial sovereignty, they rarely were.[103] Julián was also very honest in his assessment of the efficacy of aerial eradication and counternarcotics efforts in general:

> I have always said that the results depend on what you are measuring. If you are measuring whether it has reduced cocaine production in Colombia, it did reduce cocaine production. Has the production of illicit crops been reduced? Yes, it has. Has it changed the reality of where there are or were illicit crops? No, it has not changed it. In other words, there may be illicit crops tomorrow where there are none today because the conditions are what they are. It is like when you take medicine to lower the fever, but the infection is still there. I believe that measuring the hectares of illicit crops is an indicator, but it cannot be *the* indicator that measures whether we are doing it well or not because there are many factors. For example, when coca [cultivation] decreases, illegal mining increases and there is still the presence of armed groups outside the law. The crime structures continue to exist.[104]

Meanwhile in the comunidades negras of southwestern Colombia, many residents understand aerial eradication as an intentional form of transnational environmental racism that exacerbates the violent displacement caused by those armed groups. For instance, at a meeting of five different communities in Guapi, Cauca, one gentleman publicly complained: "I compare the coca here with other places, and there are just small plots here. They came to dump all that glyphosate and we think to ourselves, It is a banned chemical, but they have to exhaust it to satisfy the United States. The United States finances it, so they dump it on us in the Pacific coast. They dump it on us Blacks, on our houses. So, we are punished two or three times, not just because of the war, but also because of state policies!"

In calling glyphosate a "banned chemical," the gentleman was referring to the March 2015 declaration of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) that glyphosate is "probably carcinogenic to humans."[105] That declaration prompted numerous countries throughout the world, which had permitted the use of glyphosate for agricultural purposes, to ban the use of the herbicide.

I approached the gentleman after the meeting and asked him how many times his community had been fumigated and when. He replied:

> Exact dates I could not say. But I know that in Napi they fumigated five times since the beginning of the process on the Pacific coast. They do it like every four months, three times a year. This year they have not fumigated. It will be a year now as of

> Holy Thursday that they don't fumigate. But it is the little things that they have done without following protocol; communities have been fumigated, rivers, water sources such as streams, aqueducts, and farm plots and forests have been fumigated . . . which have nothing to do with illicit crops.

He later added: "If someone has one hectare [of coca], ten are fumigated. And it is not one affected, but nine more. And it generates displacement because people are without anything to eat, and they must leave. They did away with food crops. We used to have so many children in school but not anymore."

This description of aerial eradication as a counternarcotics strategy implemented overzealously in comunidades negras was quite common among people I interviewed in the region. Beyond the frustration that comunidades negras are not consulted about the eradication of coca, many people feel that comunidades negras are sprayed where coca is not being cultivated as an intentional means of dispossessing these communities of their lands.

MYTHMAKING AND THE WAR ON DRUGS

Skeptical of the perception that aerial eradication was an intentional means of dispossession, but more skeptical that other rules and procedures, in addition to consulta previa, were *not* being followed, I shared these accusations with the INL staff of the US Embassy in Bogotá, which oversees the US side of illicit crop eradication operations. Somewhat ironically because I am a US citizen, it was more difficult to schedule this interview than the interviews with high-ranking Colombian government officials. I was granted an interview six months after my initial request. In fairness, there was quite a bit of uncertainty during that six-month period because it coincided with IARC's declaring glyphosate to be "probably carcinogenic to humans" and Colombian government agencies' deliberating whether to suspend aerial eradication as the government negotiated a peace agreement with the FARC.

The interview took place in August of 2015, which is significant because it occurred in the interim period between the announcement from the Colombian government that aerial eradication would be suspended (May 2015) and its actual suspension (October 2015). During that time, aerial eradication operations were ramped up significantly. For instance, in 2013, aerial eradication totaled 47,000 hectares for the entire country.[106] In the month of August 2015, aerial eradication totaled 27,000 hectares.[107]

I was not allowed to record the session, though I am unsure whether that was standard protocol or due to concerns about the negative perception of aerial eradication, particularly at that moment in time. Per the rules outlined at the beginning of the interview, I emailed my notes to the communication liaison, who edited some of what I had transcribed but ultimately approved the majority of what I had noted. The 2.5-hour interview began with thirty minutes of explanation from the

INL director in which I was simply supposed to listen. He presented his lecture as the debunking of "myths about aerial eradication." What follows is my (subsequently approved) notes on those "debunked myths," numbered 1–9. Underneath each I have included the findings from my own research on these assertions.

#1) Aerial eradication planes have a map of plots to be sprayed, which are continually updating in flight, so it is not easy for a pilot to miss the target.

My findings: According to the staff at Project SIMCI, the technicians in the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime who track illicit crops in Colombia, the maps that the pilots use are not always accurate. These maps are from snapshots taken on a specific day (usually December 31) or from a composite of images take over a series of days (in areas obscured by cloud cover). It is therefore possible for illicit crops to appear or disappear, depending on when the aerial eradication mission is conducted.[108]

#2) The vast majority of coca is grown away from where people actually live, so accusations of communities or people being sprayed are unfounded.

My findings: I spoke to numerous people who claimed that their homes or the rivers where they bathe and wash clothes/dishes had been sprayed. I also noticed that many farmers in comunidades negras do indeed cultivate their crops away from their homes because the soil right next to people's homes tends to be less fertile than soil elsewhere that has not been cultivated as often.

#3) Coca is clearly visible from the air [bright green color], and the only plants that can be mistaken from the air are pepper plants and young cacao plants. Therefore, it is difficult for pilots, all of whom are experienced spray pilots, to spray the wrong crops.

My findings: I have no reason to doubt this statement, but what the INL director did not mention is the fact that pilot accuracy is impacted by the dangerous nature of the job. The fumigation planes are accompanied by armed helicopters so that the planes are not shot down by groundfire.[109] Therefore, the pilots are under stress. Furthermore, visibility can be a factor, particularly in the tropical lowlands of the Pacific region, where heavy cloud cover is the norm.[110]

#4) The vast majority of coca is not cultivated on land owned by farmers. It is increasingly grown in national parks and Indigenous reserves.

My findings: Yes, a lot of coca is cultivated in national parks, which are off-limits to aerial eradication operations. The fact that comunidades negras could be sprayed and national parks could not be is astonishing. This decision underscores the perception that human beings, especially Afro-descendant human beings, are not part of the biodiversity worth preserving in Colombia.[111] Furthermore, the region most impacted by aerial eradication at the

time of this interview surrounded Tumaco, Nariño, the southernmost Pacific corner of Colombia predominately consisting of comunidades negras.

#5) Only a small percentage of aerial eradication cases are successful, less than three percent in the last few years. Most claims involve people mixing coca with licit crops or claims of having been sprayed when they were not, as verified by spray line data.

My findings: This is misleading. The Colombian Counternarcotics Police (DIRAN), the same Colombian agency that conducted the spraying, was also in charge of the complaint process. To file a complaint, a farmer had to download a form from the internet (there are not many people connected to the internet, and many people do not even have access to electricity). Filling out the form required information such as GPS coordinates, the exact time the spraying occurred, and the exact quantities of crops affected. It also required some farmers to travel very long distances just to file the paperwork with local government offices they did not necessarily trust. For these reasons, many people stopped filing complaints.[112]

#6) Pilots that spray outside the lines are subject to remediation in addition to the annual certification that all pilots undertake. Therefore, it is very difficult for pilots to repeatedly miss the mark.

My findings: This is also misleading, especially when discussing comunidades negras or resguardos indígenas or any peasant communities for that matter. Pilots can spray more than just illicit crops because the protocols state that licit crops mixed with illicit crops can also be sprayed. So, a farm plot may have only a few coca plants and a much larger swath can be sprayed. "Spraying outside the lines" refers to the shapes of illicit crop fields outlined on the map aboard the plane. Farm plots in the Pacific region do not look like the rectangular plots you might see when flying across the United States or in other places where agriculture is industrialized. These plots are not rectangular with neat lines of separation between people's farms. From an airplane, a private farm in the Pacific region (and many regions of Colombia) just looks like a mix of vegetation.[113] In other words, how could a pilot tell whether they sprayed "outside the lines" if there were no lines to begin with?

#7) Smaller coca plots mixed in with licit crops and the cultivation of illicit crops in off-limit areas (natural parks, indigenous reserves) is the current trend. Plots mixed with licit and illicit crops can legally be sprayed while indigenous reserves (without permission) and national parks cannot be sprayed.

My findings: This statement is misleading because it makes it seem like farmers are starting a trend of mixing crops to avoid detection of illicit crops. Mixing crops is the traditional way of cultivating crops in many parts of

Colombia, especially in comunidades negras.[114] So while it is true that some farmers may have planted coca in their fields and may want to hide that coca, this should also be an indication that people of modest means were desperate enough to risk the fumigation of their community.

#8) There has never been a single case of serious health problems proven to be caused by glyphosate. A lot of studies have been conducted, but none offer conclusive evidence substantiated by the peer-review process.

My findings: There are numerous ways that aerial eradication advocates have invalidated claims of health and environmental problems associated with aerial eradication. The number one way is to blame any potential effects on the chemicals used to cultivate and process coca.[115] The second way is to be hyperselective about whose research counts (i.e., why the peer-review process was mentioned). Finally, the exact chemical mixture used during spraying has been kept secret, preventing outsiders from conducting tests on the specific effects.[116]

In other cases, some of the health claims made about aerial eradication by residents of comunidades negras seem far-fetched. For instance, some people I interviewed went so far as to blame aerial eradication for the chinkungunya virus outbreak throughout the country. Chinkungunya is a viral disease transmitted by the same mosquitoes (*Aedes aegypti* or *Aedes albopictus*) that carry dengue. The symptoms are quite similar to dengue (fever and arthritis in joints), although there are no fatal strains of chinkungunya. The virus is believed to have originated in Africa; however, the current outbreak in Latin America has inspired a wide variety of rumors about its origins. The Colombian Ministry of Health has an entire webpage dedicated to refuting these "urban myths," including the statement that chinkungunya is not transmitted by particles suspended in air, perhaps a reference to rumors about chinkungunya being a product of aerial eradication.[117]

#9) The FARC and other guerilla groups have been pushing communities to lodge more complaints, which has been driving up the number of complaints being filed.[118]

My findings: This was likely true at the time, though I could not confirm that it was happening.

Though I initially felt that this lecture was a waste of time because I had already done so much research on these topics, it highlighted what the INL was most defensive about. For the rest of the allotted time, the staff, which consisted of five Americans and two Colombians, took turns responding to my questions. By the end of the interview, I realized that the INL had some of its own misgivings about how aerial eradication and other United States–supported strategies were implemented in Colombia. This is noteworthy because the interview transpired at a moment when decisions about the viability of aerial eradication and drug

policy in general were tilting toward Colombian control. As explained to me by the DIRAN officer in charge of the detection of illicit crops, per the stipulations of Plan Colombia, the Colombian government was incrementally taking control of all government projects that were initiated by the United States. He estimated that the Colombian government controlled seventy percent of eradication operations as of 2015.[119] It is also very noteworthy, therefore, that aerial eradication was suspended when the Colombian government had more control than ever over counternarcotics operations conducted within in its own borders.

Similar to Brownfield and the Colombian military officer I spoke to, INL officials established that there were rules and procedures in place that made it unlikely for aerial eradication to result in environmental injustices. The INL's misgivings surrounding the Colombian government taking greater control of aerial eradication suggested that *if environmental injustices were occurring*, it was because *the Colombians were not following the proper protocols*.

CONFRONTING THE TWO-HEADED MONSTER

The Two-Headed Monster is the product of an increasingly unpopular War on Drugs that thrives despite unreasonable expectations about the proper completion of rules and procedures. Both the monster and its minions, which include the Killer Plants described at the beginning of this chapter, embody both the *demand for* and *prohibition of* drugs such as cocaine. The monster exists as a plague to Black and Brown communities subject to those contradictory forces. However, it persists, despite an increasingly popular perception that the War on Drugs is a failure, because the very institutions that carry out this war determine its effectiveness, who/what is criminalized in the process, and whether the critiques of this war are justified.

While the visions discussed up to this point in the book have been the products of people engaged in an oral tradition of storytelling, the Two-Headed Monster is something I created on my own to make sense of the far-reaching impacts of US drug imperialism. And whereas many of the visions in this book have been described as the rationalizations of people confronting violent forces beyond their control, this monster is *my* rationalization of the violence and pollution caused by the actions and policies of *my* country. This rationalization also speaks to the tension inherent in my self-description as a gringo latino (explained in the Introduction); I was raised in the United States but am not always proud to say so, especially when interviewing people harmed by US imperialism. However, at the same time, my status as a US citizen and as a scholar connected to powerful academic institutions granted me access to interview US and Colombian authorities that shape, monitor, and/or implement drug policy. While many of these same people are critical of US and Colombian drug policies, it is highly doubtful that they would view the work they do as contributing to such a monster.

Environmental justice communities are often required to look beyond state-based solutions to environmental problems because state institutions can be

complicit in or even primarily responsible for the pollution they live with. The continued violence of "post-conflict" Colombia combined with the external and internal pressure to continue aerially eradicating coca suggest that comunidades negras continue to have a limited political relationship with the Colombian state, which has prioritized various iterations of "national security" over the well-being of poor rural populations. They may be understood as a collective of environmental justice communities not relying on state-based solutions to defeat the Two-Headed Monster. Comunidades negras challenge the monster in three important ways.

In the first place, they reject the stigmatization of drug-affiliated criminality by calling attention to the fact that *cocaine production is not part of their culture* and that *the War on Drugs is a product of US imperialism*. For instance, I spoke with a young man who bore a rash on his chest and arms caused by cocaine-processing laboratories near the comunidad negra of Río San Juan de Micay del Tambo, Cauca. He told me that he and others in his community experienced an allergic reaction to the chemicals that make their way into the river he bathes in. I asked him how his community was dealing with the spread of coca cultivation and cocaine production to the region, and he explained, "We have been working with a group of young people, and we are trying to recover a part of our culture. I believe that this is one of the strategies to begin to eradicate that . . . because it is not our culture."[120] He operationalizes an "oppositional imagination"[121] to challenge the conceptualization of his community as a lawless space of illegal activity.

Regarding the destruction caused by aerial eradication, the Process of Black Communities (PCN) leaders I spoke to understood that the Colombian government has been complicit in the US War on Drugs demands. For some, such as Mario Angulo, a PCN leader at the main office in Buenaventura, the Colombian government has been careless in implementing those demands. He explained, "It is a very complex issue because there is no study of the consequences, and that seems to us to be irresponsible on the part of the national government, that due to an imposition by the gringos they begin to fumigate the territories without foreseeing the consequences."[122] On the other hand, a PCN leader and member of the Río Anchicayá community council, Benjamín Mosquera, viewed aerial eradication as an intentional means of destroying comunidades negras imposed by the United States. Benjamín stated, "The way in which the United States supports a program that is destroying production, agriculture, and the life of ethnic communities . . . we see it as . . . in fact we reject it first because it hasn't been coordinated properly. Secondly, because that policy is not good for [our] health or for the ecosystem."[123]

In the second place, comunidades negras challenge "technologies of displacement"[124]—discourses of development, conservation, biodiversity, and national security that US and Colombian authorities have employed to justify the War on Drugs—by articulating alternative versions of these discourses. The perception of state-directed development as a catalyst of displacement and dispossession is also

fundamental to the appraisal of the myriad of security discourses proposed by successive presidential administrations in Colombia. When I mentioned that national security is often cited as the primary reason why rural communities are seldom, if ever, consulted about the means to eradicate coca, one gentleman declared: "For comunidades negras, national security has no meaning! When they fumigate, what they do is displace us. Why? What does a community living on a river do when they have nothing to eat? The fish are dying, so the fisherman comes home with nothing. Plantains, potatoes . . . sustenance crops are ruined, and people survive off of that, so they are forced to move. Therefore, this is a case of the State running roughshod over comunidades negras!"

These alternative discourses both validate local epistemologies and mark such technologies of displacement as "foreign" concepts, not applicable to the context of comunidades negras in the Pacific region.

Last, comunidades negras not only problematize the geopolitical imagination of the state,[125] but also take steps toward radically redefining the state[126] by leveraging domestic and international laws designed to protect ethnic territorial rights in court cases. For example, Samuel, a member of the Río Anchicayá community council, complained:

> In our territory they have carried out about three fumigations, which for us is something disastrous because it is a government policy with the United States and the Colombian Counternarcotics Police, accompanied by the national army. But we see that it happens without prior consultation, because they say that every project, every program that is going to be carried out in a comunidad negra, must be a reason for consultation. Article 164 of the ILO Convention 169, and it is also reaffirmed by Article 4 and 5 of Law 70 of the constitution of this country, as well as Decree 45, state that if [the government] have not coordinated with the community council, it is not possible for the government to enter our territory. Conducting aerial spraying with glyphosate killed the *papa china* [taro root], *chontaduro* [peach palm], and *borojó* and everything, without anything in return.

Unfortunately, knowledge of these legal instruments and the will to participate in the redefinition of the state are not sufficient grounds to achieve environmental justice in the US-Colombian War on Drugs. The perspectives of Samuel and other leaders of comunidades negras cited here are continually marginalized within what Tate calls "hierarchies of credibility."[127] Their experiences and understandings of the War on Drugs have been largely relegated to myths not based on credible scientific facts published in peer-reviewed journals.

With that challenge in mind, the next chapter will explore how comunidades negras champion their own knowledge in the face of the Two-Headed Monster and other monstrosities of environmental racism.

4

Territory, Natural Rights, and Global Environmental Justice

This chapter first considers how comunidades negras confront necropolitical ecologies, including the Two-Headed Monster, and catalyze global environment justice movements. Then, within the context of Colombia after the 2016 peace agreement with the FARC, it details how natural entities are increasingly recognized as having their own rights. Finally, it raises concerns about the implications for the different kinds of rights discussed in the chapter, especially regarding global environmental justice. More specifically, this chapter addresses the following questions:

- How do rural ethnic communities, especially comunidades negras, leverage territorial rights, international agreements, and transnational actors to achieve global environmental justice?
- What are natural rights and how have they materialized in the context of the violence experienced by comunidades negras after the 2016 peace agreement?
- How does the recognition of natural rights impact comunidades negras (i.e., an example of a particular environmental justice community) and prospects for global environmental justice?

In answering these questions, this chapter addresses the increasing use of *environmental justice* in global environmentalist discourses and builds toward the possibilities of a "global environmental justice" framework (the subject of the final chapter).

While the first few chapters of the book recount stories of visions told to me during fieldwork, and the previous chapter described a vision of my own invention (i.e., the Two-Headed Monster), the section after the next utilizes visions in a different manner. To describe how comunidades negras are emblematic of global environmental justice communities, I use popular tales of visions to present the

different ways that comunidades negras *do* global environmental justice. However, first it will be necessary to address what is meant by *global environmental justice*.

WHAT IS GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE?

In this book's introduction I noted four major themes in my review of the literature on global environmental justice:

1. The study of globalized EJ movements
2. The study of transnational forms of environmental racism and resistance
3. The framing of the Anthropocene / climate change as a global EJ issue
4. The theorization of the spatial dimensions of EJ

This book touches on all those themes, especially 1, 2, and 4. However, I have intentionally avoided (and will continue to avoid) defining global environmental justice throughout the rest of this book.

Scholars have been writing about the need to conceptualize global environmental justice for roughly two decades now,[1] yet most have avoided explicitly defining it. Prominent EJ scholar David Schlosberg argues that definitions of EJ are fundamentally flawed because they have inadequately addressed the global dimensions of local EJ struggles. He states, "A thorough notion of global environmental justice needs to be locally grounded, theoretically broad, and plural—encompassing issues of recognition, distribution, and participation."[2] Schlosberg acknowledges that a major challenge in defining global environmental justice is that, even within a local geographic location, justice is conceptualized differently across legal systems, civil society, and academia.[3]

Another reason why scholars are hesitant to define global environmental justice is that EJ itself is driven by the grassroots activism of marginalized populations impacted by pollution. As England-based EJ scholar Gordon Walker points out, globally there is much skepticism about embracing an EJ framework that originated in the United States, a country massively implicated in environmental problems that have contributed to climate change.[4] So in addition to hesitation about universalizing a framework for the world, scholars have misgivings about determining what environmental justice looks like from the vantage point of their elite (academic) institutions of the Global North. Walker further points out that as information about environmental justice circulates throughout the world, it is subject to local reinterpretation and reframing.[5]

Catalan political ecologist Joan Martínez-Alier argues that *global environmental justice* may be considered an umbrella term for a wide spectrum of ecological struggles such as climate justice, water justice, food sovereignty, popular epidemiology, biopiracy, and many more.[6] In other words, there are a number of ongoing struggles that EJS scholars might label "global environmental justice" but whose individual movements have not necessarily been labeled as such.

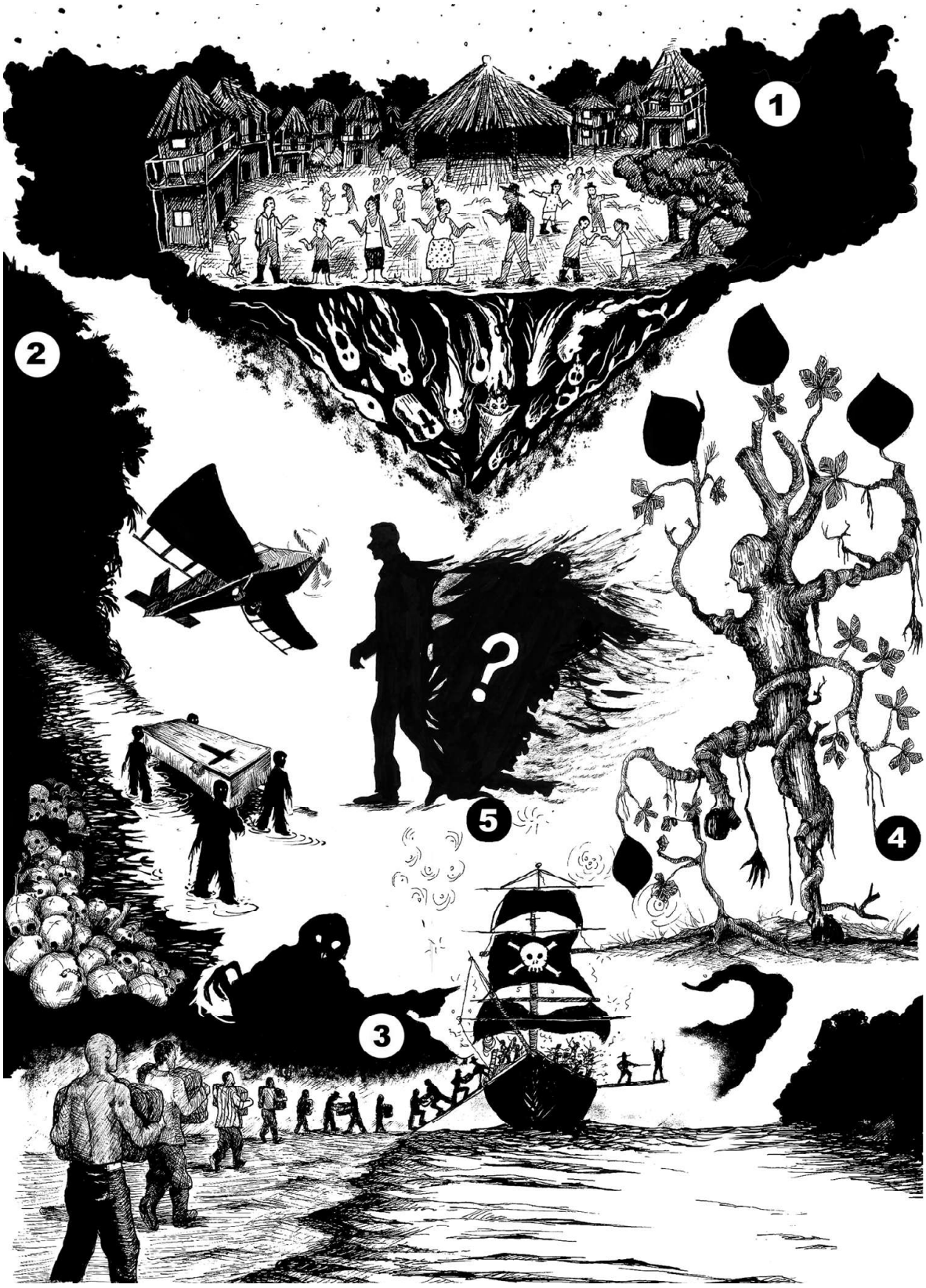


FIGURE 14. The defense of territory (illustrated by Jose E. Arboleda).

Scholars participate in the expansion of global environmental justice by circulating ideas learned about local environmental justice struggles. In this sense, environmental justice and global environmental justice are process-driven conceptual frameworks. A truly global environmental justice framework should cohere around the lessons learned from activists and activist scholars engaged in such struggles across the globe.

So, while I *have not* done the work necessary to approximate a definition of global environmental justice (i.e., engaging activists and activist scholars all over the world to see what we might come up with), I have analyzed my own research through the lenses of critical EJS.

Figure 14 is a visual representation of this effort. It is a composite image representing five different ways that comunidades negras *do* environmental justice, in my opinion. The respective illustrations within the image can be understood as individual stories, which correspond to the sections discussed in this part of the chapter (numbered 1–5). Collectively, this composite image also conveys the importance of understanding environmental justice as a historical continuity with more-than-human dimensions.

THE DEFENSE OF TERRITORY AND THE REBORN

Collectively titled rural ethnic communities of the Americas—comunidades negras and peoples of Indigenous reservations—leverage international agreements and collaborate with transnational actors to fight for global environmental justice in five important ways:

#1) Denounce necropolitical ecologies (e.g., extractive economic activities, megaprojects, and the effects of illicit drug production/prohibition) as a threat to the territory. The top part of figure 14 depicts a comunidad negra and spirits of the underworld, appearing to drain downward, into the lower part of that image. Are the people of the community becoming ghosts? Are the roots of the community disappearing? Will the movement downward result in the reappearance of those spirits in other places? None of the abovementioned explanations/questions are mutually exclusive, and all point to a similar concern expressed by the people I interviewed, a concern for the survival of comunidades negras. Concerns about the disappearance of the oral tradition of visions, therefore, also reflect greater concerns about the disappearance of traditions that unite people and Afro-Pacific culture in general, which is constantly shifting toward more urban spaces with dramatically different sets of socio-ecological relations.

In the discourse of the Process of Black Communities (PCN), an organization foundational to the creation of comunidades negras in Colombia, this concern for survival is articulated as the "defense of territory." For example, the PCN organized a workshop titled *Encuentro AfroPazífico* on the anniversary of the passing of Law 70 in Piendamó, Cauca. Implemented in 1993, Law 70 formalized the Colombian

government's recognition of collective land titles for comunidades negras based on a specific identity connected to those geographic spaces. As geographer Offen, who observed aspects of the titling process, notes, "The law does this, essentially, by elaborating a 'black ethnicity,' something constituted by culture (traditional production systems), history (palenques and self-liberation), and geography (rural riverine and Pacific)."[7] The formal titling of comunidades negras that began in the 1990s established these new political subjects with their own representative bodies, the *concejos comunitarios* (community councils). The Encuentro AfroPazífico workshop was comprised of residents from eight comunidades negras throughout the southwestern Pacific region that came together to discuss different issues plaguing their respective communities.

In honor of the occasion, PCN leader José Santos Caicedo spoke about the history and continued importance of "the territory": "We are a community, a comunidad negra, because we have a shared history and because our grandparents and great grandparents had to sacrifice so much in the construction of this country. . . . The construction of freedom requires territory. So, every man and woman from our community will have to continue this struggle. Because if it is not our reborn that will have our territory to construct freedom, it will be the multinationals, the governments, the insurgents, and the paramilitaries that will want those territories to hand them over to others."[8]

Territory—from this point of view—then not only signifies the space in which life takes place but also the struggle to protect lives and ways of life. The phrases *construction of freedom* and *continue this struggle* place the participants of the workshop in socio-historical context. Many comunidades negras were first formed by Afro-descendants fleeing slavery, also known as maroon societies (e.g., societies termed *palenques, quilombos, mocambos, cumbes, ladeiras*, or *mambises* in the non-English-speaking Americas).[9] To "continue this struggle" is to continue to construct what Bledsoe terms "spaces free from assumptions of black inhumanity and the varied concrete manifestations of these assumptions,"[10] which include all forms of violence that infringe upon the freedom, well-being, and livelihoods of Afro-descendants in the Americas. Human rights and socio-environmental justice are built into the modern-day "defense of territory" in the face of outsiders seeking to dispossess comunidades negras of this inheritance.

The defense of territory also entails the power to determine how life is carried out, which is why scholars note that "territory" more closely resembles the concept of territoriality for comunidades negras.[11] Comunidades negras are defined by this resistance, which spans past, present, and future generations. As Arturo Escobar explains:

> The Afro-Pacific concept of renacientes, "the reborn," referring to the continual renewal of life, embodies a local way of thinking about the sustainability of the life-worlds of the region's black communities. It is important to point out that appealing to ancestrality as a principle has nothing to do with a desire to "remain mired

> in the past," as critics often adduce. On the contrary, although defending territory for the sake of the renacientes is conceived in terms of an ancestral mandate, it is oriented toward the future—a future, however, in which the communities will be able to decide on their ways of life autonomously.[12]

Thus, returning to José's speech, the "multinationals, the governments, the insurgents, and the paramilitaries"[13] not only threaten the erasure or removal of Afro-descendants from comunidades negras, but also undermine or outright destroy the political potential of comunidades negras as places "in which the communities will be able to decide on their ways of life autonomously."[14] "Defending the territory" is therefore understood as a highly dangerous undertaking within the respective historical continuities of Afro-descendant and Indigenous peoples that has been ongoing since the colonization of the Americas.

Following José's speech, fellow PCN leader Harrison Cuero gave a PowerPoint presentation about current challenges to "the territory" in the Pacific region. He highlighted coca cultivation, aerial eradication, and illegal mining as the three most pressing issues affecting the comunidades negras present at the workshop. "Illegal mining" is a massive issue in the Pacific nowadays, especially in ethnic territories. The giant excavation machines that are brought in wreak havoc on forests and pollute waterways with mercury that is used to separate the gold from other minerals.

Armed groups (FARC, BACRIM) began mining for gold in the late 2000s, when the price of gold soared, as an alternative source of income and as a means to launder illicit income. In 2018, sixty-six percent of alluvial gold production in Colombia lacked technical or legal permissions.[15] Illegal mining operations are particularly concentrated in comunidades negras, which contain forty-seven percent of illegal mining activities in territories requiring prior consultation or special permission for mining (the other two areas are Indigenous reservations and national parks).[16] Illegal mining disrupts traditional gold mining practices that are far less environmentally harmful and serve as a source of modest income.[17]

When speaking of the cumulative impacts of coca cultivation, aerial eradication, and illegal mining on comunidades negras, a community council member of Río Cajamabre, Buenaventura, likened "the territory" to a piñata repeatedly being bashed: "So, there are now other logics functioning with regard to the use of territory—violence, coca, illegal mining—every one of these logics has brought . . . it's like the territory is a piñata that you take hits at. There comes a point when the piñata cannot take any more hits and the goodies spill out. And when that piñata breaks, everyone jumps in to tear it open."

So, while the piñata is the territory in this analogy, the goodies are the natural resources that external actors—guerillas, paramilitaries, BACRIM, multinationals, state subsidiaries—are vying for. And the hits are the extractivist "logics" transforming the territory physically and culturally.

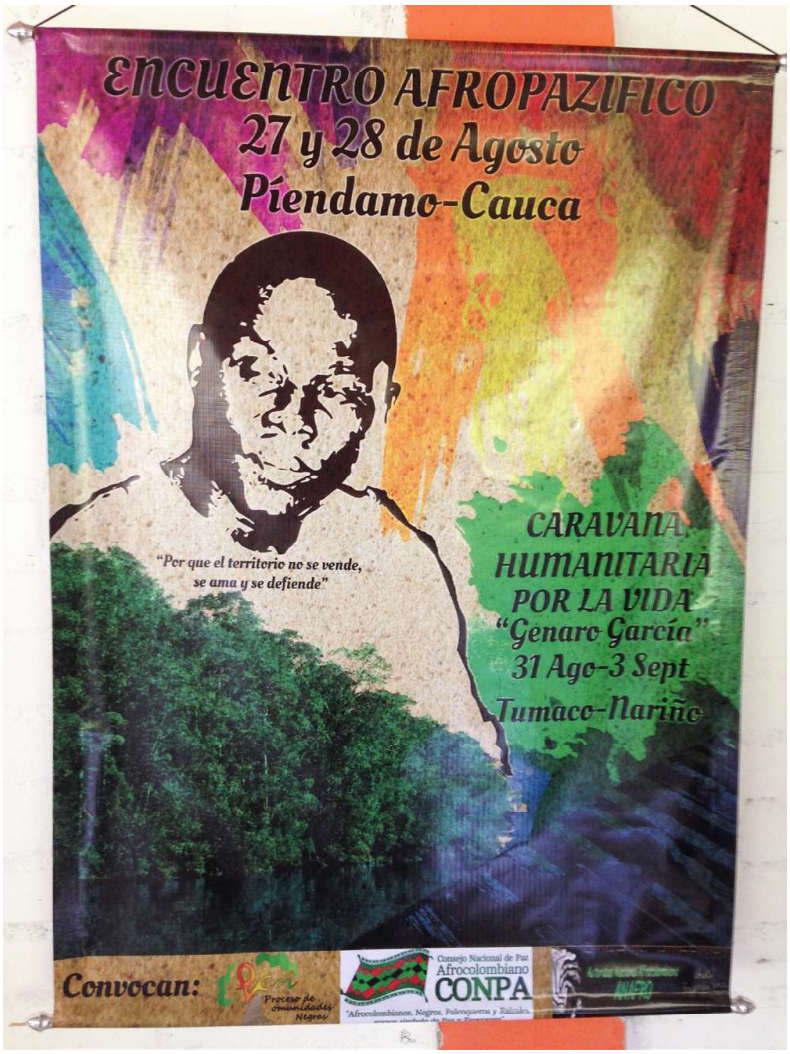


FIGURE 15. Poster for Encuentro AfroPazífico (photo: Author).

The *Caravana Humanitaria por la Vida* (Humanitarian Caravan for Life), mentioned on the right side of figure 15, took place a few days after Encuentro AfroPazífico. The caravan—constituted of Afro-descendants, Indigenous, and campesinos—traveled from Pasto to Tumaco to deliver food and supplies in the wake of multiple FARC attacks on Tumaco. The man pictured in the poster is Genaro García, former PCN leader and president of the community council of Alto Mira y Frontera near Tumaco, Nariño. Described as a tireless defender of comunidades negras, he was assassinated on his way to meet with FARC officials on August 3, 2015.[18] In 2008, the assassination of two community council members prompted many residents to flee the community. Despite threats from the FARC, Genaro continued to pursue the legal recognition of Alto Mira y Frontera as a comunidad negra, a process that was initiated in 2012.[19] The quote beneath the image of Genaro states, "The territory is not for sale, it is to be loved and

defended." The phrase *not for sale* specifically refers to the collective will to stand strong in the face of those attempting to leverage comunidades negras through violence and bribery (e.g., described in the introduction, when the least wise person in the community is offered money to "rent the land").

Genaro's death, along with the deaths of hundreds of other Afro-descendant and Indigenous leaders in recent years, is symptomatic of the "ecogenoethnocide" described in chapter 1.[20] It is irresponsible for scholars, journalists, and government officials (i.e., those capable of affecting the perception of Colombia's problems) to frame the physical violence of the civil war, drug trafficking, and the War on Drugs as phenomena *independent* of the exploitation and contamination of those same ecological spaces where the violence is taking place. For the PCN, both forms of violence constitute the incursion of capital and development projects.[21] The 2016 peace accord between the Colombian government and the FARC has not slowed this onslaught. In fact, the disbandment of the FARC created a vacuum of control over rural spaces, which has resulted in numerous BACRIM (criminal bands) fighting over control over those spaces. Afro-descendant and Indigenous community leaders have been murdered at a shockingly higher rate, with more than 500 human rights defenders slain in the years since the agreement was signed.[22]

For instance, in 2018 social leaders Jhonatan Cundumí Anchino and Jesús Orlando Grueso Obregón were murdered in Guapi, Cauca, for promoting the gradual and voluntary substitution of illicit crops as members of the National Coordinator of Coca, Poppy and Marijuana Growers (COCCAM). This initiative, part of the fourth point of the 2016 peace accord signed in Havana, specifically threatens the viability of coca cultivation in the region, which would be replaced by legal crops. Both men had joined the newly formed Common Alternative Revolutionary Force, now known as the Commons, the political party formed from the disbanding of the FARC. They advocated for illicit crop substitution despite receiving death threats and were gunned down by soldiers of one of the remaining guerilla groups in Colombia, the National Liberation Army (ELN).[23] Thus, while denouncing "extractive economic activities, megaprojects, and the effects of illicit drug production/prohibition," as emphasized above, may not be a bold undertaking for most citizens of the Global North, speaking out in this context will often result in death in the Global South.

Denouncement should be considered an initial step toward the formation of a "global environmental justice community" because it often occurs through open letters sent to international organizations and posted on social media accounts that circulate throughout the globe. For example, the reason I began research on the topic of aerial eradication is that I was forwarded a letter from an organization, COCOCAUCA, that described this War on Drugs strategy as the cause of death of an elderly man: "On August 20, 2012, helicopter gunships of the National Army and small planes conducted chemical warfare in the collective territory of the comunidades negras of Alto Guapi—Pacific coast of Cauca. . . . As a result of this

operation of chemical warfare, residents commented that grandfather Francisco Paz Cuenú, 80 years-old (who was in good health), fell ill and died at 4:00 a.m. on August 21, 2012 after that damn fumigation poison had fallen on the community."[24]

This excerpt of the letter contains three phrases that relate to "global" environmental justice studies. Two of these phrases, *chemical warfare* and *that damn fumigation poison*, can be discussed collectively. These phrases denounce aerial eradication as not only a malevolent practice, but one also purposefully carried out by institutions directed by the Colombian government (the Colombian government is explicitly called out later in the letter). Rather than urge the Colombian state to solve this injustice, the letter identifies the state as the principal perpetrator of injustice. As EJ scholar Laura Pulido suggests, "What is needed is to begin seeing the state as an adversary that must be confronted in a manner similar to industry."[25] Furthermore, and in relation to another assertion made by Pulido, the specific choice of the words *chemical warfare* and *that damn fumigation poison* emphasizes the *degree* of culpability of the state. Regarding the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, Pulido explains, "I use the word 'poisoning' deliberately. 'Contamination' can erase agency and consciousness. Poisoning suggests a deliberate and indeed evil act."[26] The heaviest assertion within this passage is the blaming of aerial eradication for the death of an elderly man. Such an assertion would likely fall under the list of "myths about aerial eradication" listed by the staff of the US Embassy (described in chapter 3). EJ scholars can assist in denouncement by investigating the merit of such claims and challenging official claims when appropriate.

For instance, INL officials contend that people blame aerial eradication for all sorts of maladies and environmental problems that are completely unfounded. The failure of licit crops can be attributed to fungi, insects, or cultivation chemicals that have nothing to do with aerial eradication. Rather than view the numerous claims against the aerial eradication program as an indictment of the program, INL officials regard the controversy as a lack of communication between the Colombian government agencies in charge of the program and a rural population with limited knowledge of how the program works.[27]

A perfect example of an assertion that had not been taken seriously as a repercussion of aerial eradication is the loss of *chontaduro* (peach palm) in the comunidades negras near Buenaventura. Peach palm was once a profitable, locally grown product in the communities of Río Calima, Valle del Cauca. Though it is still widely consumed in the southwestern Pacific region, it is now imported from elsewhere. Mario, a farmer whose land has never been sprayed, claims his chontaduro palms had been indirectly harmed by aerial eradication. His hypothesis is that beetles migrated from aerially fumigated palm trees in neighboring communities to his farm. Forced out of its original habitat, this beetle, locally referred to as *picudo negro*, is now hollowing out sections of chontaduro palms in its new habitat, thereby killing the trees.

The picudo negro occupied a new habitat when its original habitat was polluted. The displacement of this insect appears to have been disastrous for peach palm trees. As Samuel, another resident of Río Calima, complained, "We were rich in the cultivation of peach palm, and today there is not any, now it comes from Cauca, and it is not as tasty as ours." "The territory" encompasses all that exists within its boundaries, which includes humans, flora, and fauna.

The territory also encompasses more-than-humans, such as the visions mentioned at the beginning of this book (e.g., El Duende and La Tunda). Why are they relevant to the territory and the defense of territory? As detailed in chapter 1, the cultured space of human activity is intrinsically connected to the underworld of the supernatural in the ontologies of the Pacific region. Visions help establish an ethics of how people should interact with or treat others (humans and nonhumans) within their communities. For this reason the visions can also function as a means to warn against the necropower of *extractive economic activities, megaprojects, and the effects of illicit drug production/prohibition*.

#2) Defend the territory from within. The story of *El Guando* (alternatively spelled *El Guango*) is an example of an oral tradition meant to protect the territory from within. Featured in a popular Colombian children's book of visions, this story chronicles a solitary old man in the Pacific region whose reputation is that of a grumpy, greedy, and sickly individual without family. The old man refused to participate in communal traditions such as *velorios* (wakes), bragging that he preferred to stow away money rather than help carry the dead. To that end, he refused to help others in financial need and buried his money in a place that only he knew about. He insisted that when he died his body should be thrown into the river so that the vultures could feast on his remains. However, when he passed away, the entire community pitched in to cover the cost of his burial, holding a velorio for him despite his wish to be thrown into the river. His remains were transported to the cemetery in a casket (sometimes described as a *guando*, the term for a rustic stretcher) of *guadua* (local bamboo). During the procession, his remains got progressively heavier for the pallbearers to carry—so heavy that they collapsed a bridge while crossing it. The entire procession fell into the river and disappeared. Only the priest, children, and pregnant women who had remained at home survived the incident.[28] The souls of the dead were converted into a menacing vision, the apparition of the funeral procession that appears to those wandering through isolated and dark areas. For instance, Juan was once attacked by El Guando late at night while accompanying a friend who was on his way to serenade a young woman in a nearby village. They saw a bright light at three kilometers distance that approached rapidly, and he said that once he heard the sound of the maracas (the bones rattling in the coffin), he knew what they had to do. They recited prayers while lying face down in the form of a cross to protect themselves while this being passed over them.

The vision serves as a reminder of the destructive capacity of an individual only looking out for themself. An alternate version of this story, found in a collection of visions for an older audience, explains that the victim of El Guando is paralyzed by fear and hears a voice say, "*Meta el hombro, compañero!*" (Lend your shoulder, buddy!) This is a reference to the old man's refusal to help others, physically or financially. This alternate version also describes the kinds of people who come across El Guando: "The guando appears to the late-nighters, the drunkards, the greedy and cruel; to the petty, to the enemies of doing good for others and to those who will stop at nothing to make money."[29]

Though no one I have interviewed has explicitly made this connection, I find a striking resemblance between the lessons learned from El Guando and the arguments I have heard against coca cultivation in comunidades negras. In the first place, the person who decides to cultivate coca, especially at a large scale and without the permission of their fellow community members, is labeled selfish and greedy. Though not burying their money in the ground like El Guando, they conspicuously spend money on themselves and provoke resentment in the process. Second, unsanctioned illegal activities such as coca cultivation foster distrust among community members. Interviewees complained that because of the distrust, people are less inclined to help each other. "Lending a shoulder" or "lending a hand" for the sake of helping one's fellow neighbor in comunidades negras is known as *minga* (originally a Quechua term for collective action or work). A common complaint is that there was more minga before coca arrived in the region, both physically and financially. Finally, this greedy, selfish behavior ultimately leads to the downfall or destruction of the community. The entire funeral procession is swallowed by the river in the story of El Guando because of his lack of concern for anyone besides himself. Similarly, the individual cultivating coca or conducting other illegal activities is putting the rest of the community at risk. In the case of coca cultivation, some of the physical risks are the following: the infiltration of violent outsiders, contamination attributed to cultivation, contamination attributed to coca paste production, and contamination attributed to aerial eradication. In addition to transforming how people relate to each other, coca cultivation and other illegal activities are often associated with unwanted socioeconomic activities such as prostitution and gambling. Collectively these repercussions are analogous to the community being swallowed whole and becoming a ghost of itself.

The left side of figure 14 depicts my interpretation of El Guando as a vision associated with the cultivation of coca *without* the blessing of the community. The aerial eradication plane is flying over the funeral procession walking at the bank of a river. On the upper left side, you see the trees of the mangroves, and at the shore you see skulls, symbolizing the death and destruction associated with the old man's selfishness.

In "A History of the Environmental Justice Movement," Cole and Foster describe three traits that EJ activists have in common: (1) activists are motivated by the

conditions of the communities that they live in, (2) activists largely hail from poor and working-class backgrounds, and (3) activists are oriented toward achieving social justice.[30] Leaders and activists of comunidades negras possess those baseline traits as well. However, similar to formally recognized Indigenous reservations, comunidades negras are held to an environmental standard that environmental justice communities outside of this context are usually not held to. Comunidades negras, in the mold of Indigenous reservations elsewhere throughout the Americas, are granted collective land titles based on a unique relationship to the ecological spaces they occupy. In addition to having ancestral ties also to these spaces, these communities must also prove that they are environmental stewards.

Conceptualized through the lens of environmental justice studies, the leaders and activists of comunidades negras and Indigenous reservations, "motivated by the conditions of the communities that they live in," as Cole and Foster describe, are tasked with establishing an ecological ethics that fulfills state requirements for environmental stewardship *and* attends to the material needs of people often living without basic services such as potable water, electricity, hospitals, schools, etc. On the one hand, there is the pressure to carry on ways of living that are symbiotic with the surroundings, which can potentially lead to the essentialization or romanticization of comunidades negras. There is also the pressure to modernize and to develop economic activities that will generate wealth, create more infrastructure, and better connect these communities to domestic and international markets. Both sets of pressures materialize within and outside of these respective communities, but open communication and respect are key to consensus on important decisions that will affect everyone. The "*Process* of Black Communities" acknowledges that negotiating these pressures while remaining united is an ongoing struggle.[31]

Two examples of comunidades negras and coca cultivation demonstrate how consensus can result in dramatically different sets of ecological ethics and outcomes that defy essentialization. The first example is the comunidad negra of Río Yurumanguí near Buenaventura, which has a reputation for strong PCN leadership. In 2007, residents confronted an outsider who had cultivated twenty-seven hectares of coca within the boundary of their comunidad negra. Worried that the Colombian police would simply fumigate without warning, the community came together in the spirit of minga. Despite protests by the outsider, who falsely informed the Colombian police that the community was collaborating with the FARC, the community manually eradicated the coca before their land could be aerially fumigated.[32] In contrast, the second example, the comunidad negra of El Carmelo, on the Río Guajuí near Guapi, has *voluntarily* cultivated coca *and* engaged in illegal mining in recent decades. In the late 1990s, coca cultivation spread to the Pacific region after massive aerial eradication campaigns limited cocaine production elsewhere, such as the Colombian Amazon.[33] Coca cultivation was the principal economic activity in El Carmelo until 2005 when, to

distance itself from the problems associated with this illegal activity, the community decided to participate in *Familia Guardabosque*, a crop substitution program sponsored by the United Nations. However, aerial eradication operations eventually expanded to the Pacific region as well, and the community's plots of *legal* substitute crops were aerially fumigated. In 2011 the residents of El Carmelo then decided to invest their resources in gold mining, first in traditional pan mining and later in large-scale mining operations that require heavy machinery. Despite conducting this activity on their own collectively titled land, they were still subject to the government bureaucracy required for *legal* mining permits. In other words, mining in their own community was considered *illegal* according to Colombian law. The irony of this situation is that it is easier for a foreign company, equipped with requisite finances and legal team, to *legally* mine in the Pacific region than it is for a comunidad negra. After considering the soil and water damage incurred by their own mining operations as well as the news that the Colombian government was unable to reinstate aerial eradication operations in 2021, the community of El Carmelo recently decided to concentrate its resources in cultivating coca again.[34]

These contrasting examples demonstrate that there is no set blueprint for defending the territory from within or establishing the ecological ethics of comunidades negras. As environmental justice communities, they face the unique challenge of achieving community consensus while balancing external perceptions with internal needs. While the residents of Río Yurumanguí collectively eliminated the threat of aerial eradication by manually eradicating the coca of an outsider, the residents of El Carmelo collectively decided to conduct *illegal* activities when the *legal* pathways to economic improvement were not viable.

Should the comunidad negra of El Carmelo be considered an environmental justice community if it willfully conducted environmentally harmful economic activities? Or is this an example of an environmental justice community looking beyond state mechanisms (government bureaucracies) capable of proliferating the very necropolitical ecologies they are threatened by? Regardless of how those of us with enough environmental privilege to avoid these circumstances might judge this example, the community has articulated its version of defending the territory. At the very least, the profits generated by El Carmelo's economic activities went toward the community itself and not toward the expansion of the necropolitical actors seeking to displace its residents. Furthermore, in self-determining its economic activities, it thwarted outside actors from extracting El Carmelo's most valuable resource, its resolve as a community.

#3) Defend the territory externally. The story of *El Buque Fantasma*, also sometimes referred to as *El Buque Maravelí*, can be interpreted as a threat to the territory that prompts an external mechanism of defense. It is the vision of a ghost pirate ship that travels by night, frequently spotted during Holy Week, when various visions take advantage of Christ's absence from earth to cause havoc. Although the ship enters ports quietly, it is mostly known for sights and sounds

of revelry—parties, dancing, laughter, screams, and "irreverent" behaviors.[35] The following passage describes its passengers and crew:

> Legend has it that they are old bandits, murderers, cunning, spiteful and vengeful types; sectarian politicians, religious types who have lost their way, and merchant thieves. It is the theater of witches and traitors, of people in coats and boot leggings.
>
> The captain calls the list, and the prisoners respond, "present!" It is the frightful hour. To hear one's name is to understand that one becomes part of that world of galley slaves, of those left for dead. The wave of emotions incurred will lead to annihilation within weeks.
>
> Among these travelers with skinny legs, emaciated arms, sagging chests, wrinkled faces, and bulging eyes, are placed one's enemies. People in Tumaco often heard the names called of those who exploit for rubber and cocoa, while people in Barbacoas often heard the names of those made famous through the slave trade. . . .
>
> Be it suggestion or another force, the person whose name is called dies prematurely. He begins to weaken and become sad, he becomes morally angry and avoids all struggle. Leisure takes a hold of his life and his thoughts race. Hearing this mysterious call, the voices from beyond the grave, his heart is excited and he becomes fatigued. Feelings and sleeplessness, concerns and memories, everything that eats away the soul, shakes it and disjoins it, leads to loneliness and abandonment.[36]

It is said that to stare at the ship is to lose oneself completely; it is to lose one's memory, to become frail, and never to return.[37] Perhaps because to stare at the revelry of the ghost ship is to daydream about the festivities taking place and to forget how that wealth was accumulated. The transfixed become part of the challenge of defending the territory from within, those susceptible to falling into a morally corrupt lifestyle, forgetting their values and relationships in the process.

The names heard in the towns Tumaco and Barbacoas are representative of external threats to the territory. They are the foreign (Spanish-descended) enemies of the local Afro-descendant and Indigenous populations of this southwestern corner of Colombia. Plantation owners (i.e., "those who exploit for rubber and cocoa") and slave traders capitalized on the non/human resources of the region for their own benefit, generating excesses of wealth that financed the kinds of hedonistic activities taking place on the ship. The names called were those associated with the necropolitical ecologies of the colonial era, extracting value to expand the occupation and exploitation of the region. The description of the person doomed to "annihilation" is a projection of the thoughts and feelings wished upon the plantation owner or slave trader. The people of Tumaco and Barbacoas hope that the deeds of these men lead them to feel remorse, to feel sadness, and to prematurely die a lonely death.

El Buque Fantasma therefore is symbolic of another challenge of comunidades negras as environmental justice communities, the challenge of defending the territory from infiltration and exploitation by external actors. Pirates are known for robbery on the high seas, and for thwarting the colonial power's extraction of

natural resources from the colonies. They operate outside of the law, trafficking contraband and extracting from the extractors. One modern-day equivalent of the ghost pirate ship could be a drug-trafficking vessel, which takes a variety of forms. It may take the appearance of freight smuggled through a legal cargo ship leaving the port of Buenaventura. It may take the appearance of a submarine designed specifically for transporting illegal cargo. Or it may take the appearance of a modest fishing vessel towing an illegal shipment in a submarine-like container. The DEA's massive efforts to deter illegal drug trafficking from South America to Miami (via the Caribbean) eventually paved the way for another major drug corridor through Central America and Mexico. Colombia's Pacific coast is a convenient embarkation point for "noncommercial" (not registered by port authorities) "maritime events" (boat routes) suspected of drug trafficking.[38]

Similar to the ghost pirate ship, the drug-trafficking vessel enters and exits port inconspicuously. However, the traffickers themselves, a mix of people from emergent Colombian criminal bands and Mexican cartels, are inclined to host their hedonistic festivities ashore. Impressionable youth, enticed by the money, women, and general extravagance of the trafficker lifestyle, are those susceptible to becoming transfixed by the ghost ship in this analogy.

The lower portion of figure 14 situates El Buque Fantasma in the context of modern-day drug trafficking. The contraband being loaded onto the pirate ship is kilos of cocaine, a product extracted from the Pacific via violence and pollution. The ship is surrounded by haunting specters that remind the viewer that this deadly operation is cloaked in darkness, both literally and figuratively. Those who pose a threat to this transaction are forced to walk the plank (depicted on the right side of the ship).

The physical geography of Colombia's Pacific coast facilitates outsider access to its shores. In the following passage, Colombian anthropologist Eduardo Restrepo explains how coca paste (described as "alkaloid") is transported from laboratories (adjacent to coca fields) directly and indirectly (via the port of Buenaventura) to Central America and Mexico: "The morphology of the southern Pacific Coast, replete with estuaries and mangroves, crossed by countless rivers and tributaries that penetrate deep into rainforests, facilitates the travel of small rapid boats with which to transport the alkaloid to Central America, and from there, to North America. At the same time, the continuous flow of cargo vessels transporting timber coming from the dozens of sawmills camouflage the drugs headed to the port of Buenaventura."[39]

The estuaries also provide sanctuary for boats evading the Colombian Coast Guard and other authorities. For instance, in the Chocó, the department (province) that occupies the bulk of Colombia's Pacific coast, I visited the Nabugá Waterfall on the land of the Emberá Indigenous peoples. I was part of a group of tourists that had to request permission to visit the waterfall. We were greeted by the community upon disembarking from our boat onto the beach. Within a

minute we were also met and questioned by a group of soldiers, encamped near the Emberá village. Once away from soldiers, I asked one of the villagers guiding us to the waterfall why the soldiers were there. They explained that drug traffickers would often hide in the nearby estuary and had murdered villagers in the past. The soldiers were there to protect the Emberá from future violence.

Most residents of comunidades negras I have spoken with have expressed distrust in the Colombian armed forces, including the police. The general perception among PCN leaders is that the safest way to eliminate illicit crops is to prohibit outsiders from intruding on their collectively titled lands. This perspective is rooted in a general distrust of the Colombian military, which aside from its history of permitting paramilitary groups to perpetuate violence against poor rural communities, is perceived as unwilling to protect the boundaries of comunidades negras. Escobar mentions the military's history of passivity in the context of coca cultivation in the Pacific: "Not infrequently, one finds in some areas a river controlled by guerillas next to another controlled by paramilitaries, both pushing people to plant coca, while the army keeps watch a few kilometers downstream."[40] Mario Angulo, the director of the PCN office in Buenaventura, expressed similar frustrations while reflecting on the history of counternarcotics in Buenaventura:

> If we consider the current state of counternarcotics policy, instead of resolving the problem what has really happened is the problem has worsened. Before, here in the Pacific, there was only trafficking but now the plant is being cultivated and processed. The police have actually limited the mobility of the farmer and not the people responsible for the production. In our case in Buenaventura, in the communities of Calima and Anchicayá, native residents were not responsible for the majority of the production; outsiders were primarily responsible. Native residents were the auxiliaries and they helped secure supplies. The supplies were transported through the territory without any problems, but the difficulties occurred when they tried to send remittances. . . . Our point is that there has never been a military decision to rid the territory of coca cultivation and trafficking, because if they wanted to do that, they could have done that already. The only way to reach the Pacific from the interior is through Buenaventura or Tumaco. So, if you controlled those roads, the Pacific region would be free of all this; not just the coca crops but also the illegal mining.[41]

In sum, Mario believes that aerial eradication would have never been necessary if the Colombian military had prevented traffickers from entering the region in the first place. Alfonso of Río San Francisco, Guapi, similarly complained: "The government should be responsible for removing these outsiders cultivating coca or bringing in their mining machinery!"

Inspired by an organization in the Chocó, PCN leader José Santos Caicedo proposed the idea of forming a local armed guard as a physical defense of the territory from unwanted intruders: "The National Autonomous Congress of the Black Community in Quibdó commissioned a mechanism, *la Guardia Cimarrona* [the Maroon Guard], which is similar to the state's armed forces. It was formed so that

there is no trespassing on or meddling in their territory. We, as members of community councils, should create our own security structure, which would allow us to exercise control. So that when someone enters our territory, they are required to ask us permission and we may authorize or reject their request to enter."[42]

In other words, if the Colombian military is not going to protect comunidades negras by keeping illegal armed actors out of their territory, then they should take steps toward guaranteeing their own safety.[43] Yet to date, no such self-defense organization has been formed in the comunidades negras of the southwestern Pacific region.

In the meantime, the primary strategy for comunidades negras and peoples of Indigenous reservations to defend their respective territories (i.e., prevent the intrusion of outsiders and unsanctioned activities) is to demand consulta previa (prior consultation). As detailed in chapter 3, however, the officials I interviewed in the Colombian Ministry of Justice and the Counternarcotics Police (DIRAN) had insisted that comunidades negras were subject to aerial eradication without prior consultation. Despite this insistence, demanding the right to prior consultation has persisted as a viable option for the defense of territory.

Colombia ratified the International Labour Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 169 in 1991, the same year the country adopted its new constitution. Article 6 of Convention 169 stipulates that "governments shall consult the peoples concerned, through appropriate procedures and in particular through their representative institutions, whenever consideration is being given to legislative or administrative measures which may affect them directly."[44] However, since Convention 169 was ratified but not explicitly written into the new Colombian constitution, "prior, free and informed consultation" (i.e., the way "previous consultation" is often phrased in Colombia) has been established through jurisprudence. In other words, the activities that require prior consultation with comunidades negras or peoples of an Indigenous reservation are determined by court cases that interpret this international agreement. Those court rulings then set precedents for what "appropriate procedures" are moving forward.

To date, twenty-four countries across the world (most of which are in the Americas) have ratified Convention 169 since its creation in 1989.[45] Collectively titled Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in these countries have demanded prior consultation for a wide range of circumstances beyond the War on Drugs. Some common reasons why prior consultation has been invoked include activities not commissioned by communities themselves, such as dam construction, roadway construction, pipeline construction, mining operations, etc. *Prior consultation should therefore be recognized as a vitally important instrument of global environmental justice.* Why an instrument of environmental justice? The mandate to determine what is best for a collectively titled community rests with each community itself. The countries that initially ratified Convention 169 did so acknowledging that their Indigenous populations had been subject to settler violence,

often perpetrated for the sake of unsanctioned activities such as those mentioned above. Such activities, just a few examples from a much wider spectrum of violently imposed megaprojects and extractive operations, certainly fit the definition of environmental racism.

Why should prior consultation be considered an instrument of *global* environmental justice? In the first place, Convention 169 is an international agreement that spans the countries that have ratified it and exists as a source of pressure for countries that have not ratified it yet. That pressure emerges from nation-states and global citizens who now can identify a transgression such as the infamous construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline as a "violation of prior consultation," even though the United States has not ratified the agreement. Second, the parameters of prior consultation are constantly being determined in courts throughout different nation-states as well as in transnational courts. For example, the original version of Convention 169 was not necessarily meant to apply to Afro-descendant peoples. Two court decisions by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the 2000s classified the Moiwana and Saramaka communities as people of African descent assimilated to "tribal peoples" in Suriname. These rulings provided precedent for people of rural Afro-descendant communities elsewhere to be consulted about activities conducted within their collectively titled lands.[46] The timing of this decision at least partially explains why it has been challenging for many comunidades negras to be granted prior consultations. Though the Colombian government began the process of formally recognizing comunidades negras in the 1990s and ratified Convention 169 in 1991, prior consultation only became a viable option for these communities as legal systems, both nationally and internationally, slowly churned out favorable precedents (decisions in favor of prior consultation).

In the context of aerial eradication, many comunidades negras have long insisted that they should be granted prior consultation. For example, another excerpt from the COCOCAUCA letter that inspired me to conduct research on aerial eradication states:

> We demand that the Colombian government suspend these devilish actions and initiate a process of agreement with the communities on its counter-narcotics policies, that it proceeds to respect and abide by the agreements and pacts signed by Colombia with the international community, such as prior, free and informed consultation based on ILO Convention 169.
>
> We are alerting the national and international communities about the events that are happening so that they may urge the national government to immediately suspend all forms of violations, including fumigations.[47]

The letter (written in 2012) not only invokes the terms of Convention 169, but also calls upon the international community to apply pressure on the Colombian government to abide by the agreement.

After enduring decades of aerial eradication, some communities are finally being granted prior consultation to determine the best pathway forward. For instance, a 2021 ruling by the Superior Court of Pasto halted the reinstatement of aerial eradication operations in Nariño, which had been the most heavily fumigated department in recent history. The court mandated that operations could only resume if the comunidades negras and peoples of Indigenous reservations targeted for fumigation were consulted, per the fourth point of the 2016 peace agreement with the FARC, which favors eradication via the "voluntary substitution of illicit crops."[48]

The denial or disregard of prior consultation is also a critical element of ongoing court cases that fit the mold of "global environmental justice." *My involvement in one such case* and *access to information in another case* began with a very memorable encounter. Per the recommendation of a PCN leader, I called Silvano, a council member of the comunidad negra Río Anchicayá, who I could barely understand over the phone. I intended to talk to Silvano about how his community has been impacted by aerial eradication. When we met in person, however, I immediately regretted setting up the interview. We were to meet in downtown Cali for lunch. After waiting for 45 minutes with no sign of Silvano and no response to my phone calls and texts, I ordered lunch and proceeded to eat. A few bites into my meal, a flustered Silvano arrived, complaining that his previous meeting had run long and that his cell phone had died. I offered him a menu, and he proceeded to look at it in silence while I rambled through an introduction of my research. I asked him some questions about himself, but he did not say a word for a few minutes, looking upset that I had begun to eat without him and disinterested in the menu. He eventually ordered and continued to sit in silence for what felt like eternity. When his lunch was served, he devoured it quickly. Blood sugar level restored; he then spoke uninterrupted for five minutes. He repeatedly encouraged me to talk to an attorney named Germán Silvano explained that the attorney was representing his community in the case of a dam that had been opened and had flooded his community with sediment. I could not understand why he wanted me to talk to this attorney so badly, because the dam incident had nothing to with aerial eradication. However, Silvano was adamant that the attorney had another case that would interest me. It turns out that both court cases have been fundamental to my understanding of defending the territory externally, which in turn prompted me to think about a global environmental justice framework.

Soon after my interview with Silvano, I met Germán Ospina, a gregarious attorney who has frequently used the term *justicia ambiental* (environmental justice) to refer to the cases he has worked on. He asked me a series of questions about my research and then enthusiastically explained that he was working on a collective-action court case in the department of Cauca, where 27,000+ Colombians were suing the Colombian Police for health and environmental damages caused by the aerial eradication of

coca. Germán was excited to meet someone with my expertise. In fact, because my research centered on the disconnect between aerial eradication policymakers and the comunidades negras most impacted by spraying, I was the most informed person he had ever engaged on the subject. Germán invited me to Popayán, the capital of Cauca and the location of the court ruling on this case, to look at the evidence. With the judge's permission, I was granted access to roughly thirty boxes of evidence. As this was my first time reviewing the evidence of any court case, I was immediately overwhelmed by the sheer amount of numbers and details contained in those boxes. For the defendants—the Colombian Counternarcotics Police (DIRAN), which is the branch of the Colombian Police that conducts aerial eradication operations—evidence primarily consisted of the paperwork filed for the approval of each aerial eradication mission as well as the logistics of each complete, incomplete, or aborted mission (e.g., details such as flight time/date, GPS coordinates, wind speed, amount of chemical sprayed, amount of fuel expended, etc.).

After analyzing the evidence, I found that DIRAN is absolving itself of admitting any wrongdoing in the case by demonstrating that officials, as well as the pilots contracted for aerial eradication, followed protocols. In other words, how could there be health and environmental damages if those conducting operations followed the established rules? However, what is not explained in the defense's box of evidence is that protocols are not only subject to interpretation, but also biased against poor rural Colombians. Since a court of law cannot see what the pilot saw during their mission, aerial eradication operations are legible only through the paperwork mandated for each mission. If an aggrieved farmer wished to file a complaint, they were required to document similar information, such as the time/date of the spraying, the GPS coordinates of their farm lot, calculations for the value of the crops damaged, etc. In other words, the farmers—people with drastically less financial and technological means to collect data and download/upload the paperwork via the internet (many farmers were lucky if they had electricity)—were being asked to furnish proof on the same scale as that provided by the well-equipped staff of aerial eradication operations.[49]

Unknowingly in the moment, I had taken my first step toward becoming part of a transnational environmental justice court case. Since comunidades negras were a subset of the plaintiffs in the aerial eradication case, I was particularly interested in how those communities leveraged their status as collectively titled rural ethnic communities in their demands for restitution. Since then, I have also wondered how the term *environmental justice* has been operationalized outside of the context of its place of origin (i.e., communities of color demanding restitution for environmental racism in the United States).

I recently asked Germán how he understands *environmental justice*, a term quickly gaining popularity throughout the world, including in the 2022 Colombian presidential election. Germán replied:

> I use that, not only for environmental justice, but also for social justice. That term was used by President Petro when he spoke of the three axes of his government policy: peace, social justice, and environmental justice. So of course, the cases of Anchicayá and aerial fumigation fall between environmental and social justice. I understand environmental justice through formal justice, through institutions . . . we generally talk about vulnerable people, which is a social issue. So, with these communities, what justice does is prevent or repair damage that has been caused, generally not by these social groups. And environmental justice in the same sense seeks to prevent or repair damage that has been caused to the environment.[50]

Germán defines environmental justice quite literally, as many outside the realms of environmental justice movements and studies do. He understands it to mean legal justice for people vulnerable to environmental damages that they did not cause. Germán, drawing from President Petro's use of the term, also importantly points out that environmental justice is related to social justice, though he does not explicitly signal race or other social categories that make environmental justice inextricable from social issues. He also does not mention a critical element of environmental justice, which is that environmental justice movements stem from the activism of the communities suffering environmental racism. Beyond a lack of familiarity with environmental justice literature, this omission might also be attributed to the way Germán became involved in this court case.

In 2006 Germán became involved in the aerial eradication court case when an official from the United Nations investigating the claims invited him to join the case. The United Nations sponsors "laboratories for peace" across different regions of Colombia with the dual intent of providing reconciliation for communities afflicted by the armed conflict and strengthening the capacity of local institutions. The laboratory for peace in the department of Cauca helped organize local leadership and facilitated a large meeting for the multitude of communities impacted by aerial eradication. To avoid competition between different communities, each filed its own grievance against DIRAN. *La campesinada* (the peasantry) comprised the bulk of the plaintiffs represented in the court case, which made Germán's work more difficult because these communities were far less organized than resguardos indígenas. This was particularly so because Germán traveled to each community represented in the case, one at a time, to explain how the legal proceedings would unfold. The case was originally presented in court in 2010 and continued to expand as aerial eradication operations continued over the years. It has also expanded geographically as new communities subject to aerial eradication have been added to the case. In 2012, the comunidades negras of the Pacific coast of Cauca, who were increasingly subject to the impacts of aerial eradication as these operations expanded, were added to the case.[51]

With so many people represented across so many communities, Germán opted for the legal strategy of *prueba diabólica* (diabolic proof), which, in modern legal terms, means that no one can be forced to demonstrate the impossible, to defend

their rights and claims. In other words, the legal strategy was not to prove that all these communities met the standard "to not to be fumigated." Rather the strategy was to establish that aerial eradication should have never been conducted because it caused so much damage.[52] The evidence for the plaintiffs, therefore, largely hinges upon what was damaged because of the sprayings. Damages include material losses, such as amounts of crops ruined, as well as the immaterial, such as the loss of access to areas important for cultural practices. So, while the defendants (DIRAN) provided the court of Popayán with boxes and boxes of aerial eradication operations paperwork, the evidence of the plaintiffs (the 27,000 Colombians represented in the case) mostly consisted of estimates. As the lead attorney, Germán has sought assistance and engagement from several organizations, including the following:

- *La Defensoría del Pueblo*—The Department of Advocacy for the People, a Colombian government office, facilitated and financed the acquisition of evidence of damages (distributed resources to other organizations).
- *Universidad del Cauca*—A group of researchers from the local university, experts from various academic fields, submitted reports on the kinds of damages incurred.
- Earth Economics—This transnational NGO utilized econometrics to assess the value of damages.
- BioDiversa—This transnational NGO assisted in determining damages and assessing value of natural resources.
- *Abogados sin Fronteras*—Lawyers without Borders supported the argument that the plaintiffs were victims of the armed conflict.
- *Corporación Viso Mutop*—This international drug policy organization assisted with the comprehension of international agreements.

The last two organizations have been instrumental in leveraging international agreements and drawing international attention case to the case. The other organizations in the list have primarily been concerned with assessing the monetary value of what was damaged by aerial eradication.

While many aspects of this court case are complicated, assessing the value of what was damaged is an extremely subjective process that must *appear* as objective as possible to the Colombian court system. The reason these processes are so complicated is that the value of any given resource or practice cannot be abstracted from a cultural context. For instance, the monetary value of a banana plant to someone in the capital city of Colombia might simply be the cost of the bananas the plant produces. The value of the same plant for a comunidad negra in the Pacific region could include the same base cost of the bananas produced but could also potentially include the value of other aspects of the plant that are useful for shelter (e.g., leaves are used for thatched roofing), medicinal remedies (e.g., different parts of the plant are used to treat a wide variety of ailments), and traditional

beliefs (e.g., women of comunidades negras are encouraged to eat bananas during pregnancy). However, for those other values of the banana tree to become legible in a different cultural context, anthropologists and other social scientists must collect data to determine how each resource is valued within the context of the respective communities. This is another reason why comunidades negras have collaborated with external organizations, particularly those that can promote the acceptance and legibility of their knowledge production in courts of law.

#4) Collaborate with external actors and organizations that elevate or validate locally produced knowledge. *El Hojarasquín* is a vision that appears as the amalgamation of man, flora, and fauna. He is known for both disappearing people in the forest and helping people find their way out of the forest. He is sometimes depicted as a tree with limbs like a human as well as the hooves and claws of an animal (see the right side of figure 14). El Hojarasquín will invert his steps to leave hoof prints that lead hunters astray, protecting the animals under his guardianship.[53] His body contains flowers such as "intoxicating poppies," fruits such as "erotic pears," and shrubs such as "myrtle for prosperity."[54] As explained in a popular children's book, "El Hojarasquín enjoys the presence of the Amazons and the Indigenous people, he views settlers with suspicion, he confronts those who want to steal his medicinal secrets; he entangles intruders with vines until they are lost and then he returns them [to where they came from]."[55] Similar to other visions discussed in this book, especially La Madremonte and La Patasola (chapter 1), El Hojarasquín sets boundaries for Euro-American settlers seeking to exploit the resources of new areas. At the same time—as an entity with human, animal, and plant traits—El Hojarasquín blurs the boundaries of the typologies established by biologists and other scientists classifying elements of the "natural world." While the effects of some of his natural resources (e.g., "intoxicating poppies") have been studied, El Hojarasquín possesses far more medicinal secrets that have yet to be discovered by scientists. He is therefore representative of the challenge of determining the value of environmental damages across different cultures when the questions, What should be considered damage? and What exactly was damaged? subordinate local knowledge to the dominant culture's assessments.

Returning to the collective-action aerial eradication court case, it would be impossible to calculate the value of everything (e.g., natural resources, agricultural products, animal products, medicinal products, etc.) that was lost or damaged in a court case of this scale. Furthermore, just to produce estimates of the damages requires a monumental amount of effort, coordination, and trust. When ecosystems are compromised by invasive activities such as aerial eradication or hydraulic mining, there is a tendency to undervalue that which is not commoditized because in general things not produced as commodities are undertheorized.[56] Claudia Leal, historian of the Pacific lowlands of Colombia, critically identifies this trend as a problem with agrarian studies, which "often treat land as an abstraction, even if the land that peasants eagerly desire and fight for has specific traits and might

actually include marshes or forests valuable for reasons different than their capacity to sustain crops."[57]

In 2008, *Asociación Manos Negras* (AsoManosNegra), an Afro-Colombian women's organization for the defense of the environment and Black culture, published a study on the effects of aerial eradication in the municipalities of Timbiquí and Guapi, both in the department of Cauca. AsoManosNegra conducted 883 surveys, which determined that 3,238 hectares and 6,282 people of the two municipalities had been impacted by aerial eradication. The report also contained testimony from thirty-six interviews and observations from seventeen visits to farm plots that had been fumigated. The findings detail the following: the percentage of people impacted in each municipality, the kinds of food crops ruined, the kinds of farm animals affected, the various human health problems caused, other plant life damaged, marine life damaged, and soil contamination. The organization summoned local government agencies, a local research institute, and the community councils of the respective comunidades negras to discuss these findings.[58] The leader of this process, AsoManosNegra founder Yolanda García, eventually testified in court about the effects of aerial eradication in Cauca. She remembers that, despite her sending the report to the government offices present in the court that day, officials of the Ministry of Justice and other government ministries denied ever seeing the report and doubted its standards of technical validity. They asked her how she, "an ordinary resident of the Pacific," would know about the effects of aerial eradication, and they denied that the chemical sprayed contained glyphosate. Despite the monumental effort and coordination required to generate their report, AsoManosNegra's attempt at highlighting the problems associated with aerial eradication was not taken seriously.[59] In other words, the data collected by Afro-Colombian women—with firsthand knowledge of how aerial eradication impacted the most vulnerable members of the community, such as children, pregnant women, and the elderly—were not worthy of consideration by a powerful group of men who do not live in this area subjected to this controversial War on Drugs strategy.

Given the poor reception of this report as well as other community-led research reports on aerial eradication, which is a commonplace phenomenon in the context of environmental injustices happening throughout the globe, Germán understood the importance of collaborating with transnational actors and organizations with greater perceived qualifications. To that end, he contacted Earth Economics to provide calculations of damages for the collective-action case.

The 2018 damage assessment report published by Earth Economics lists ninety-three *veredas* (hamlets) spread across seven different municipalities in the Cauca department, totaling 236,699 hectares of land impacted by aerial eradication.[60] In order to provide the Superior Court of Popayán with a range of estimates for the total amount requested in the settlement, Earth Economics utilized calculations from regions with similar topographies (e.g., croplands, forests, pastures, water,

wetlands, mangroves) elsewhere in the world. The value of those respective topographies was assessed via an "ecosystem services" model, which considers how changes in an ecosystem will impact human welfare in monetary terms: Costanza et al., the authors of a foundational article on the topic, explain, "Ecosystem services consist of flows of materials, energy, and information from natural capital stocks which combine with manufactured and human capital services to produce human welfare. . . . In general, changes in particular forms of natural capital and ecosystem services will alter the costs or benefits of maintaining human welfare."[61] For example, values were generated based on the size and type of topography associated with some of the following ecosystem services:

- Climate stability
- Cultural value
- Reduction of natural disasters
- Energy and raw materials
- Food
- Habitat for species
- Medicinal plants
- Recreation and tourism
- Soil quality
- Soil retention
- Capture, transport, and supply of water
- Water quality
- Water storage[62]

Although highly imperfect, because it does not capture every way that natural resources are utilized, the framework documents elements of local understandings of the value of specific resources within categories legible to state institutions such as the superior courts.

Within the academic context, these organizations, such as Earth Economics, that assess and calculate the damages are addressing two related dilemmas of two related fields, political ecology and environmental justice studies. The first dilemma is incommensurability, which is the notion that there is no common unit of measurement for the value of ecological resources.[63] For instance, Yolanda García made these observations about the complaint form that farmers were required to fill out for wrongful damages caused by aerial eradication: "Communities do not even talk about hectares because it is not a measurement they use. They talk about other measurements we have never heard of before. Meanwhile, we will say that my piece of land goes from the ravine to the river. People do not know exactly how many hectares or how many square meters . . . it is a totally technical language that is not of the communities."[64]

Furthermore, if a resource is attributed a monetary value for the sake of environmental reparations, in what sense does this monetization transform the

perception of that resource? If, hypothetically speaking, a banana tree were valued way more than a mango tree, would this valuation lead to more banana cultivation, thereby impacting the diversification of crops in the community moving forward?

The second dilemma is how locally produced knowledge is assessed outside of its cultural context. To be clear, elevating or validating locally produced knowledge is implicitly hierarchical because it assumes that the dominant cultural group can and should determine the worth of the information produced by the subordinate group. The fact that external actors and organizations have been instrumental to demonstrating the repercussions of aerial eradication is emblematic of the distrust between comunidades negras (and other peoples impacted by aerial eradication) and government institutions, such as DIRAN or the US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). For instance, comunidades negras have been complaining about the damages incurred by aerial eradication for decades. Their claims for reparations require legitimation from social scientists because the Colombian legal system, largely constituted of educated urban whites and mestizos, is inclined to marginalize evidence of aerial eradication damages provided by poor rural communities, such as comunidades negras, within "hierarchies of credibility."[65] One of the main reasons why the ecosystem services approach has been successful in court cases throughout the world is that the sheer volume of numbers collected and calculated is impressive and ascribes a level of technical authority way beyond the means of peasant communities.

Collectively, these dilemmas speak to the difficulties of articulating a global environmental justice framework. In the first place, the term *incommensurability* also applies to the concept of justice. "Justice" for some communities may look like reparations for what was damaged or lost. However, justice should not be narrowly defined by financial settlement in courts of law. Nor can justice be understood as the termination of environmental degradation in one location if that ultimately results in the degradation of a new location. Consider the fact that coca cultivation arrived in the Pacific region after the Colombian Amazonian region was heavily fumigated and *cocaleros* (peasant coca growers) launched a massive campaign to stop the spraying.[66] Second, environmental justice movements must think beyond state-based solutions to environmental racism because government mismanagement, negligence, or outright discriminatory laws/policies/practices are often at the root of the injustice being suffered.[67] At the same time, environmental justice communities should not have to rely on external actors to elevate or validate local epistemologies, which means that they should not be wedded to state-sanctioned forms of knowledge validation. The hierarchies of credibility that marginalize the knowledge production of comunidades negras are an extension of what Escobar describes as the patriarchal Western perception of nature: "In this culture, which engulfs most modern humans, we live in mistrust and seek certitude through control, including control of the natural world."[68] Escobar, therefore, emphasizes

the importance of seeing "patriarchy as an active historical reality" to subvert this hierarchical order.[69]

One potential pathway through these dilemmas for the articulation of a global environmental justice framework is to consider how EJ communities such as comunidades negras are critical to transforming the global landscape of environmental rights.

#5) Promote pluriversal understandings of environmental justice. Another way to conceptualize why visions—such as El Duende or La Tunda or visions in general—are seen less or talked about less is to think in terms of "ontological space." Perhaps there is simply less room for supernatural visions or whatever lies outside the boundaries of the scientifically provable nowadays. The concept of "the pluriverse" is an academic acknowledgement of what countless societies implicitly know; there are many alternatives to modern western ways of thinking and existing. *The pluriverse* acknowledges the ubiquity of ontologies and epistemologies that challenge the singularity of the modernizing *universe*. This includes the recognition of the following: preexisting ontologies of the Global South,[70] counterhegemonic political movements throughout the world,[71] and efforts to incorporate these knowledges into new ways of being in the Global North.[72] Ultimately, noted decolonial scholar Mignolo explains, "pluriversality becomes the decolonial way of dealing with forms of knowledge and meaning exceeding the limited regulations of epistemology and hermeneutics."[73]

The center of figure 14 depicts this question of ontological possibilities and space. It shows "modern man" exiting an ontological space where elements of the supernatural exist (behind him). He is stepping forward (presumably, in a modern direction), but the reader's vision is drawn to the question mark in the middle. The question, Will the visions survive the Anthropocene? is tied to the question, Will other ways of existing in the world survive the Anthropocene?

While conversations about the pluriverse are mostly confined to the realm of academia, sometimes the pluriverse makes itself apparent in unexpected ways. For instance, my parents were originally confused by the idea of the book you are reading but eventually understood why I have woven elements of the supernatural or more-than-human into this narrative about environmental justice. They recently returned from a vacation in Cancún, México, where a local taxi driver took them to the Mayan ruins of Tulum. Along the way, the taxi driver explained that one of the overpasses they were crossing, the Nizuc-Cancún bridge, had an interesting history. In the 1990s construction crews tried to build the overpass multiple times, but their efforts were continually sabotaged. Finally, a Mayan community member suggested that the construction crew consult the local shaman.[74] The shaman explained that the overpass was being torn down because the construction had offended the *Aluxes*, supernatural spirits that are not always visible but occasionally take the form of small children or little people, with a wide spectrum of physical characteristics.[75] The shaman suggested that the construction crew make

an offering to the Aluxes, in the form of miniature pyramids beneath the overpass. Once the miniature pyramids were constructed, the overpass was completed without further complications.[76] Though this account takes place outside the context of comunidades negras and the War on Drugs in Colombia, it provides some insights on pluriversal understandings of environmental justice.

In the first place, *in an environmentally just world, all communities should have the power to determine whether pollution or major environmental transformations are in their best interests*. Though Mexico has yet to formally ratify Convention 169 (and may never do so), a representative of the local community (the shaman) was consulted about how to proceed with the construction of a road through an Indigenous region, nicknamed "the Mayan Riviera." One mistake that environmentalists frequently make (i.e., outside the context of an environmental justice framework) is to assume what is best for any given community. Some communities might be okay with a factory that pollutes the area they live in if that factory is a major source of employment. Likewise, it is often assumed that peoples of Indigenous reservations and comunidades negras are anti-capitalist, when that is not always the case. Capitalism is so often blamed for the destruction of Indigenous space, when as anthropologist Fabricant notes, "what is somehow left out of this conversation is the ways in which indigenous peoples have contributed to the development of capitalism and benefited from extractive industries that have wreaked havoc upon the natural environment."[77] Residents of comunidades negras are by no means an exception to this reality. Highway construction will eventually transform the region in numerous ways, connecting the Pacific lowlands to the extensive road network of the Andean highlands. Presently, there are only two roads that connect the Pacific region to the Andes: (1) the highway connecting Buenaventura and Cali and (2) the highway connecting Tumaco and Pasto. Increased roadway connectivity could ultimately allow greater access for local products to national and global markets. It could also facilitate access to the region by outsiders who are intent on exploiting the region, which is already a massive problem. The residents I interviewed about this subject were relatively split on whether new roadways will ultimately be beneficial or harmful to comunidades negras. Disagreements about such projects are sometimes symptomatic of the ideological disconnect between organizations establishing the basis for the collective titling of land (e.g., the PCN) and individuals motivated by financial gain or simply surviving. Regardless, it should be the communities themselves that determine whether the benefits of their decisions outweigh the drawbacks.

Second, *in an environmentally just world, thinking "pluriversally" is the norm*. The incident near Tulum is an example of how two very different ontologies (e.g., of the modern West and of the Maya of the Yucatán Peninsula) can coexist in the same space. For academics and environmentalists, *thinking pluriversally* means conceding that the industrialization and modernization of the planet (i.e., in the Anthropocene) is not sustainable for humanity nor for many endangered species.

Likewise, knowledge systems are also subject to extinction and have been violently rooted out in the Americas since the beginning of colonization.[78] Engaging and learning from societies that already live sustainably is vitally important to mitigating the damage already done to the planet. Thinking pluriversally means that such engagement flows multi-directionally and not within the top-down model of knowledge exchange promoted across most academic disciplines.

Finally, *in an environmentally just world, both humans and nonhumans should be accounted for in the collective of any given community*. The nonhumans (e.g., the Aluxes) near Tulum expressed their agency by sabotaging the construction of the overpass until an offering (e.g., the miniature pyramids) was constructed in their honor. Since the construction of the offering, there have been no further issues with the construction or safety of the overpass. In the related realms of environmentalism and environmental studies, there is an emerging global trend in the designation of rights for natural entities, also known as natural rights. It is important to consider how these rights originated and what the implications are for environmental justice communities such as comunidades negras and peoples of Indigenous reservations. To what extent have these respective groups participated in movements for natural rights? Are these groups concerned that natural rights might infringe upon previous consultation or other forms of territorial autonomy? How will these rights be guaranteed, especially in areas, such as the Pacific region, where human rights continue to be disregarded?

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES AND NATURAL RIGHTS

There are several different kinds of "natural rights" that have been established or are in the process of becoming established throughout the globe. This section will discuss three specific forms of natural rights relevant to environmental justice for comunidades negras in post–peace agreement Colombia.

#1) A natural entity with rights. I first became aware of the recognition of rights for natural entities, also known as natural rights, because many aspects of the aerial eradication court case were informed by a completely different environmental justice court case. On July 21 of 2001, the Energy Company of the Pacific (EPSA) opened the floodgates of the Lower Anchicayá Dam to purge the dam of sediment that had accumulated during its operation. According to the plaintiffs, the comunidad negra of Río Anchicayá, "the damages caused by the irresponsible actions of the EPSA have been incalculable, both for the river and for our communities, which have an ancestral connection. This is why, in the past 19 years, various national and international organizations have described the impacts as a human and environmental tragedy of immeasurable dimensions, which placed our communities and our river in danger of extinction."[79]

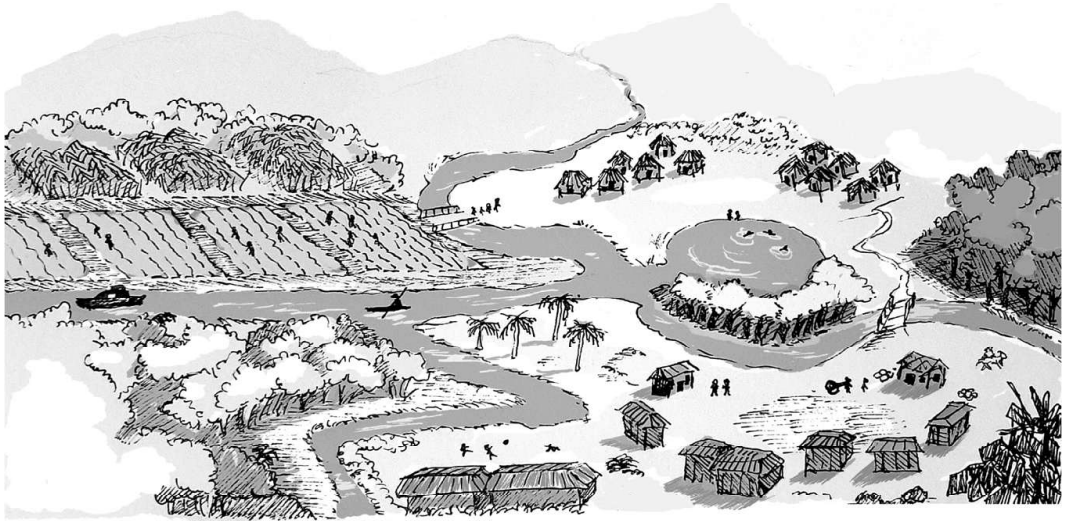


FIGURE 16. A river with rights (illustrated by Jose E. Arboleda).

Germán (the same lawyer as in the aerial eradication case) was asked to participate in the Anchicayá trial when a friend working in Buenaventura's city hall (the Anchicayá River is within the jurisdiction of that municipality) complained that the victims had no representation for the damages caused. Apart from the difficulty of acquiring transportation to the comunidad negra of Río Anchicayá, the community was trapped in a war zone. Germán had to pass through military checkpoint after military checkpoint to conduct interviews with local leaders and residents. Another attorney was also involved in the case but moved on after their initial criminal suit failed after five years of proceedings, leaving Germán as the lead attorney when the case was appealed.[80] Twenty-two years and many appeals later, the case finally ended in a massive settlement for the residents of Río Anchicayá. Many of the original claimants have passed away or have moved on to other places. In the months leading up to the payouts for the victims and the legal team, Germán received death threats. To protect his family, he moved out of the country.

As in the aerial eradication case, Earth Economics was instrumental in calculating the value of what was damaged. However, a major difference between this case and the aerial eradication case is that one specific community endured the brunt of the damage caused by the opening of the dam. So, while the ecosystem services model factored in some of the value of the rivers contaminated by aerial eradication, the Anchicayá River was the principal site of damage for this court case. In the Pacific region, where comunidades negras relate to one another via the network of rivers[81] and live according to the "logic of aquatic space" (e.g., tides determine when activities such as travel on the river can be undertaken or when shellfish can be collected),[82] the river is fundamental to life itself. During the court case, transnational organizations such as International Rivers and the Earth Law Center strengthened that argument by citing examples of rivers granted rights

elsewhere in the world. For example, the first such river granted rights in the world was the Whanganui River of New Zealand in 2007, via a constitutional law specifically passed to protect the river. In 2016, a Colombian court granted rights to the Atrato River in a decision that was not made public until 2017. Later in 2017, a court in India granted rights for two rivers, the Ganges and the Yamuna, to protect them from industrial pollution.[83]

The underlying legal logic for the designation of rights for natural entities is that these entities, such as rivers, have value unto themselves, not just for human beings. Felipe Clavijo Ospina, a Colombian professor of law and natural rights, describes this logic as the ecocentric response to the anthropocentric model of valuing natural entities according to their worth within a capitalist system. However, Ospina points out the ecocentric theory of natural rights is potentially dangerous and often not representative of the belief systems of the ethnic peoples most impacted by such rights. As he sees it, the underlying problem is that "sometimes a basic principle is forgotten; human beings are part of nature as an ecosystem as a product of the evolution of species."[84] This sentiment is echoed in statements such as this one from the Maori of New Zealand: "I am the river, and the river is me."[85] Likewise, a resident of the comunidad negra of Río Anchicayá expresses a similar thought in this reflection on the opening of the dam: "Such a decision triggered hundreds of thousands of cubic meters of accumulated putrefied mud to be thrown into our river, our mangroves, recreation pools, territories, bodies, families, minds, and spirits."[86] In other words, to pollute the river is to pollute everything within the community, including that which cannot be seen (e.g., minds and spirits).

The danger of the ecocentric model of natural rights is that it simply reinforces the nature-society divide that plagues most variants of environmentalism today. Whereas the underlying logic for the legal designation of natural rights is that the river needs to be protected because it is an important part of nature, the underlying logic for riverine ethnic peoples of the Pacific region of Colombia is that the river is inseparable from the ecological community. Figure 16 illustrates this relationship by anthropomorphizing the form of a river, depicting the kinds of activities conducted in the river, and showing how the river connects communities across geographic space.

When laws are designed to protect nature or natural entities unto themselves, peoples with an already symbiotic relationship with their surroundings are often disregarded and/or outright displaced. Clavijo Ospina argues that there is potential for natural entities with rights to meaningfully improve the conditions of all beings; however, ecocentric terminology must first be deconstructed to expose the underlying nature-society divide before it can be reconstructed in a manner that meaningfully integrates natural entities as new subjects of law.[87] The State in almost all cases is the arbiter of who or what has a beneficial relationship with "nature." Returning to the example of aerial eradication in Colombia, this War on Drugs strategy was prohibited in national parks, prohibited in Indigenous reservations



FIGURE 17. Paintings in PCN office in Buenaventura (photo: Author).

(unless previous consultation had been conducted), and *permitted* in comunidades negras. For comunidades negras, the underlying message understood from this differential treatment was disregard for both their human rights and their value to the biodiversity of the region.[88] Would a river having rights change that perspective if the residents of that river did not feel that they had rights themselves? Even the lawyer (Germán) representing this comunidad negra did not feel safe in Colombia, so why would people of a rural ethnic community, with considerably less privilege and mobility, feel more secure if the river had rights?

#2) The territory as victim of the Colombian armed conflict. Another emergent form of natural rights is the recognition of territories as entities with rights. Such rights affirm the conviction of *el territorio* as the source of life. Figure 17 is a photo of two paintings that are hanging side by side in the PCN office in Buenaventura. They state, "Because this land is ours, completely ours" (painting on left side) and "Territory is life and life is not possible without the territory" (painting on right side).

The legal genesis for the recognition of territories as entities with rights in Colombia is Decree-Law 4633 of 2011, also known as the Law for Victims of Indigenous Communities. Article 45 of this law stipulates: "The territory, understood as a living whole that sustains identity and harmony, in accordance with the worldview of indigenous peoples and by virtue of the special and collective bond they maintain with it, suffers damage when it is violated or desecrated by the internal armed conflict and its related and underlying factors."[89]

This decree-law was followed by a second, Decree-Law 4635 of 2011, that declares the recognition of territories as entities with rights for Afro-descendant communities, including comunidades negras, *raizales* (from the island of San Andrés), *palenqueras* (descendants of maroon societies), and Afro-Colombians who do not pertain to the previous categories.[90] Anthropologist Daniel Ruíz-Serna explains a key difference between the two decree-laws: "In the indigenous case, the decree mentions in its object and scope the '*protection*, comprehensive reparation and *restitution of territorial rights*,' while that of black communities mentions '*assistance*, comprehensive reparation and *restitution of lands*.'"[91] He further points out that the differences in wording of the respective decree-laws are not just semantic. For instance, the "restitution of territorial rights" of Decree-Law 4633 includes language on how the armed conflict has impacted peoples of Indigenous reservations' special ancestral and harmonious relation with *la madre tierra* (Mother Earth), whereas the "restitution of lands" outlined in Decree-Law 4635 largely focuses on the damages to the environment and property of comunidades negras.[92]

Similar to what I wrote about in chapter 1, Ruíz-Serna's argument is that the effects of the armed conflict extend beyond the human realm of both sets of ethnic communities as well as peasant communities that are not collectively titled: "The consequences of the armed conflict extend beyond human rights, since the war has also affected a heterogeneous set of non-human agents that are a fundamental part of the experiences that Indigenous, Black and even peasant communities have maintained with the places they inhabit."[93]

And though Ruíz-Serna recognizes that both decree-laws are worded vaguely, he maintains that the differential wording limits the recognition of nonhumans as members of comunidades negras impacted by the armed conflict. This kind of "ontological blind spot" once again demonstrates the limits of the State as the arbiter of justice. In this case the Colombian state, articulated as a pluriethnic and multicultural nation per the 1991 constitution, has created two sets of laws grounded in the state's perceptions of these respective ethnic peoples versus, for instance, how comunidades negras articulate the impacts of the armed conflict on both humans and nonhumans.[94]

Nevertheless, Ruíz-Serna is optimistic that the ontological challenges presented by recognizing the rights of territory, such as determining who speaks for the land, are outweighed by the gains. Understood as a matter of "political ontology," territories with rights are an invitation to see the world through different ontological lenses, providing opportunities for those communities that have suffered the most during the armed conflict to demonstrate how humans and nonhumans are vitally important to each other.[95] They also open the possibility for further legislation that attempts to strengthen the rights of Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities.

For instance, per the terms of the 2016 peace agreement signed in Havana, Cuba, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) was created as a transitional organization that sentences those who participated in the Colombian armed conflict

(e.g., former FARC members, members of the Colombian military, other combatants, as well as government officials and other individuals who facilitated war crimes). JEP Case 002 addresses approximately 105,000 victims impacted by the armed conflict in the municipalities of Tumaco, Ricaurte, and Barbacoas in the department of Nariño between 1990 and 2016. Seventy-eight percent of the land in those municipalities pertains to comunidades negras and Indigenous reservations.[96] This is a landmark case in Colombia because, in addition to addressing crimes against humanity, the JEP is including "socio-environmental and territorial damages" as part of the charges against the accused. For instance, Case 002 recognizes damages against *Katsa Su*, the name for the "great territory" of the Awá Indigenous people in the Nariño department of Colombia. The recognition of Katsa Su as a victim of the armed conflict is important because it *both* establishes that it sustains life for the Awá, who are also victims of the armed conflict, *and* recognizes the Katsa Su as a natural resource unto itself.[97]

Numerous other activities beyond direct warfare between Colombian armed forces and guerilla forces are often associated with the term *armed conflict*. For instance, an article about Awá resistance lists "illicit coca cultivation, mining, logging, megaprojects, fossil fuels, and other monocultures, such as oil palm" as the activities of armed actors vying for control of Colombia's resources. The article also mentions "aerial campaigns spraying glyphosate" (i.e., aerial eradication) as both a form of damage to the Katsa Su and an activity conducted as part of the armed conflict.[98] Germán has utilized a similar argument to draw international attention to the aerial eradication court case still underway in Cauca. However, since that case encompasses resguardos indígenas, comunidades negras, and peasant communities (i.e., not one *specific* territory), he has cited a form of natural rights that conceptualizes victims of the armed conflict on a greater scale.

#3) The environment as a silent victim of the armed conflict. The 1991 constitution laid the groundwork for establishing special protections for the natural environment in Colombia.[99] It specifically states that the natural environment is important for the social development of Colombians, in terms of rights to both health and quality of life.[100] Judgement C-595 of 2010, a ruling by Colombian constitutional court magistrate Jorge Iván Palacios, further elaborates. It states that the defense of the environment is one of the principal objectives of the Colombian government because it is pertinent "to the efficient provision of public services, health and natural resources as a guarantee of the survival of present and future generations."[101]

A 2018 update on the collective-action aerial eradication case, compiled by researchers at La Universidad del Cauca, expresses many of the same sentiments as Judgement C-595: "The collateral effects generated by aerial spraying with glyphosate are multiple . . . the effects are not only biological, but there are also social, economic and cultural effects, thus exacerbating the far-reaching impact on the populations affected and on the ecosystems they inhabit."[102]

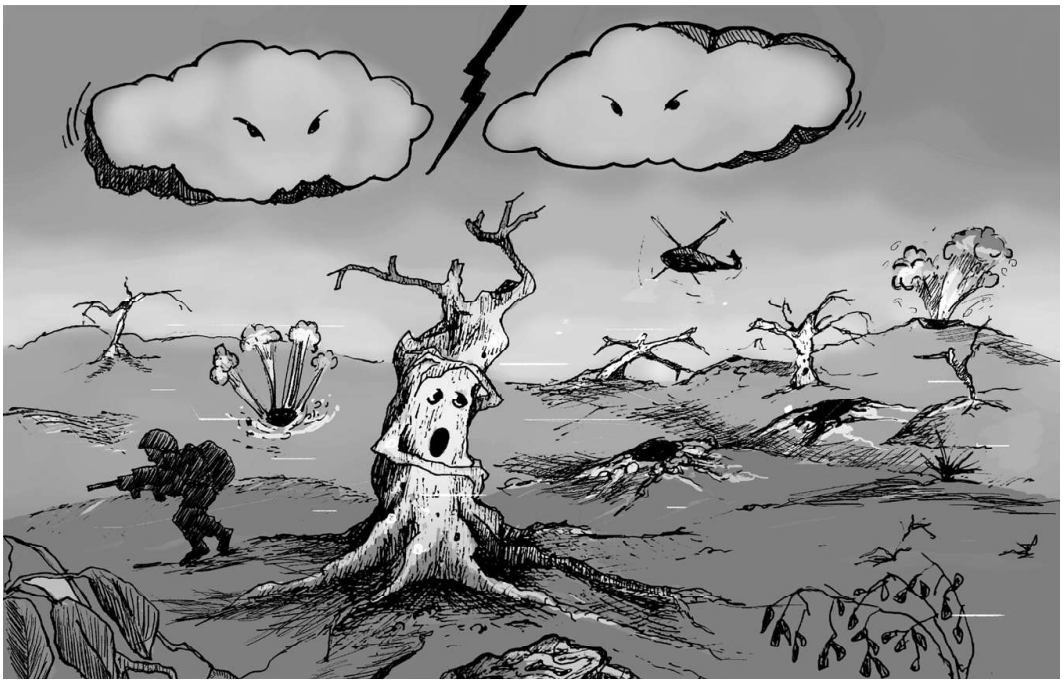


FIGURE 18. Nature as a not-so-silent victim of the armed conflict (illustrated by Jose E. Arboleda).

The 2018 update also references how aerial eradication is just one form of chemical contamination in the region, in addition to all the chemicals employed in the cultivation of coca and processing of coca paste. Whereas DIRAN targeted specific areas for spraying because coca cultivation is an illegal activity (outside the context of traditional cultivation in select Indigenous communities), this court document argues that the biological as well as "social, economic and cultural effects" of *both* forms of contamination are devastating across all aspects of life. This argument supports my own imagination of the Two-Headed Monster (chapter 3) as an entity whose destruction transgresses the bounds of human and "the environment."

In 2019, citing JEP Case 002 as well as geospatial analysis of the deforestation caused by coca cultivation, the JEP published Communication 009, which declared the environment as a "silent victim" of the armed conflict. Later, in 2022, the JEP published a special report titled "The Environment as a Silent Victim" to detail the environmental impacts of the armed conflict that have occurred *after* the peace agreement with the FARC. The report states three main reasons why the natural environment merits recognition as a victim of the armed conflict: (1) "the destruction of the environment constitutes a form of multi-offensive crime . . . it simultaneously violates the rights of entire populations to life, water, health and housing"; (2) over seventeen departments and eighty-five municipalities have declared the environment as a subject of rights; and (3) "from a philosophical point of view . . . in order to achieve a stable and lasting peace, it is necessary to abandon the anthropocentric paradigm, where human beings guided by greed end

up destroying the environment because it uses it to maximize its economic and profit-driven benefits."[103]

The arguments set forth in the Río Anchicayá court case support the reasoning established by the JEP. For instance, a virtual seminar for the case titled "Rights of the Dammed," sponsored by the United Nations, featured a quote from a community council member of Río Anchicayá: "Nature is for comunidades negras a 'social being.' As a living being, nature imposes the rules and laws, the disrespect of nature provokes punishment determined by nature."[104]

While *nature* and *the environment* are often used interchangeably in natural rights discourses, it is noteworthy that the term *nature* was employed in this context. Much in the same way that comunidades negras conceptualize themselves as part of the "biodiversity" of the region and not existing independently of it,[105] this statement articulates "nature" as part of the social fabric of the community.

Furthermore, the statement not only depicts nature as the subject of rights, but similar to the visions discussed earlier in this book, depicts nature as a being that acts on its own accord to punish those who disrespect it. In that sense, nature is reminiscent of visions such as El Hojarasquín and La Madremonte, who employ elements of nature (i.e., entangling vines or ferocious winds) to thwart human settlement. It is worth repeating that the visions themselves are highly geographically specific and establish dominion over particular land and water forms. For instance, the aquatic counterpart to La Madremonte is La Madre de Agua, who emerges from lagoons, springs, and brooks to charm youth with her beauty. Likewise, in the case of the comunidad negra of La Barra, north of Buenaventura, the sea is conceptualized as having distinct character traits:

> In La Barra, according to people, the beings and elements of the coast coexist with the tantrums of the sea: it is known that it is jealous of the sand and that is why it steals it, brings it back and reshapes the beach. The surrounding jungle also gives back what the tide takes. In this sway, which is very similar to the movement of the sea itself, whose character is that of a living and willful agent, the land sculpted by water shapes coastal societies such as La Barra, which at the same time name, appropriate, and modify it.[106]

Examples such as these emphasize the interplay between humans, nonhumans, and the forces of nature. They also exemplify the fact that "nature" or "the environment" is considered a "silent" victim of the armed conflict because its wants or concerns are not understood outside of the ontological context of the communities that profess to have a mutual understanding with nature or the environment. In other words, these communities understand the forces of nature to have agency and to speak loudly in ways simply imperceptible to those living outside of the same geo-ontological context.

Figure 18 depicts nature or the environment as both a victim (the tree in the center of the image) and a being with agency (the menacing clouds) within

the context of the Colombian armed conflict. While the landscape is barren in the aftermath of the destruction, the disposition of the clouds suggests thunderstorms (anger) and a return to life (i.e., what will grow from the ashes after rained upon).

NATURAL RIGHTS AND GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE?

The bulk of this chapter has conceptualized comunidades negras as "global environmental justice communities," citing five different ways that they leverage their status as collectively titled ethnic communities across political borders and ontologies. The rest of this chapter has detailed three ways natural rights have emerged in Colombia, a country that continues to be plagued by necropolitical ecologies, even in the aftermath of a major peace agreement. This final section of the chapter will highlight three critiques of natural rights that must be addressed for this new form of environmentalism to meaningfully function as a form of global environmental justice.

#1) Challenge anthropocentric and ecocentric articulations of natural rights by conceptualizing socio-environmental rights for ecological communities. As Clavijo Ospina explains, natural rights have emerged as an ecocentric response to an anthropocentric model of environmentalism that strictly values elements of ecosystems according to their worth to human beings. The anthropocentric model of environmentalism is part of the fabric of modern Western societies; it is implicit to the social contract that divides human nature from nonhuman nature, regarded as either threats or resources for humans.[107] This model can be traced back to the philosophies of Descartes and Kant, who argued that only "man" possesses a soul and the capacity of reason. By the same logic, nonhuman animals and devalued humans possess neither and therefore lead more mechanical existences.[108] The ecocentric model of natural rights runs the risk of the opposite effect, conceptually removing human beings from the definitions of "natural environment" and "biodiversity," which, in the past, has translated to the physical displacement of local populations throughout the world (e.g., the removal of Indigenous peoples to create national parks in the United States,[109] the removal of local peoples to create wildlife preserves in Tanzania,[110] the removal of peasants for the creation of Parque Tayrona in Colombia[111]).

In the specific context of Colombia, the articulation of "biocultural rights" is an attempt at reconciling natural rights with the rights of rural ethnic communities such as comunidades negras. Colombian scholars Ramírez-Hernández and Leguizamon-Arias explain:

> The recognition of biocultural rights is considered an alternative vision of the collective rights of ethnic communities in relation to their natural and cultural environment, that is, it does not refer to the recognition of a new right but rather to

> the reconfiguration and scope of those already existing in the matter contained in articles 7, 8, 79, 80, 330 and 55 of the Constitution, in the words of the Colombian Constitutional Court "biocultural rights are not new rights for ethnic communities, instead, they are a special category that unifies their rights to natural resources and culture, understanding them integrated and interrelated."[112]

In theory, *biocultural rights* seems to negate both the anthropocentricism of mainstream environmentalism and the ecocentricism of natural rights in a "reconfiguration" that adequately resolves the critiques of these -centrisms. However, critics of the biocultural rights model argue that it is also flawed in two major respects: (1) It suggests that the destruction of natural and cultural environments in Colombia began with the armed conflict, when, in fact, the destruction of natural and cultural environments has been implicit to the structural violence of the State itself. (2) The biocultural model of rights, similar to ethnic territorial rights, is highly geographically restricted.

#2) Resolve the geographic dilemma of both natural and ethnic territorial rights. The geographic dilemma of natural and ethnic territorial rights is that both sets of rights, or even the potentially merged version of such rights (e.g., biocultural rights), are bound to specific geographic spaces. In the case of comunidades negras, this dilemma is monumental because the vast majority of Afro-descendants in Colombia live in the country's rapidly growing cities. Does a person raised in a comunidad negra become a completely different person if they willingly move or are forcibly displaced to an urban neighborhood? Likewise, should a bird that seasonally migrates or a river that flows across multiple borders have more rights in one location versus another?

One potential pathway through this dilemma is an ontological shift. Many Indigenous peoples of the world conceptualize themselves as belonging to the land or territory versus having dominion over land or territory (i.e., private property and political boundaries). However, such a shift also assumes that people conceive of themselves as elements of a bigger collective. Given the countless wars that have occurred in the name of differences in belief systems, it would be naïve to expect peoples of different belief systems to suddenly shift toward a consensus that ultimately challenges human dominance, particularly the dominance of wealthy white heterosexual males, in the hierarchy of modern Western societies. Perhaps the lack of a specific religious affiliation is one reason why "Mother Earth" has been a popular entity for environmentalists to rally around. Mother Earth encompasses everything on the planet, is often depicted as a sentient being, and appears to translate across ontological contexts throughout the world.

#3) Abstain from conflating earth spirits across ontological contexts. It is important to emphasize, however, that Mother Earth only *appears* to translate across ontological contexts throughout the world. It is a common mistake for environmentalists, and people in general, to conflate Mother Earth with earth spirits from other cultures, such as *Gaia* from ancient Greece or *Bhumi* in Hinduism or

Pachamama in Andean South America. While there may be similarities between these entities, the dominant culture will often project its values onto the earth spirit beings of other cultures, often minimalizing important differences in the process. Such differences have major implications for socio-environmental justice movements and likewise matter to environmental justice studies.

For instance, in 2008 Ecuador became the first country in the world to recognize Pachamama as a legal being with rights as part of its new constitution. The following year, Bolivia followed suit with a similar set of laws, introducing the rights of Mother Earth.[113] While the terms are often used interchangeably, it is important to note that the meanings of the respective terms are contested, even among Quechua and Aymara-speaking peoples of the Andes. *Pachamama* is the Quechua term for "the vitality that animates the earth,"[114] and though it is often depicted as a woman, "the relation between masculinity and femininity, what indigenous people call *chachawarni*, is not always one of rigid opposition."[115] Miriam Tola, a decolonial scholar analyzing socio-environmental movements through feminist lenses, explains: "Although the precolonial Pachamama was usually translated as Earth-Mother or World-Mother and connected to fertility, it was not primarily defined through the qualities of purity and moral virtue that characterised the Virgin Mary. Throughout the period of European colonisation, however, this Andean being was associated with the Virgin and turned into a nurturing mother."[116]

Tola further argues that this colonial interpretation of Pachamama has persisted and permeated the present, which is reflected in former Bolivian President Evo Morales's characterization of Pachamama as "the subject of rights that is threatened by the unbridled commodification of the material world" and "the earth as a mother in need of saving."[117] Though Evo Morales is widely respected as Bolivia's first Indigenous president and his speeches on this topic have been well received, Tola's underlying point is that Pachamama has been transformed into a gendered and passive subject of rights that has very little to do with its Indigenous Andean ontology of origin. In doing so, the Bolivian state has asserted its authority to place the "gifts" of Pachamama (e.g., oil, gas, and lithium) under state control, thereby perpetuating an extractive ecological relationship with the planet.[118]

In developing a global environmental justice framework, it is key for scholars to pay attention to how earth spirits, as a category of nonhumans or more-than-humans, are operationalized. And, since environmental justice movements emanate from the struggles of the disenfranchised, it is of the utmost importance that EJ scholars are highlighting the perspectives of activists contesting the State's definitions of the nonhumans becoming the subjects of rights.

5

Envisioning Global Environmental Justice Studies

This chapter summarizes the main themes and arguments of the book and then transitions to some additional observations on the implications of *Visions of Global Environmental Justice* for global EJS.

STORYTELLING AND VISIONS OF GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The introduction to this book juxtaposed two experiences that occurred four years apart from one another. In 2015 I visited a farm plot that had been aerially fumigated in the comunidad negra of Temuey on the Guapi River. On the motorboat trip back from the plot, the farmers explained how outsiders gained access to their region and strong-armed the locals into planting coca. In 2019, I was on a return trip in the same boat, with a new but related group of farmers who had taken over the plot. I wanted to see how things were going, to find out what happened to the farmers and their crops. However, a lull in our conversation presented an opportunity for a change of topic. The men began telling stories about El Duende (the Troll) and La Tunda (a story about a supernatural female being that seduces young men). The conversation concluded when the men wondered why they did not hear these stories about these supernatural beings anymore.

And as suggested at the end of that description, there are multiple possible explanations to the question of what happened to El Duende and La Tunda. Perhaps this oral tradition is simply less popular than it once was. Maybe it is because people, especially newer generations, are less interested in such stories and are more interested in the entertainment provided by their smartphones. Or perhaps these stories are told less because many of the people who used to share in

this oral tradition have moved elsewhere, through personal choice, forcible displacement, or death. Or maybe the visions themselves, like human beings, have been displaced to burgeoning cities where they take on new identities to adapt to new circumstances.

I, the author of this book, believe all those possibilities to be true, but I do not feel it is important that you, the reader, necessarily agree with me. I, the storyteller, have introduced these visions and have speculated on the reasons for their disappearance, in the service of theorizing both the global and more-than-human dimensions of environmental justice.

Expanding upon the explanation provided in the introduction, the term *visions* in this book is multifaceted. It literally refers to the collection of supernatural entities that provide a narrative structure to the book. *Do these beings really exist? Do they have agency?* Those are questions of personal opinion. *Visions of Global Environmental Justice* has argued that these beings exist and have agency within the stories themselves. The tradition of sharing these accounts is an exercise in knowledge production and community building, one of many such exercises that are fundamental to comunidades negras mobilizing against environmental injustices.

Figuratively, *visions* alludes to the graphic-novel vignettes featured throughout the book. Some of these narratives have been illustrated, compelling you, the reader, to interpret the images on your own and then make sense of the images via the text that follows. The illustrations not only attract the eye, but also merge elements of the supernatural with lessons about environmental racism and justice. Although some of the illustrations convey a traditional historical timeline, others disrupt the conventional understanding of time by combining elements of the colonial past and present. In doing so, these illustrations demonstrate how comunidades negras conceptualize many environmental injustices they currently face as historical continuities connected to the legacies of slavery and the pervasiveness of anti-Blackness in the Americas.

The term *visions* is also employed as a synonym for ontological perspectives, particularly in consideration of how contested terms—such as *environment, territory, biodiversity*, etc.—are comprehended differently by state institutions versus comunidades negras. The introduction mentions the challenges of ecological "incommensurability," when there are no units of measurement common to ontologically distinct societies who value resources differently. Chapter 4 elaborates this discussion, highlighting the importance of global networks in the mobilization of environmental justice struggles. More specifically, the chapter highlights how the knowledge produced by local communities is made legible to state institutions through transnational agreements and organizations. The chapter also highlights how Indigenous and Afro-descendant ontological perspectives are materializing in the form of natural rights, which are subject to interpretation by state institutions and deserve critical attention from scholars and activists.

Finally, in hindsight, *visions* also refers to the active process of me, the author, "envisioning" comunidades negras as globalized EJ communities even though many residents have only recently become aware of the term *environmental justice*. In a similar vein, it also refers to the ongoing challenge of envisioning the expansion of EJS, which is not an event, but rather what Sze terms "a process and politics of meaning-making."[1]

The rest of this section will touch upon four key points from *Visions of Global Environmental Justice:*

1. The oral tradition of supernatural visions operates as a form of local biopolitics.
2. The necropolitical dimensions of environmental racism demarcate the expendability of Black and Brown bodies across rural and urban spaces.
3. The War on Drugs is a necropolitical ecology.
4. EJ communities span borders, scales, agencies, and ontologies.

#1) The oral tradition of supernatural visions operates as a form of local biopolitics. This was mostly discussed in chapters 1 and 4. These chapters describe "eco-monsters" (e.g., La Madremonte, La Madre de Agua, El Hojarasquín) that use their supernatural powers to defend nonhuman beings (mainly flora and fauna) against the violent intrusions of human beings. Eco-monsters also include visions such as El Duende and La Patasola not typically thought of as ecological guardians, but who occasionally perform that function. The "biopowers" of these visions are their respective abilities to control or manage life-forms. The function of these visions is not necessarily to protect the lives of all plants and animals from humans, but rather to protect the balance of the ecosystem from excessive human disruption.[2] In a Foucauldian sense, the stories of these visions operate as a form of discipline, which can have a panoptic effect.[3] In other words, the stories are a way to convey the importance of respecting the plants and animals of the forest or the river, because you never know what eco-monster lurking in the shadows is watching. Taking a step further into Foucauldian theory, the oral tradition of sharing stories about visions could be considered a form of "governmentality" that predates the governmentality Foucault originally wrote about. In this analogy the community willingly governs itself, not according to the laws of the Republic of Colombia (here Foucault would refer to the laws of "the sovereign"), but according to the collective will of the community itself (here Foucault would refer to "modern bureaucratic forms of government" that eventually replaced the sovereign in Europe).[4] While certainly not a perfect analogy because the internal governance of comunidades negras is not comparable to modern government bureaucracies, the basis for this comparison is the idea that power in the latter form of governance is de-centered. Furthermore, in participating in oral traditions and other practices that involve lessons about appropriate behaviors toward non/humans, community members play an active role in their self-governance. The collective will of

comunidades negras, in the idealized version of autonomous governance espoused by the PCN, is oriented toward the survival of "the territory," which encompasses the entire ecological system, including non/humans.

#2) The necropolitical dimensions of armed conflict are intertwined with environmental racism, demarcating the expendability of Black and Brown bodies across rural and urban spaces. This argument is elaborated in chapters 1–3. Chapter 1 describes the necropolitics of Colombia's decades-long armed conflict, in which Black and Brown bodies have been disproportionately targeted for death. The ghosts of those marked for death, as well as the visions that have been transformed by the violence (such as El Ayudado, formerly a civilian but now often described as a soldier who escapes death), are inscriptions of necropower in the rural landscape, the primary site of the armed conflict. "Necropolitics" is the rationalization of massacres and other forms of physical violence that forcibly displace peasants from their homes. In connection to EJS's theorization of "racial capitalism"[5] and "expendability,"[6] Black and Brown bodies are less valuable within a white supremacist society, especially when their labor is not in demand. In the dual context of the Colombian armed conflict and the War on Drugs, the necropolitical explanation for the poisoning (i.e., aerial eradication) of comunidades negras was that it was a matter of national security (for the United States, Colombia, and the Americas) and that it was a form of environmental conservation (to deter the deforestation caused by coca cultivation). The massive displacement of Colombians from their rural communities to violent urban metropolises has generated a new kind of necropolitical space, the "necropolis." Like modern-day ghettos in the United States, these spaces are disproportionately populated by Black and Brown bodies subject to both physical violence and the silent violence of pollution. The rapid growth of Colombia's major cities, the necropolitan areas of these cities, has prompted Malthusian fears of overpopulation. The historical referent for those who do not belong, for those who have polluted the city both morally and physically, is the devil. The Christian devil is synonymous with sinful and pagan (non-Christian) behavior and therefore was the embodiment of the Spanish demonization of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples. Conversely, the devil is a more complicated figure in the cosmology of comunidades negras, sometimes admired but almost always feared, and, for some displaced to the city of Cali, the embodiment of the drug cartels.

#3) The War on Drugs is a necropolitical ecology. This is the focus of chapter 3. This chapter expands on the original definition of "necropolitical ecology" as a conceptual means to reveal the extractivist, neocolonial relationship between a local Indigenous population and the assemblage of exploitative actors intertwined with the Ugandan state. This ecology is sustained by the surplus value extracted from land and resources, which facilitates the further annexation of territory.[7] Chapter 3 explains how there are multiple necropolitical ecologies presently exploiting the land and resources of the southwestern Colombian Pacific region,

which include large-scale gold mining operations, palm oil plantations, and coca cultivation / cocaine paste production. These respective necropolitical ecologies are similarly composed of what Cavanagh and Himmelfarb term "an assemblage of political and economic actors"[8] (government institutions, multinational corporations, paramilitary groups, emergent criminal bands, etc.) deterring peasants from subsisting on desirable lands. It is popular opinion among affected residents of comunidades negras, especially those affiliated with the PCN, to view the aerial eradication of coca as an intentional form of displacement and means to dispossess comunidades negras of their territories. I invented the Two-Headed Monster as a metaphor for the destruction caused by both the demand for cocaine and the prohibition of cocaine. Both heads of the monster factor into the necropolitical ecologies of the southwestern Pacific region (and globally) because the prohibition of illegal drugs, especially when rationalized as a form of national security, promotes forcible eradication strategies that criminalize populations in illicit crop-cultivating regions. Their lives become more expendable in the eyes of drug authorities because they are putting others' lives in danger by virtue of the illegal economic activity (i.e., in the case of the FARC, their tax on coca cultivators raised funds to continue their insurgency against the Colombian state). This dynamic is prevalent not only in this predominately Afro-descendant- and Indigenous-populated corner of Colombia, but elsewhere in the world, especially the United States, where the criminalization of drug production and trafficking has disproportionately impacted Blacks and Latinos. Furthermore, this global-scale necropolitical ecology is self-sustaining because the War on Drugs is not a winnable war. Coca cultivation may disappear from one region, only to later reappear in the same region or simply shift to another location. The business of prohibition is a continual source of employment, with its own economic logic that seeks to continually expand operations or, in the case of combatting rebranded "narcoguerillas," to draw funding from new sources (counterterrorism funding after 9/11).[9]

#4) EJ communities span political borders, geographic scales, and non/humans. This is the overarching argument of chapter 4. The impetus for environmental justice at any scale is the community impacted by environmental racism. The refusal to settle for state-driven solutions and the drive to "make justice happen" is the common bond between different kinds of EJ movements, whether they refer to themselves as such ("environmental justice communities") or not. While normally conceptualized within specific locales with specific political borders (e.g., city, county, state/province/department, or national), the messages of EJ movements typically move beyond those boundaries to be effective. The movements themselves are opportunities to build, strengthen, or expand the EJ community in question. However, because of the specific history of EJ movements, which emerged out of Civil Rights activism in the US South, EJS scholarship initially focused exclusively on urban EJ communities in the United States. Even though scholars have gradually expanded the analysis of EJ movements beyond

that original context, geographic scale remains an undertheorized dimension of EJS. The conceptualization of aerial eradication as a transnational form of environmental racism that has prompted the formation of a transnational EJ movement is a contribution to this lacuna in EJ scholarship. Likewise, the theorization of more-than-humans or non/human collectives or elements of the supernatural is also new terrain for EJS. Though the study or theorization of different kinds of beings, awarenesses, or agencies is becoming more popular across a variety of academic fields and disciplines, there is a strong argument that such work is both appropriate and important for EJS. This is particularly true for scholars who think about Indigenous communities as EJ communities whose ways of existing are a form of resistance in the face of climate change in the age of the Anthropocene.[10] *Visions of Global Environmental Justice* has also sought to demonstrate that comunidades negras and other collectively titled Afro-descendant communities of the Americas, though often treated differently by state institutions as explained in chapter 4, are similarly worthy of EJS scholarship in this vein. In sum, though originally rooted in socio-ecological struggles in the US urban context, the emerging field of global EJS holds great potential to address the multi-scalar and more-than-human dimensions often overlooked in EJS scholarship.

ENVISIONING GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE STUDIES

Before further delving into the potential of global EJS, however, it is important to acknowledge some simple guidelines that generally apply across EJS scholarship.

#1) EJS should always center the voices of the EJ movement. The further away any academic study strays from the voices of the social movement in question, the more likely it is to lose sight of the lessons of that struggle. To that point, many movements are outwardly identified by a social category of difference (race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.) but often are led by people championing justice for multiple forms of inequality. Centering the voices of EJ movements is one potential way to attend to Pellow's first pillar of critical EJS, which is to think about the intersectional dimensions of EJ.[11] Figure 19 places EJ movements in the center as the primary focus of EJS.

#2) EJS should abstain from definitively defining what justice looks like for EJ movements. This suggestion merely affirms a sentiment from Sze's *Environmental Justice in a Moment of Danger*, which is that *EJ movements* define what EJ looks like for their respective movements.[12] EJS scholars can theorize different aspects of EJ movements, support the knowledge production of EJ movements, and put the lessons of EJ movements in conversation with other literatures, but environmental justice is determined through the dialogue and actions of respective movements. Figure 19 makes a distinction between socio-environmental movements and EJS. The globe in this illustration is the field of EJS, holding such movements in focus. EJS works



FIGURE 19. Global environmental justice studies (illustrated by Jose E. Arboleda).

toward highlighting and theorizing socio-environmental movements, but these movements preexisted their mapping onto a globe (i.e., analysis in a field of study).

#3) EJS should actively work toward eroding the conceptual divide between nature and society, which also applies to the perception of environmental and social issues. Once again, this guideline is another affirmation of what EJ scholars such as Pellow and Sze have already stated[13] but is worth repeating when thinking about how EJS scholarship can better theorize the ontological politics of environmental racism and justice. The misperception of nature or environment as something solely pertaining to certain kinds of ecological relations (i.e., usually with the minimal number of human beings or signifiers of human occupation) is itself a form of ontological violence produced by settler colonialism. For instance, when Spaniards first reached Alta California (now known as the US state of California),

they believed they were seeing lands untouched by human settlement.[14] Their confusion stemmed from the fact that the multitude of Indigenous peoples living in California had transformed the landscape in many ways imperceptible to Europeans (e.g., vegetation cleared out of meadows to facilitate hunting opportunities),[15] who associated human settlement with a more dramatic transformation of landscapes (e.g., buildings, land cleared for ranches or farms). One aspect of this ontological violence is that Euro-American settlers eventually imposed rules about what nature or environment is and what it is not, which facilitated the displacement of Indigenous peoples for the creation of national parks (i.e., for the preservation of "natural" spaces).[16] It is the same ontological violence that hinders many mainstream environmentalists from perceiving urban environmental racism because urban spaces do not pertain to "nature" or "the environment." In the concluding pages of *What Is Critical Environmental Justice*, Pellow argues for merging EJ with ecological justice because ecological justice more deeply engages human beings' relationships with the nonhuman world.[17] Perhaps EJS should attempt to redefine itself as a form of "socio-ecological justice" as a step toward further erasing both boundaries. Figure 19 places protesters asking "Stop the violence" alongside protesters asking to stop pollution: "*No más contaminación*."

#4) To situate the knowledge production of EJS and as an affirmation of guideline #1, EJS scholars should be clear that they are not stating anything new about environmental justice that past/present/future EJ movements have not already stated. This guideline is meant to remind EJ scholars that, beyond engagement with EJ movements, their primary functions as scholars are to expose environmental racism, present the lessons of environmental movements, and challenge the hierarchies of credibility[18] that marginalize the knowledge production of EJ communities. Figure 19 depicts arrows (i.e., flows) emanating from those demanding change. These flows are the lessons of socio-environmental movements, the bases for revolutions of thought and action.

#5) EJS must keep in mind that EJ movements' thinking beyond state-based solutions also often implies thinking beyond the academy. Given the increasing use of the term *environmental justice* in popular discourses as well as the increase in EJ as a topic of scholarly inquiry, it is more important than ever to remember that not everyone talking about EJ is concerned with the ethics of EJ movements. This is particularly true in universities and other institutions of learning that draw from a wide range of funding sources (e.g., state budgets, federal budgets, military-funded grants, corporate-funded grants, etc.). For example, the US Environmental Protection Agency recently created the Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights.[19] This does not mean that the research funded by their grants, with "environmental justice" printed in the titles of publications from those grants, is necessarily in line with the objectives of the EJ movements those investigations may focus on. The flows of figure 19 extend beyond the globe itself (i.e., EJS) in acknowledgement that any academic field of study has such limitations.

Global environmental justice studies has the potential to engage the global scale of environmental racism and justice in some exciting novel ways, both theoretically and methodologically.

Beyond identifying ways to think about the global scale of environmental racism, which was specifically discussed in the introduction and has been discussed across other chapters of *Visions of Global Environmental Justice*, more attention should also be paid to the ways socioeconomic globalization facilitates global environmental racism. EJ scholars have an opportunity to elaborate on the ways that the consumption habits of the Global North compromise the sustainability of life on the planet, which is further exacerbated by the entire world becoming more connected (especially through social media) and more consumption oriented. To that point, climate change (with its affiliated disasters) and garbage patches in the ocean are forms of pollution that are not distributed equally across ecosystems. Furthermore, much more can be done to reveal the connections between extractivism (usually the domain of political ecologists), physical violence, and environmental racism. The same can be said of specific entities that top the list of the world's polluters, such as the US military, that provide EJ scholars an opportunity to illustrate the global intersections of environmental racism and physical violence through geospatial and quantitative methods.

Theorizing the globalization of EJ movements is a potential site of collaboration for EJS scholars conducting ethnographic research on EJ movements and legal scholars focused on the proceedings of EJ court cases. As *Visions of Global Environmental Justice* has attempted to demonstrate, EJ scholars should pay particular attention to how EJ communities leverage transnational agreements and assistance in such court cases. There are also numerous opportunities for EJ scholars to explore how EJ itself has become a globalized concept, translated differently across geo-ontological contexts.

Last, much work needs to be done identifying literatures that could fall under the rubric of global EJS, especially scholarship not explicitly identified as EJS. Apart from scholarship that deconstructs the nature-society divide, there is great need for investigation of the ramifications of natural rights. As Álvarez and Coolsaet argue for in their call to decolonize EJS, EJ scholars need to pay more attention to decolonial literature and scholarship of the Global South in general.[20] In particular, because of EJS's concern with centering the voices of EJ movements, literature on the pluriverse, the geopolitics of knowledge production, and ecologies of difference would resonate with global EJS.

In conclusion, I would like to share the words of someone I interviewed about the effects of aerial eradication on their community:

> A recommendation for your thesis or your book, which is that you should document the poverty that exists here in the Pacific, but you should also show the potential that there is in flora and fauna . . . that for a few whims is being destroyed, because this biodiversity serves not just our community, but the entire world.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. US DEA 2020: 32–33.
2. Jelsma 2001.
3. Rivera Flórez 2005.
4. Mejía 2015: 5–6.
5. Throughout this book, the first time a Spanish word or term is presented, it is italicized, then followed by a definition. Subsequent uses of the same Spanish word or term (e.g., *resguardos indígenas*) are intentionally not italicized in the rest of the text.
6. In Colombia, *comunidad negra* refers to a specific type of collectively titled Afro-descendant community in the Pacific region. In the broader context of Afro-descendant identities in Colombia, there are also terms such as *palenqueros/as* (descendants of maroon communities on the Atlantic coast) and *raizales* (Caribbean peoples of the islands of San Andrés, Providencia, and Santa Catalina). The term *Afro-Colombian* has a complicated history related to the struggles for recognition of comunidades negras, the creation of new census categories in the 2000s, and the spatial concentration of Afro-descendant Colombians in urban areas (Wade 2009). In *Visions of Global Environmental Justice*, I prefer to use the term *Afro-descendants* versus *Afro-Colombians* because it both encompasses the abovementioned identities and connects these populations to the greater diaspora of African peoples in the Americas.
7. Rincón-Ruiz and Kallis 2013.
8. The names of people interviewed in this chapter have been changed to pseudonyms.
9. Author translated any interviews and texts originally in Spanish to English for this entire book.
10. *Paisa* is the Colombian nickname for someone from the state of Antioquia. In the Pacific region it refers to Colombians not from the Pacific (i.e., obviously not Afro-descendant or Indigenous).

11. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFbKCYllHHo&t=300s for the video of this visit with the original Spanish audio (includes subtitles in English).

12. Colombia 2009.

13. Colombia 2009.

14. Escobar 2008; Cárdenas 2012; Oslender 2016.

15. Asher and Ojeda 2009; Restrepo 2013.

16. República de Colombia 2003.

17. Policía Nacional et al. 2014.

18. Letter from the Coordination of Community Councils and Organizations Representing the Black Communities of the Cauca Pacific Coast (COCOCAUCA) is dated August 21, 2012. It states, "*Colombia debe respetar sus acuerdos internacionales ya que es el único país del mundo que permite la guerra química contra su territorio*."

19. The suspension was lifted and aerial eradication operations resumed in 2021, only to be suspended again in 2022.

20. SINIC, "Mitos y Leyendas—Chocó."

21. Vanín Romero 2017: 46.

22. Whitten 1974: 100.

23. Whitten 1974: 99.

24. See the note following the List of Figures for more information about the illustrator and the process of conceptualizing these illustrations.

25. Chavis 1994: xii.

26. Bullard 1999; Pulido 2000; Holifield 2001.

27. Bullard 1999: 6.

28. Pellow 2018: 4–5.

29. Bullard 1999: 7.

30. Bryant and Mohai 1992; Bullard 1999; Cole and Foster 2001.

31. Massey and Denton 1993; Pulido 2000; Pastor et al. 2001; Lipsitz 2007.

32. Szasz 1994; Pellow 2018.

33. Pellow 2018: 7.

34. Pellow 2018 citing Hurley 1995; Pellow 2002; Pellow and Park 2002; Washington 2003; Taylor 2009.

35. Pellow 2018: 14.

36. Pellow 2018: 3.

37. Pellow 2018; Sze 2020.

38. Adamson et al. 2000; Gonzalez 2006; Reed 2009; Gonzalez 2011.

39. Martínez-Alier et al. 2011; Martínez-Alier et al. 2016; Anguelovski 2015.

40. Williams and Mawdsley 2006; Basu 2016; Roy and Martínez-Alier 2019.

41. Dhillon 2019; Gilio-Whitaker 2019; Sze 2020.

42. https://www.latinorebels.com/2018/08/14/coaldeathroute/

43. Pellow 2016; Pellow 2018; Mascarenhas 2020.

44. Marbury 1995; Park 1998; Adeola 2000; Pellow 2007.

45. Huang 2017; Bennett et al. 2023.

46. Bandy 1997; Carruthers 2007; Carruthers 2008a; Carruthers 2008b; Grineski and Juárez-Carillo 2012.

47. Crawford 2019.

48. Douglas et al. 2012; Perez and Egan 2016; Douglas and Cooper 2020.
49. Terry 2009; Lipset 2013; Schlosberg and Collins 2014; Sultana 2022.
50. Tsosie 2007; Méndez 2020; Villa 2020.
51. Rees and Westra 2003; Skillington 2012; Sabajo et al. 2017.
52. Pellow 2018: 26.
53. Dhillon 2017; Gilio-Whitaker 2019; Ulloa 2017; Rodríguez and Inturias 2018.
54. Sheller 2020; Lloréns 2021; de Onís 2021.
55. Cole and Foster 2001.
56. Hofrichter 1993; Marbury 1995; Martínez-Alier 1997; Glover et al. 2002; Yang 2002; Anand 2003; Martínez-Alier 2005; Faber 2005; Pellow 2007; Schlosberg 2007; Carruthers 2008b; Taylor 2010; Martínez-Alier et al. 2016; Lewis 2016; Pellow 2018; Sze 2018; de Onís 2021.
57. https://www.wsj.com/articles/exide-and-california-battle-over-toxic-site-the-company-left-behind-11602803518
58. https://e360.yale.edu/features/getting-the-lead-out-why-battery-recycling-is-a-global-health-hazard
59. Bullard 1999: 7.
60. Park and Pellow 2011; Taylor 2016; Pellow 2018.
61. Moore et al. 2003.
62. Park and Pellow 2011: 4.
63. https://sandiego.surfrider.org/cbwn/
64. https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/water_issues/programs/tijuana_river_valley_strategy/sewage_issue.html
65. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMOhWAzHwm8
66. Gladstone et al. 2021.
67. Pugliese 2020: 2.
68. Wolf 1972.
69. Robbins 2012: 14.
70. Neumann 2005: 32.
71. Neumann 2005: 33.
72. Blaikie and Brookfield 1987: 17.
73. Peet and Watts 2004: 9.
74. Robbins 2012: 85.
75. Robbins 2012: 5.
76. Escobar 2007; Escobar 2008.
77. Green 2013.
78. de la Cadena 2015.
79. Álvarez and Coolsaet 2020.
80. Sze 2020: 6.
81. Trask 1992; Mascarenhas 2007; Gilio-Whitaker 2019.
82. de Onís 2021: 43.
83. de Onís 2021: 43.
84. Cavanagh and Himmelfarb 2015.
85. Moore 1993; Peet and Watts 1996.
86. Cavanagh and Himmelfarb 2015: 60.

87. Cavanagh and Himmelfarb 2015: 63.
88. Foucault 1978: 138.
89. Cavanagh and Himmelfarb 2015: 62.
90. Cavanagh and Himmelfarb 2015: 69–70.
91. Cavanagh and Himmelfarb 2015: 70.
92. LeGrand 1986.
93. In this book the term *resguardos indígenas* will exclusively refer to Indigenous reservations in Colombia. The term *peoples of Indigenous reservations* will be used to refer to such communities in the rest of the Americas.
94. Oslender 2008a; Oslender 2012.
95. Cavanagh and Himmelfarb 2015: 62.
96. IGC 2019.
97. Reyes Posada and Bejarano 1988.
98. Cavanagh and Himmlefarb 2015: 60.
99. Agnew and Oslender 2013.
100. Vanín 1993; Arocha Rodríguez 1999; Mosquera Mosquera 2001.
101. Weinstock 2020.
102. Kristeva and Lechte 1982; Creed 1993; Stratton 2011.
103. Foucault 1978; Foucault 1996; Foucault 2010; Prozorov and Rentea 2017.
104. Lewis 2003; Martínez 2020.
105. Escobar 2008; Ramírez-Hernández and Leguizamon-Arias 2020.
106. Appelbaum 2003; Coronil 1997; Derby 2009.
107. Mbembé 2003; Mbembé and Corcoran 2019.
108. Cavanagh and Himmelfarb 2015.
109. Alves 2014.
110. Pulido 2016; Alves and Tathagatan 2020.
111. Pugliese 2020.
112. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/incommensurability/
113. Kuhn 1962.
114. Martínez-Alier 1995.
115. Martínez-Alier 1995: 76.
116. Latour 2004: 192.
117. Pellow 2018, original emphasis: 26.
118. MacPherson and O'Donnell 2017; Ruíz Serna 2017; Moreno Parra 2019.
119. Known as *quilombos* in Brazil.
120. Rahder 2020; Pugliese 2020; Sheller 2020.
121. Haraway and Goodeve 2000: 107.
122. Haraway 1988.
123. Haraway and Goodeve 2000: 59.
124. Escobar 2008, original emphasis: 15.
125. Agier 2002: 162.
126. *Huezo* is a fairly common surname in El Salvador, and it literally means "bone" in Spanish (though spelled slightly differently, *h-u-e-s-o*). In Colombia people often smirk once I tell them my last name because in many Spanish-speaking Caribbean countries, the expression *un hueso duro de roer* (a bone that is tough to gnaw on) connotes

someone who is dull or requires an inordinate amount of explanation to be convinced of something.

127. http://cerac.org.co

128. In documenting the origins of this racial classification in the Pacific region, Wade notes, "Racial categories, which were already perhaps clearer than in other areas of Latin America, due to the geographical concentration of black people in the region, became even clearer, as mestizo highlanders lumped together all the locals—whatever their racial identity—as blacks and arrogated the term *blanco* (white) for themselves" (Wade 2014: 192).

1. TRICKSTERS, SEDUCTRESSES, AND ECO-MONSTERS

1. Vanín Romero 2017: 153.
2. Pellow 2018.
3. All names of people interviewed in this chapter have been changed to pseudonyms.
4. *las historias antiguas*
5. *Los jóvenes no creen más en esas historias.*
6. *Yo vengo del otro mundo . . .*
7. *Es un orgullo saber estas tradiciones.*
8. Motta González 1997: 30.
9. *No, tenía la forma de un ser humano, un negro con dientes de oro.*
10. Agier 2002: 150–151.
11. SINIC, "Mitos y Leyendas—Valle del Cauca."
12. Silva Vallejo 1998: 44.
13. Silva Vallejo 1998: 44.
14. *Le da miedo pero no hace nada.*
15. SINIC, "Mitos y Leyendas—Valle del Cauca."
16. Rentea 2017: 2.
17. Foucault 1978: 142–143.
18. Foucault 1978: 138.
19. Foucault 1978: 137.
20. Foucault 1988.
21. Lorenzini 2021: S41.
22. Foucault 1995.
23. Vanín Romero 1989: 18.
24. Given this similarity with La Tunda, Daniel commented that the two are sometimes talked about as the same entity.
25. SINIC, "Mitos y Leyendas—Chocó."
26. SINIC, "Mitos y Leyendas—Chocó."
27. SINIC, "Mitos y Leyendas—Chocó."
28. Weinstock 2020.
29. Guidotto 2008: 53.
30. Auerbach 1995.
31. Vanín Romero 2017: 68.
32. *Sí, les contaría esas historias y, idealmente, contarles de mi vida en el campo. Ellos no saben nada del campo.*

33. *un pueblito de fantasmas*

34. *Esas cosas sí creo porque yo las viví. . . . No voy a contar esas historias a mis hijos porque, para mí, fue muy traumático. Soy una persona miedosa. Sería traumático para ellos.*

35. *Es la maldad del pasado.*

36. *Todo en la ciudad, ¡hay que comprar!*

37. *La gente del campo es más integrada.*

38. *La convivencia es diferente . . . la verdad es que antes de llegar los grupos armados . . . la vida muy sabrosa. Tengo 69 años, tres nietos y no encuentro trabajo. No tengo valor en Buenaventura como en el campo.*

39. Sánchez Gómez and Meertens 2001: 32.

40. Pécaut 2013: 149.

41. Uprimny Yepes 2003: 46.

42. LaRosa and Mejía 2012: 88.

43. Vargas Meza 1999: 42–43.

44. Offstein 2003: 105.

45. Reyes Posada and Bejaraõ 1988: 7.

46. Reyes Posada 2009: 56–57.

47. Reyes Posada 2009: 85.

48. Vargas Meza 1999: 43–47.

49. Reyes Posada 2009: 85–86.

50. Reyes Posada 2009: 86.

51. LaRosa and Mejía 2012: 89.

52. LaRosa and Mejía 2012: 89.

53. Salazar 2012.

54. Reyes Posada 2009: 87–88.

55. Reyes Posada 2009: 88.

56. Thoumi 2003: 99.

57. Tickner et al. 2011: 421.

58. Tate 2015: 50.

59. Vargas Meza 1999: 47–48.

60. *Eltiempo.com* 1998.

61. Tickner et al. 2011: 420.

62. Vargas Meza 1999: 50.

63. Reyes Posada 2009: 88–89.

64. Human Rights Watch 2010.

65. Human Rights Watch 2010.

66. None of the displaced people I interviewed made a distinction between paramilitary groups and BACRIM, or *bandas criminales* (criminal bands), even though paramilitary soldiers were supposedly demobilized after 2006.

67. *el flagelo de todo*

68. *Pagaban la gente del pueblo para servicios o cosas como gasolina . . . muy difícil resistirse cuando uno no tiene plata y el tipo tiene fusil.*

69. *¿Usted sabe por qué los grupos armados se ha metido por allá? ¡Por injusticia!*

70. *Lo pueden matar y si son soldados lo pasan por guerrillero. Lo hicieron a una señora mayor del pueblo.*

71. Mbembé 2003: 12.
72. Mbembé 2003: 21.
73. Mbembé 2003: 24.
74. Mbembé 2003: 39–40.
75. Mbembé 2003: 27.
76. LeGrand 1986.
77. Mbembé 2003: 34.
78. https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/colombia.html
79. Ramírez 2010: 94.
80. This is more evident than ever with the popularity of the Black Lives Matter movement in countries throughout the Americas.
81. The term for maroon societies in Colombia, Ecuador, and elsewhere in Latin America.
82. The term for maroon communities in Brazil.
83. Bledsoe 2018: 55.
84. Specific examples are discussed in chapter 3 and chapter 4.
85. *Tengo entendido que en los tiempos antiguos . . . cuentan a la gente de allí mismo, los nativos . . . que la gente se mataba a punto de machetazos. Se bajaban las cabezas por los machetes. O sea, corría sangre por las lomas. ¿Me entiende? Masacres, la guerrilla tiraba los cuerpos al rio.*
86. Mbembé 2003: 34.
87. *Escuché gritos y vi sombras pero cuando salí de la carpa no había nadie.*
88. https://rutasdelconflicto.com/especiales/conflicto-continua/sur-bolivar/index.html
89. Crain 1991: 70.
90. Crain 1991: 70.
91. *Pregunté que quería.*
92. *Ahora estoy acustombrada a esas cosas, ya es rutina.*
93. SINIC, "Mitos y Leyendas—Chocó."
94. Mbembé and Corcoran 2019: 107–108.
95. Vanín Romero 2017: 153.
96. See Taussig 1980; Crain 1991; Edelman 1994.
97. SINIC, "Mitos y Leyendas—Chocó."
98. *Oye, puedes llevar un cliente a la finca. Un gringo gordo que pesa como 120 kilos nos hizo tumbar la moto.*
99. *pinta de militar.*
100. Fanon 1963: 55–56.
101. Motta González 1997: 96–97.
102. This term refers to much more than "territory" and will be discussed in further detail in chapter 3.
103. Grueso et al. 2003: 444.
104. Hernández Cassiani 2022: 94.
105. Grueso et al. 2003.
106. Shaw 2002: 56.
107. Arboleda Quiñonez 2019: 106.
108. Arboleda Quiñonez 2019: 106.
109. Arboleda Quiñonez 2019: 106.

110. Pellow 2018: 61.
111. Pellow 2018: 66.
112. Bullard 1990; Pellow 2002; Taylor 2014.
113. Pulido 1996; Smith et al. 2006; Berkey 2017.
114. Park and Pellow 2011; Mascarenhas 2012; Taylor 2016.
115. Bullard and Wright 2009; de Onís 2021; Lloréns 2021.
116. Voyles 2015.

2. DEVILS, WITCHES, AND NARCO-MONSTERS

1. This includes two major groups, the Calimas and Gorrones, which are subdivided into smaller groups such as the Jamundíes, Buchitolos, Liles or Lilies, Aquales, Calotos, Bugos, Abichines, Ocaches, Buscajoes, Atuncelos, Noamaes, Guacaries, Chancos, Chinches, Sonsos, Llamas, Timbas Paches, and others. https://www.cali.gov.co/cultura/publicaciones/225/resea_histrica_de_santiago_de_cali/
2. Wolfe 2006; Veracini 2010.
3. Rodríguez Cuenca et al. 2005: 14 citing Ortíz 1965.
4. Rodríguez Cuenca et al. 2005: 9.
5. Rodríguez Cuenca et al. 2005: 9.
6. Waxer 2010.
7. Varela 1984.
8. A Cali-based salsa DJ and music collector (and friend of mine) posted all 500 songs on his Facebook account over the span of several weeks.
9. Waxer 2010.
10. Fraser Delgado 2000.
11. Waxer 2010.
12. Fraser Delgado 2000.
13. I was fortunate to have met the legendary Jairo Varela a few months before his passing.
14. Alves and Figueroa 2019.
15. García et al. 2015: 18.
16. Friedemann 1993.
17. Aprile-Gniset 1994.
18. Aprile-Gniset 1994.
19. Vásquez Benítez 2001.
20. DANE 2018.
21. Vásquez Benítez 2001: 3.
22. Vinasco-Martínez 2019: 164.
23. Vásquez Benítez 2001: 4–5.
24. Zapata 2018.
25. merriam-webster.com
26. Mbembé 2003: 40.
27. Vinasco-Martínez 2019: 181.
28. Alves 2014: 324.
29. Alves and Vergara Figueroa 2019.
30. Alves 2014: 324.

31. Constaín Restrepo et al. 1995: 155.
32. Constaín Restrepo et al. 1995: 156–160.
33. Obando 2015.
34. Obando 2015.
35. Obando 2015.
36. Silva Holguín 1985.
37. This interview can be found in the following clips on YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6X6OOWJKhU
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6OH_6NHveok&t=29
38. Obando 2015.
39. González Cortés 2001.
40. These details are recounted in the online version of the local newspaper, *Diario Occidente* (2018). Below the article there is a video that features interviews with Afro-descendant residents of Juanchito remembering the story: https://occidente.co/cali/el-dia-que-el-diablo-se-aparecio-en-juanchito-verdad-o-leyenda/
41. Agier 2002. A parallel version of this legend exists in Antioquia. In both versions the protagonist is named Francisco and is challenged by the devil to a musical duel. In Antioquia the duel was performed on accordions, not marimbas (Sánchez 2001).
42. Quintero 1999.
43. All names of people interviewed in this chapter have been changed to pseudonyms.
44. Even today, picture taking inside certain clubs is restricted to your immediate group of friends. The security guards of these clubs enforce this rule to avoid conflicts with members of cartels that do not want their photos taken.
45. This includes plastic surgery. Narcotraficantes are said to have bought so much plastic surgery for their girlfriends in the 1990s that Cali is now widely renowned for the relatively cheap costs of numerous procedures. *Sin tetas no hay paraíso* (2005), a Colombian novel that later became a telenovela (2006), chronicles this phenomenon in Pereira, Colombia.
46. Limón 1994: 185.
47. José had also read in the newspaper and had seen in a television news report that the devil had been spotted in another nightclub. This version of the devil has appeared in other cities in Colombia, according to tabloid media outlets.
48. *Pura sangre* (1982) is a Colombian horror film based on this story.
49. Ponce de León-Calero 2020.
50. Ordóñez Valverde 2017: 114–116.
51. Vinasco-Martínez 2019: 165.
52. Vinasco-Martínez 2019: 165–166.
53. This is also common practice in many rural areas of Colombia.
54. CVC 2010.
55. This came from a discussion with Juan and Nancy, mentioned later, in the neighborhood Manuela Beltrán of the Aguablanca District. El Caballero sin Cabeza appears to be the combination of two visions common to Antioquia and other regions of Colombia: *El Cura sin Cabeza* (the Headless Priest) and *El Sombrerón* (the Man with a Large Sombrero) or *El Jinete Negro* (the Black Horserider). Of course, the vision also could be inspired by the headless horseman in the Washington Irving short story *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

56. Agier 1999.
57. Agier 1999: 24.
58. Agier 1999: 24.
59. Creed 1993: 252, commenting on Freud's interpretation of the myth of Perseus.
60. Vanín Romero 1999: 4.
61. *El Tiempo* 2010.
62. CVC 2010.
63. *El Tiempo* 2010.
64. As reported by Emcali (2015): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbPddNTj9PQ
65. *El Tiempo* 2010.
66. *Noticiero 90 Minutos* (2013): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_GEnzgHhEs
67. *Noticiero 90 Minutos* (2014): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5tG-SPXv2Q&t=49s
68. *Y los niches vinieron a joder Cali y a invadir*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJmu-bmTtaI&t=113
69. Pellow 2018: 17.
70. Pellow 2018: 17.
71. Alves and Figueroa 2019.
72. *De noche, son los vivos los más bravos.*
73. International Crisis Group 2019.
74. Vinasco-Martínez 2019: 170–171.
75. Vinasco-Martínez 2019: 170–171.
76. Vinasco-Martínez 2019: 171–172.
77. Castillo Garcés and Betancourt Ledezma 2017.
78. Perea Restrepo 2015: 31.
79. Vinasco-Martínez 2019: 174.
80. Vinasco-Martínez 2019: 174.
81. Vinasco-Martínez 2019: 175.
82. Colombia 2009: 1.
83. Unsolicited opinion of several displaced informants. Opinion of sociologists Federico Guillermo Muñoz and Sergio Mauricio Zamora of La Universidad del Valle. Opinion of employees of SoliVida and Proyectos Desarraigados, two nongovernmental organizations working with the displaced population in Cali.
84. See note 83.
85. Semana 2009.
86. *Ya no más creo en ese tipo de cosas.*
87. The following is a sample of examples found on Youtube:
    Timbiquí, Cauca (2023): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QloC7eRdkG8
    Lloró, Chocó (2017): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfCNQzMMleY
    Bogotá, D.C. (2015): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNHuXeP7sBY
88. According to Juan, witches often take the shapes of cats, ravens, or turkey vultures. He described various methods of trapping and injuring witches in their animal form so they can be identified later by their injuries when they return to human form.
89. The accused witch, an Indigenous woman from Putumayo, passed by on the sidewalk and avoided eye contact as I was interviewing Cristina about what had transpired.
90. *Cuando me pasa me da la espalda, y eso no se hace por aquí.*

91. Wade 1993: 318.
92. Trailer for Netflix's *Siempre Bruja*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EpP3Al2GaB8
93. Nittle 2019.
94. Pellow 2018.
95. Gregory 2003.
96. Harvey 2005.
97. Pellow 2018: 19.
98. Pellow 2018: 19.

3. KILLER PLANTS AND THE TWO-HEADED MONSTER

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mvDz7n_1JvI
2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UbcDyNitkbE
3. República de Colombia 2010: 8.
4. Agnew 2003.
5. Escobar 2008; Oslender 2008a.
6. Meertens 2010; Grajales 2011.
7. Dion and Russler 2008.
8. Cavanagh and Himmelfarb 2015: 63.
9. Thoumi 2003: 29–30.
10. Thoumi 2003: 29–30.
11. Thoumi 2003: 34.
12. Thoumi 2003: 35.
13. Gootenberg 2003: 121.
14. Pereira 2010: 393–394.
15. Gootenberg 2003: 121.
16. Pereira 2010: 395.
17. Gootenberg 2003: 122.
18. Gootenberg 2003: 124–126.
19. Gootenberg 2003: 127–132.
20. Gootenberg 2003; Blickman 2014.
21. Thoumi 2003: 53.
22. Blickman 2014.
23. Thoumi 2003: 18–20.
24. Gootenberg 2003: 122.
25. Thoumi 2003: 22 citing Musto 1999.
26. Gootenberg 2003: 131.
27. Gootenberg 2003: 133.
28. Gootenberg 2003: 138.
29. US DEA.
30. United States 1972.
31. Gootenberg 2003: 138.
32. Thoumi 2003: 25.
33. Gootenberg 2003: 138 citing Musto 1999.
34. Thoumi 2003: 24–25.

35. Youngers and Rosin 2005: 3.

36. Dussel 1992.

37. Escobar 2008: 20.

38. Dávila et al. 2021.

39. With the exception of small-scale experimentations in various states, the aerial eradication of illicit crops was not conducted in the United States until the 1990s when Roundup was sprayed on marijuana fields in Hawaii. Jelsma 2001: 17–18.

40. Escobar 2004: 7 citing Joxe 2002.

41. Escobar 2004: 8.

42. Escobar 2004: 9.

43. Escobar 2004: 11.

44. Escobar 2008: 51.

45. Slater 2004.

46. Thoumi 2003: 26.

47. Tate 2015: 36.

48. Youngers and Rosin 2005: 3.

49. Youngers and Rosin 2005: 3–4.

50. Though as Youngers points out, the "Lack of accountability and transparency in the region's military forces make tackling the inevitable corruption that accompanies antidrug efforts even harder—and controlling potential human rights abuses next to impossible." Youngers 2000: 20.

51. Youngers 2000: 20–21.

52. Tate 2015: 46–47.

53. Tate 2015: 47.

54. Morales 1992: 353–354.

55. Morales 1992: 355.

56. Youngers 2000: 22.

57. Krauss 1992.

58. Youngers 2000: 18; Shining Path is a guerilla group intent on replacing Peru's government with a Marxist-Maoist regime.

59. $10 million was approved in the first stage of aid that also included aircraft and road-building equipment. The US Drug Enforcement Agency (US DEA) and US Army Special Forces had already been working with Peruvian police units at the time. Krauss 1992.

60. Gootenberg 2003: 147.

61. Ramírez 2010: footnote #10, 106.

62. Ramírez 2010: 94.

63. Ramírez 2011: 56.

64. Ramírez 2011: 82.

65. Fraser 2010: 288–289, original emphasis.

66. Elden 2009: 67.

67. "Posture Statement" 2014: 3, author emphasis.

68. Elhawary 2010: 88, author emphasis.

69. Author interview with Germán Ayala Osorio at La Universidad Autónoma de Occidente in Cali, Colombia, on July 14, 2012. Ayala Osorio conducted a discursive analysis of how Plan Colombia was presented in mainstream Colombia print media in 2000,

highlighting how the merits of the plan were lauded even though the plan had never been published in Colombia. He explained that 3–4 informal English-to-Spanish translations of Plan Colombia were circulating in Colombia after the agreement had already been implemented. The only substantive Colombian media critiques of Plan Colombia were plagiarized versions of articles originally written in *The Washington Post*.

70. Ayala Osorio y Llano Ángel 2004: 43.

71. *Departamentos*, or departments, in Colombia are political units comparable to states or provinces.

72. Presidencia de la República 1999: 76, 78.

73. Ayala Osorio y Llano Ángel 2004: 63.

74. Thoumi 2003: 90.

75. Ayala Osorio y Llano Ángel 2004: 66–67.

76. Shifter 2012.

77. Author interview with anonymous officer who participated in Plan Colombia. Interview conducted at US Southern Command in Doral, Florida, on November 12, 2012.

78. Brodzinsky 2016.

79. O'Shaughnessy and Bradford 2005: 100–101.

80. Brodzinsky 2016.

81. Shifter 2012.

82. Quoted in Brodzinsky 2016.

83. Brodzinsky 2016.

84. Tickner 2007; Borda Guzmán 2010.

85. Shifter 2012.

86. Borda Guzmán 2010: 145.

87. *The Economist* 2016.

88. Brownfield 2014.

89. Cavanagh and Himmelfarb 2015: 63.

90. Pellow 2018: 23.

91. Bullard 1999; Szasz 1994; Taylor 2000; Cole and Foster 2001.

92. https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/138

93. https://www.southcom.mil/About/

94. Author interview with Colombian military officer at US Southern Command November 14, 2012.

95. ILO 1989.

96. Author interview with Pablo Rueda-Saiz at Parque de la 93 in Bogotá on April 7, 2015.

97. República de Colombia 2003.

98. Author interview with Leonardo Correa at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Bogotá on April 28, 2015.

99. Author interview with Pablo Rueda-Saiz at Parque de la 93 in Bogotá on April 7, 2015.

100. Huezo 2017.

101. Author interview with Farid Benavides at La Universidad de los Andes on March 10, 2015.

102. Author interview with Pablo Rueda-Saiz at Parque de la 93 in Bogotá on April 7, 2015.

103. Author interview with Julián Wilches at *la Fiscalía General de la Nación* (Office of the Attorney General of Colombia) on March 11, 2015.

104. Author interview with Julián Wilches on March 11, 2015.

105. https://www.iarc.who.int/featured-news/media-centre-iarc-news-glyphosate/

106. UNODC 2014.

107. Eltiempo.com 2015.

108. Author interview with Leonardo Correa at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Bogotá on April 28, 2015.

109. Author interview with Lieutenant Colonel Miguel Tunjano Villaraga of the Colombian Counternarcotics Division (DIRAN) at the Hotel Tequendama in Bogotá on May 8, 2015.

110. Author interview with Leonardo Correa at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Bogotá on April 28, 2015.

111. Huezo 2019.

112. Huezo 2017.

113. Huezo and Bazán Orobio 2021.

114. *Impactos de las aspersiones* 2011: 47–48.

115. Policía Nacional et al. 2014.

116. Tate 2015: 198.

117. https://www.minsalud.gov.co/paginas/Los-mitos-urbanos-sobre-el-virus-del-chikunguña-.aspx

118. Author interview with INL staff at US Embassy in Bogotá on August 4, 2015.

119. Author interview with Coronel Miguel Tunjano on May 8, 2015.

120. Author interview with interlocutor who preferred to remain anonymous on August 28, 2015.

121. Slater 2004.

122. Author interview with Mario Angulo on September 9, 2015.

123. Author interview with Benjamín Mosquera of Río Anchicayá on August 12, 2015.

124. Braun 2002.

125. Dalby and Ó Tuathail 2002: 3.

126. Agnew and Oslender 2013: 136.

127. Tate 2015: 64.

4. TERRITORY, NATURAL RIGHTS, AND GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

1. Schlosberg 2004; Pellow and Brulle 2005; Walker 2009; Temper et al. 2015; Martínez-Alier et al. 2016.

2. Schlosberg 2004: 518.

3. Schlosberg 2004: 536–537.

4. Walker 2009: 374.

5. Walker 2009: 374.

6. Martínez-Alier et al. 2016.

7. Offen 2003: 58.

8. Excerpted from José Santos Caicedo's speech at *Encuentro AfroPazífico* in Piendamó, Cauca, on August 28, 2015.

9. Price 1979: 1.

10. Bledsoe 2018: 55.

11. Asher and Ojeda 2009: 299.

12. Escobar and Frye 2020: 126.

13. Excerpted from José Santos Caicedo's speech at *Encuentro AfroPazífico* in Piendamó, Cauca, on August 28, 2015.

14. Escobar and Frye 2020: 126.

15. UNODC 2018.

16. UNODC 2018.

17. See Oslender 2008b for a description of traditional mining practices in the Pacific region.

18. Arias 2015.

19. Amnesty International 2015.

20. Arboleda Quiñonez 2019.

21. Grueso, Rosero, and Escobar 2003.

22. Human Rights Watch 2022.

23. Jaramillo Arango 2018.

24. COCOCAUCA 2012.

25. Pulido 2017: 530.

26. Pulido 2016: 2.

27. Author interview with INL officials at US Embassy on August 4, 2015.

28. López Orozco 2008: 55.

29. Silva Vallejo 1998: 28–29.

30. Cole and Foster 2001.

31. Author conversation with José Santos Caicedo at PCN office in Bogotá on March 5, 2015.

32. See Huezo 2017 for more details on this case.

33. Restrepo 2013: 268–269.

34. See Huezo and Bazán Orobio 2021 for more details on this case.

35. Silva Vallejo 1998: 59.

36. Silva Vallejo 1998: 59–60.

37. Silva Vallejo 1998: 58.

38. https://adamisacson.com/2016-suspect-trafficking-maps/

39. Restrepo 2013: 270.

40. Escobar 2008: 64.

41. Author interview with Mario Angulo on September 9, 2015.

42. Excerpted from José Santos Caicedo's speech at *Encuentro AfroPazífico* in Piendamó, Cauca, on August 28, 2015.

43. *La Guardia Cimarrona* (Maroon Guard) is dedicated to ensuring the safety, rights, and cultural patrimony of the residents of the community of San Basilio de Palenque, Bolívar (approximately fifty kilometers southeast of Cartagena on the Atlantic coast). It is comprised of young people—mostly males, though open to women—who are not members of the Colombian police, military, or any other armed group in Colombia.

44. ILO 1989.

45. ILO 1989.

46. Agudelo 2019: 324.

47. COCOCAUCA 2012.
48. Semana.com 2021.
49. Findings for this investigation discussed in Huezo 2019.
50. Author interview with Germán Ospina via Zoom in September 2022.
51. Author interview with Germán Ospina via Zoom in September 2022.
52. Author interview with Germán Ospina via Zoom in September 2022.
53. Silva Vallejo 1998: 61.
54. López Orozco 2008: 26.
55. López Orozco 2008: 27.
56. Escobar 2008: 93.
57. Leal 2018: 113–114.
58. AsoManosNegra 2008: 2.
59. Author interview with Yolanda García at the Petronio Álvarez festival in Cali on August 16, 2015.
60. Earth Economics 2018: 1.
61. Costanza et al.1998: 255–256.
62. Earth Economics 2018: 4.
63. Martinez-Alier 1995. Origins of incommensurability also explained in the introduction of *Visions of Global Environmental Justice*.
64. Author interview with Yolanda García on August 16, 2015.
65. Tate 2015: 64.
66. Ramírez 2011.
67. Massey and Denton 1993; Pulido 2000; Pastor et al. 2001; Lipsitz 2007.
68. Escobar 2018: 13 citing Maturana and Verden-Zöller 1993.
69. Escobar 2018: 15.
70. de la Cadena and Blaser 2018; Oslender 2019.
71. Conway and Singh 2011.
72. Escobar 2018; Reiter 2018.
73. Mignolo 2018: x.
74. Website describing incident (English available): https://descubro.mx/conoce-leyenda-del-puente-de-cancun/
75. Villanueva Villanueva 2014.
76. Website describing incident (English available): https://descubro.mx/conoce-leyenda-del-puente-de-cancun/
77. Fabricant 2013: 168.
78. de Sousa Santos 2014.
79. Ospina 2020: 1.
80. Author interview with Germán Ospina in September 2022.
81. Huezo and Bazán Orobio 2021.
82. Oslender 2016.
83. Clavijo Ospina 2020: 672.
84. Clavijo Ospina 2020: 691.
85. Clavijo Ospina 2020: 676.
86. Ospina 2020: 2.
87. Clavijo Ospina 2020: 696.

88. Huezo 2019.
89. Congreso de Colombia 2011a.
90. Congreso de Colombia 2011b.
91. Ruíz-Serna 2017: 92.
92. Ruíz-Serna 2017: 92.
93. Ruíz-Serna 2017: 90.
94. Ruíz-Serna 2017: 93.
95. Ruíz-Serna 2017.
96. https://www.jep.gov.co/macrocasos/caso02.html#container
97. Medina García 2020: 426–427.
98. Sánchez Jaramillo and Hasegan 2021.
99. Sanabria-Moyano and Rodríguez-Vivas 2022: 62.
100. Sanabria-Moyano and Rodríguez-Vivas 2022: 62.
101. Corte Constitucional de Colombia 2010.
102. Grupo de Universidad del Cauca 2018.
103. JEP 2022: 1–2.
104. "Derechos Represados" 2020.
105. Huezo 2019.
106. Galindo Orrego 2019: 33.
107. de Sousa Santos and García Villegas 2001: 13.
108. Ramírez-Hernández and Leguizamon-Arias 2020: 266.
109. Cronon 1996.
110. Neumann 1992.
111. Ojeda 2012.
112. Ramírez-Hernández and Leguizamon-Arias 2020: 269 citing Constitutional Court Sentence T622 of 2016.
113. Clavijo Ospina 2020: 674.
114. Tola 2018: 26.
115. Tola 2018: 29.
116. Tola 2018: 27.
117. Tola 2018: 26.
118. Tola 2018: 34.

5. ENVISIONING GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE STUDIES

1. Sze 2020: 6.
2. Vanín Romero 2017: 68.
3. Foucault 1995.
4. Foucault 2007.
5. Pulido 2016; Alves and Tathagatan 2020.
6. Pellow 2018.
7. Cavanagh and Himmelfarb 2015: 62.
8. Cavanagh and Himmelfarb 2015: 62.
9. Tate 2015: 46–47.
10. Dhillon 2017; Gilio-Whitaker 2019; Ulloa 2017; Rodríguez and Inturias 2018.

11. Pellow 2018: 18–20.
12. Sze 2020: 6.
13. Pellow 2018; Sze 2020.
14. Anderson et al. 1997: 14.
15. Anderson et al. 1997: 35.
16. Cronon 1996.
17. Pellow 2018: 152–153.
18. Tate 2015: 64.
19. https://www.epa.gov/perspectives/epas-new-office-environmental-justice-and-external-civil-rights-moment-history
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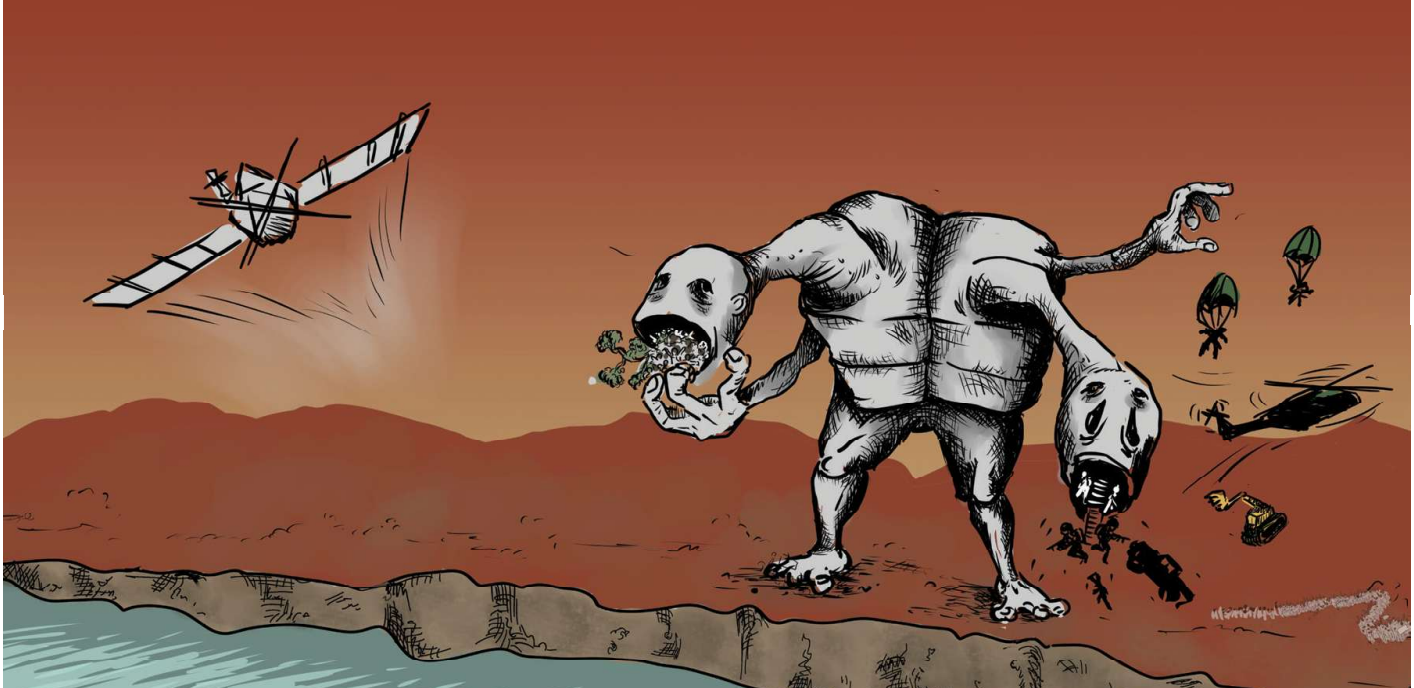
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