



Photo taken from Francia Márquez's Twitter account.

<https://twitter.com/FranciaMarquezM/status/1519519557903388673>

Decolonizing politics.

A case study of Francia Márquez' political practice with Colombian outgroups' experiences, knowledges, and struggles.

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Master Thesis in Cultural Studies + Communication Studies

Roskilde University - Autumn 2022

Total number of characters: 167,730

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how Francia Márquez, Colombia's current vice president, used knowledges and practises of historically excluded groups -outgroups- during her political campaign for Colombia's vice presidency in 2022 on Twitter.

Employing the method of Counterstorytelling proposed by the Critical Race Theory tradition, this work seeks to extract, through the creation of counterstories and its subsequent thickening, the political theory developed by Márquez and identify the knowledge and practices of marginalized groups within Colombian politics and how these either constitute Márquez's political practice or relates to it.

Finally, this work has a particular emphasis on exploring how Márquez both elaborates on and analyses the country's race, class, and gender issues and differs and challenges the political field, particularly in relation to opening frameworks of understanding of the country's problems, proposing transformative political imaginaries and ways of living.

Keywords: Decoloniality, Politics, Ancestral Knowledge, Afro-Diasporic feminism, Decolonial feminism, outgroups

Acknowledgments

I want to acknowledge and give my most cordial thanks to my supervisor, Julia Suárez-Krabbe, who embraced my ideas and guided me in this work by sharing her knowledge and experience in the field of study that concerns this thesis. I appreciate her critical feedback and guidance during this journey.

On a personal side, I would like to thank my husband, Casper, for his unconditional support and help during these months of work and throughout my entire master's degree journey. Thank you to my family in Colombia for encouraging me to pursue my studies and career in Denmark from afar and to my friends, who have always been there with their love and positive energy.

This thesis concludes this chapter of my academic life, which has enriched me intellectually, professionally, and personally.

January 2022,

María Angélica Torres Karlsmose

Introduction

Despite recent economic growth, Colombia remains one of the most unequal countries in Latin America. As reported by the World Bank, the income of Colombia's richest 10% is eleven times greater than that of its poorest 10%. In addition, the economic impact generated by the covid-19 pandemic further worsened inequality in the country and led around 3.6 million more people into poverty. With this trend, Black, Indigenous, and rural communities suffer the most (Editorial La República S.A.S., 2021).

From the very formation of Colombia as a state, Africans and Indigenous peoples were excluded from all areas of power, including politics and condemned to marginalization, poverty and inequality. According to Vanegas (2007), the state-building process in Colombia was based on a binary dynamic of inclusion/exclusion of the colonized peoples, influenced by the legacy of the colonization processes in Latin American lands. That implied the inclusion of the Indigenous and African struggles in the discourses of independence, and at the same time, the repression of the Indigenous and Africans' knowledges, practices, and subjectivities and the imposition of European forms of knowledge, political practices, and models of political hierarchy (Vanegas, 2007).

Colombia and the exclusive, racist, classist and patriarchal politics

In general, four different types of nation-state-building processes can be distinguished in Latin America based on the effects of colonization. In the case of Colombia, the country was founded on the notion of racial democracy. However, it was based on racial discrimination and the dominance of its Indigenous populations and African-descendent people. The racial logic as a strategy for hierarchizing people based on the idea of race within the framework of the European colonizing agenda continued to be the basis for the construction of Colombia as a nation. Under the notion of blood purity, an idea introduced by Spain and Portugal in their conquering missions, the hierarchical social-racial differentiation supported Creole dominance over other racial groups in the nascent Colombian nation (Suarez-Krabbe, 2015).

People of Spanish and Portuguese descent born in the colonies were known as Creole elites; they were second to Europeans in the social/racial hierarchy (Suarez-Krabbe, 2015). "In this hierarchy, the Creoles were followed by the Mestizos (Indigenous-European descent), the Mulattos (Afro-European descent), the Indios (descendants of the Indigenous

populations), the Zambos (Afro-Indian descent), and the Negroes (Afro descent)" (Suarez-Krabbe, 2015, p114).

From the independence of the country in 1810 from the Spanish empire, the Creole and Mestizo elites established their power based on the social-racial hierarchy mentioned above, which was reinforced by other categories of difference such as gender and class. They configured socially, economically and politically powerful groups of white, educated men and property owners able to participate in the nation's decision-making process. At the same time, this resulted in broad sectors of social groups being excluded from the country's political realm, such as the Indigenous, Afro-descendants, women and the poor. The exclusionary way the Creole and Mestizo elites established their power helps to understand inequality in Colombia. It illustrates that inequality has a continuity in history and that it is deeply intersectional, meaning it is experienced along racial, gendered, and territorial—not only economic—lines (Chang & García-Montoya, 2021b).

The elites formed from nation-state-building have maintained their power over Colombian politics for more than 200 years by reproducing the binary dynamic of inclusion/exclusion inherited from colonial times. Colombian elites have done politics by utilizing the social and economic problems (often created by the elites) faced by Indigenous, Afro-descendants, women, the poor and other marginalized groups in their political discourses. However, once in power, their wealth and personal interests always come before the lives of the country's marginalized groups (Cuero, 2021). Racism, classism, sexism and the violence from the longstanding Colombian internal armed conflict have protected the elites' interests.

Due to the long history of exclusion and marginality in Colombian politics, the 2022 presidential elections set a milestone in the political history of Colombia. On June 19th, Gustavo Petro, a former guerrilla fighter and ex-senator, became Colombia's first leftist president and his running mate, Francia Márquez Mina, became the country's first Afro-descendant woman vice president.

Márquez' political campaign during the election season of 2022 was unprecedented. In a country where the elites and the fear of reprisals by the armed groups also ruled what could be said and addressed in public, her speeches openly denounced the social inequalities in Colombian society and enhanced discussions about racism, classicism, and sexism. At the same time, her campaign embodied the struggles and hope for a different future shared by Colombia's excluded and marginalized groups. The honest and critical tone of Márquez's speeches opened debates in different sectors, such as national and international media,

impacting Colombia's elites, influential political groups with vast control over public discourse, and the media.

Study purpose & problem formulation

This thesis investigates Francia Márquez's use of knowledges and practices of historically excluded groups (henceforth outgroups) in Twitter during her political campaign towards the vice-presidency of Colombia in 2022. With a particular interest in Márquez's use of ancestral knowledge, the thesis concretely explores how Márquez both elaborates on and analyzes the country's race, class and gender issues, and differs and challenges the political field, particularly in relation to opening the frameworks of understanding of the country's problems, proposing transformative political imaginaries and ways of living. The aim is to contribute to understanding contemporary processes of decolonisation, particularly in relation to the political theories and perspectives of marginalized groups. Although such theories and perspectives abound, these are often perceived as inexistent in the academy because they are produced outside of Eurocentric and western rationality and emerge from struggles against oppression. This work seriously considers the theories and perspectives that Márquez draws upon and relates to and, in line with decolonial perspectives, it argues, that they constitute essential sources for overcoming the colonial legacies.

Employing the method of Counterstorytelling proposed by the Critical Race Theory tradition, I have created three counterstories based on Márquez's political campaign. The counterstories pinpoint the different outgroups Márquez made visible during the campaign and some key topics of her political agenda. Additionally, the narratives disclose these groups' experiences of oppression, practices of resistance, knowledge production and proposals for alternative ways of living in Colombia. In order to extract the political theory developed by Márquez and identify the knowledge and practices of marginalized groups within Colombian politics, and how these either constitute Márquez's political practice or relates to it, each counterstory is thickened based on the thesis' theoretical framework of decoloniality.

Problem formulation

How does Francia Márquez use excluded and marginalized groups' knowledges and practices –particularly ancestral ones– to carry out a political campaign that differs from and challenges dominant political imaginaries and proposes alternative ways of living in Colombia?

Thesis motivation

As a Colombian woman from Cartagena de Indias, my experiences with racism toward Black aesthetics constitute the initial motivations for this thesis. Although the Black and Afro-descendant populations represent a significant proportion of the people of Cartagena, racist practices, such as straightening the Afro-curly hair, are normalized in the city.

For over 13 years, I straightened my curly hair with chemical procedures because, from an early age, I was surrounded by discourses that positioned straightened hair as more beautiful and professional than Afro-curly hair. This racist practice against Afro-curly hair, deeply embedded in Cartagena society, is just one of the many ways racism is embedded in Colombia culture structurally and systematically. In 2020, inspired by the work of movements of Black women in Cartagena to revindicate the Afro-curly hair, I decided to stop straightening my hair and let my curls flourish. My journey led me to rethink my identity as a woman from Cartagena, which entailed critically engaging with the city's racial dynamics and colonial influences.

This work is an extension of that personal-political process that aims to widen my knowledge of decolonial theories and practices. By studying Márquez's political campaign, I attempt to critically engage with the origins of racism, sexism and classism and their connection with colonialism. Further, as a feminist, I strive to learn about women like Márquez, who, in their constant struggles and resistances, create knowledge that proposes ways of living that overcome colonial legacies. Inspired by them, I want to continue the process of decolonizing my being and support decolonizing processes in Colombian society through my academic work and everyday activities.

Literature review

Most of the research on racism, sexism, classism, and inequality, as well as its direct relationship to coloniality, is written in Spanish. It can be considered part of the fields of southern theory/epistemology, decolonization, and southern feminism, particularly Black feminism. In this section, I present existing research relevant to my investigation. In order to move forward, it is essential to emphasize that those fields of inquiry are marked by an

approach that seeks to contribute to social and epistemic justice. Therefore, its researchers are often involved in activist/political work.

Studies on race and racism are relatively new fields in Latin America. According to Viveros Vigoya & Lesmes Espinel (2014), the constitutional reforms made by the Latin American nations at the end of the 1980s to account for the multiculturalism, or cultural heterogeneity, of these societies gave rise to these studies. Viveros Vigoya & Lesmes Espinel (2014) have researched race and racism and compiled the studies done by other authors in Colombia and Latin America about the topic.

To them, authors who study racism often refer to race as, first, an ideological construction that has never existed outside of the context of the interests of the various groups involved and, second, a historical concept that has been developed socially, culturally, and historically. Thus, they conceive race as a helpful concept to address social processes of hierarchization through distinctions between us and them in which factors like class, gender, and sexual orientation come into play (Viveros Vigoya & Lesmes Espinel, 2014).

Conceiving race as a central organizing principle in coloniality, research on race and racism has focussed on processes of nation-state-building in Latin American, where the ideologies of Mestizaje and multiculturalism play a crucial role. According to Suarez-Krabbe (2015), during Colombia's early republican period, the idea of racial equality evolved into the idea of the Mestizo Raza as a universal race in which- through mestizaje (mix between races)- the quality of being Colombian could be created. The ideology of mestizaje was, however, already inscribed in the racial hierarchies, and the whiter the mix, the better. With the shift to multiculturalism marked by the adoption of the 1991 Constitution, ethnic and cultural diversity became important constitutional principles. With this shift, Indigenous communities became subjects of territorial, economic, educational, and political-administrative rights and dispositions. In contrast, Black communities only found the potential to materialize their rights in the transitory Article 55 of the constitution (Restrepo, 2018) established the creation of a law that recognizes the communities' right to land under their traditional production practices and the right to collective ownership over the areas to be demarcated by the same law. With the regulations derived from Transitory Article 55, such as 1993's Law 70, recognize the rights of the Black communities to territory and collective property and establish mechanisms for the protection of the cultural identity and rights of the Black communities of Colombia as an ethnic group, among others (LEY 70 DE 1993) and the subsequent trail of rulings from the Constitutional Court about the rights recognized to the Black communities in the constitution and laws, a dense legal framework has outlined the

terms, scope and limitations of the shift to multiculturalism for Black communities in the country (Restrepo, 2018).

Although the notions of Mestizaje and multiculturalism are widely accepted, Viveros Vigoya and Lesmes Espinel (2014) argue that racism continues to structure class hierarchies, causing both Blacks and Indigenous peoples to hold inferior positions in society. In the case of Colombia, an example is the adoption of the formerly mentioned Law 70, also known as the Law of Black Communities. This law established special land rights, the mandatory inclusion of Afro-Colombian history in the educational curriculum, two special seats in the House of Representatives for Black communities, and opened up space for their political participation. Nonetheless, the potential of these measures has been limited by the economic and political interests of elites, as well as the persistence of an armed conflict that disproportionately affects Black and Indigenous populations and reproduces the very social exclusions to which they are subjected. Thus, the ideologies of Mestizaje and multiculturalism obscure the historical and structural dynamics of racialization, being themselves part of a system of power that enables the existence of racism in a country that brands itself as a racial democracy (Viveros Vigoya & Lesmes Espinel, 2014).

Whiteness and racial hierarchisation in Colombia

Viveros Vigoya (2015) uses the notion of whiteness to examine the processes of racialisation and racism in Colombia. She claims that whiteness is an ideological concept concerned with the position of privilege associated with the white group (Viveros Vigoya, 2015). Social whitening is ideologically driven by national identity through principles such as Mestizaje and multiculturalism mentioned above that privilege what is white or close to it through criteria of social and cultural behaviors and physical appearance. Social whitening limits the social and symbolic space occupied by Indigenous populations and people of African descent (Viveros Vigoya, 2015). Additionally, *whiteness* promotes behaviors to conform to white values among social groups and individuals labeled as "not white". The diverse practices used to adapt to a white middle-class culture include constant work on one's physical appearance and type of clothing or manner of speaking to avoid regional accents. In the case of women, they for instance smoothen their hair, rationalizing this as being necessary to meet the demands of their jobs (Viveros Vigoya, 2015).

In Colombia, Black women and men were excluded from discussions about national identity during the period when the ideology of mestizaje was prevalent in the country. Although they

were socially included as regular citizens, they were not considered particularly representative of Colombian identity (Viveros Vigoya, 2015), and more as a backward condition that should be overcome. In this context, *mestizaje* has been understood as a whiteness-centered institution and an identity based on European racial hierarchy that marginalized Indigenous and African-descendent populations (Suarez-Krabbe, 2015).

During the past three decades, there has been a renewed focus on the theories and perspectives of groups excluded and marginalized in Latin America. As we will see in the theoretical framework, there has been an increased understanding of the close links between racism and modernity/coloniality. My work inserts itself in this field of research by contributing further to the understanding of theories and perspectives that emerge from struggles against injustice in Colombia. So I do not present them in this literature review but throughout the thesis.

Thesis organization

This paper is organized as follows. First, the reader will find a brief biography of Francia Márquez, which recounts her life experiences and struggles and her trajectory as an activist and social and environmental leader. This biography will enable the reader to comprehend where Márquez's knowledge comes from and, therefore, better understand the counterstories and thickening. Afterwards, the theoretical framework section focussed on decolonial thinking. This section integrates the critiques of the coloniality of power and the coloniality/modernity power matrix and its links with racism, sexism, classism and inequalities. Additionally, it elaborates on the proposals that draw on other theoretical perspectives to overcome colonial legacies made by decolonial movements, decolonial feminism and Afro-diasporic feminism.

Following the theoretical framework is the methodology section, which addresses the methods of Storytelling and Counterstorytelling developed by Critical Race Theory. In this section, the reader will find the framework for using the method of Counterstorytelling and how it was applied to the case study -from gathering the source material to writing the counterstories. This section also includes a part about the translation of the source material from its original Spanish version into English, which provides the reader with some tools to understand the counterstories better. After the section- On translation- the reader will find the three counterstories written based on Márquez's tweets and their respective thickening,

which, based on the theoretical framework of this work, complexifies, complements and extends what is narrated in the counterstories. The thesis ends with the conclusive remarks section, which presents a summary and the author's final thoughts and reflections on the entire work.

Francia Márquez-Mina: A brief biography

Francia was born in 1981 in Yolombó, a town with more than 250,000 Afro-descent inhabitants (Valencia, 2022). She has built her longstanding history as a leader and activist with her community in La Toma, a *corregimiento*¹ of the municipality of Suárez, located between the Cauca and Ovejas rivers. La Toma comprises 7,000 hectares in which about 1,300 families reside; they are Afro-descendants who have inhabited the territory since colonial times, approximately from 1636 (Sañudo, M.F. et al., 2016).

In his work about the territory, Colombian anthropologist Arturo Escobar (2014) claims that La Toma is one of the most obvious signs of what activists call "ancestralidad" (ancestry). Ancestralidad involves first, the long-standing occupation of a specific territory; second, the continuity of an "ancestral mandate" that persists today through the "Mayores" (wise elders) and finally, the ancient historical experience of living under another model of life, another worldview, in the thinking of the movements (Escobar, 2014, p 74). In this sense, La Toma, as an ancestral territory and its community, plays a pivotal role in the formation of Márquez as a person, leader and activist.

Márquez and her life of community resistance for the defence of La Toma

Márquez became a leader and activist from an early age. At 13, she used Afro-Colombian music and dance as elements of her cultural and political expression against the plans to build a dam in La Toma. Later, Márquez became a young local leader by fighting for the environment and the rights of her people in her ancestral land, and against the incursions into her community's territory by multinational mining corporations and sanctioned by the

¹ A division of the rural area of the municipality, which includes a population nucleus, which is taken into account by the municipalities when planning and ordering their territory. DEPARTAMENTO ADMINISTRATIVO NACIONAL DE ESTADÍSTICA, DANE.
https://www.dane.gov.co/files/inf_geo/4Ge_ConceptosBasicos.pdf

Colombian state. She also taught farmers in her area about sustainable agricultural practices and joined the national Afro-Colombian network to promote Afro-Colombian cultural and land rights (Goldman Environmental Foundation, 2022).

From 1997 to date, Márquez has been an active member of the organization Black Communities' Process (Proceso de las Comunidades Negras (PCN) in Spanish), a network of organizations from the Pacific, the Caribbean, and central Colombia formed in 1993. The purpose of this network is to strengthen Afro-Colombian cultural identities and the recognition of ethnic, cultural, territorial, social, economic and political rights in Black communities (Ariza Martínez, 2018). As a member of the Black Communities' Process, Márquez has focused on the organizational development of Afro-Colombian communities in the north of Cauca and the nation as a whole by executing initiatives to defend the region as a space for life, empower youth leaders, and fight against illegal mining (Biografía – Francia Márquez Mina, n.d.).

In 2007, Márquez supported the formation of the Association of Community Councils of the North of Cauca (Asociación de Consejos Comunitarios del Norte del Cauca (ACONC) in Spanish), and from that moment to date, she has supported various actions of dialogue with the National Government to demand the guarantee of Human Rights of the Afro-Colombian people (Biografía – Francia Márquez Mina, n.d.).

In 2010, Márquez used the legal defense mechanisms against, among various actors, the Mayor's Office of Suárez and the Ministries of the Interior and Justice; Environment, Housing and Territorial Development; of Mines and Energy of Colombia. She claimed a violation of the right to a dignified life in their ancestral territory in La Toma because residents of this territory were almost evicted in 2009 after the national mining agency granted mining exploitation titles to multinational corporations and outsiders without prior consultation to the community (Biografía – Francia Márquez Mina, n.d.). According to Márquez, her community could not stand that they had to be displaced because the government decided to give the territory to a foreign multinational that suddenly claimed rights on their territory. In this regard, she also claims that the marginalization of her community has a long history, as her ancestors were enslaved in the name of civilization and development centuries ago (DW Historias Latinas, 2022).

Women, resistance for the territory and struggle for peace

Márquez recognizes that her accomplishments are thanks to her community. She always acknowledges the pivotal role of the women from La Toma in all the actions of resistance she has been part of throughout her life. She claims she learned about leadership with the women of her community (DW Historias Latinas, 2022).

One of the milestones in Márquez's life as an activist and leader happened in 2014. Here women of her community and from the department of Cauca had a starring role too when they initiated a massive protest against illegal gold mining in the river Oveja, an essential waterway for fishing and drinking water for the people in La Toma (Valencia, 2022). According to Márquez, the river Oveja and its community have coexisted for many years. She compares the river with a being that moves and inspires her community, allowing them to carry out their ancestral practices (DW Historias Latinas, 2022).

For the defense of the river Oveja, Márquez reunited a group of women and held a 10-day, 350-kilometer march. Around 80 women from La Toma and Cauca traveled from the mountains of Cauca to Bogotá in November 2014. Once in Bogotá, Márquez and the women spent 22 days protesting in the streets (Goldman Environmental Foundation, 2022). Here it is essential to highlight that Márquez and her community's struggles always insisted on making visible the role of the Colombian state in violating their rights through illegal mining. They proposed the term unconstitutional mining instead of illegal mining. This term refers to the mining that the government itself, going against several parts of the country's 1991 constitution, proposes when it goes abroad to sell Colombia as a country for mining without considering environmental conservation planning and protection of ethnic communities, and using the argument of the general interest as a basis. (DW Historias Latinas, 2022).

The struggle of Márquez and the women resulted in an agreement between the community and the Colombian government to eradicate illegal mining at La Toma. By the end of 2016, Colombian security forces had physically removed or destroyed every piece of illicit equipment mining operating at La Toma. (Goldman Environmental Foundation, 2022). Her leadership in this march and the joint work with the women of Cauca to defend her community's ancestral territories from illegal gold mining made her the winner of the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize in 2018.

Although Márquez's efforts to defend her territory made her worthy of international recognition and awards, in Colombia, the story was different. For activists seeking to protect land and natural resources, Colombia is the most dangerous place in the world. Over 40 human rights defenders and community leaders in the country have been killed since January (2020), including a national park ranger and several Indigenous rights advocates (Tomassoni, 2020). Márquez was also a victim of violence against environmental activists in the country. Because of her struggles against unconstitutional mining in her territory, in 2014, she was displaced together with her two kids from her hometown of Suárez following death threats.

After being displaced from her territory, Márquez acknowledges that she found love, embrace, sisterhood and solidarity from the women of the 'Chontaduro'. A women's organization that is part of the Chontaduro Cultural House Association (Asociación Casa Cultural El Chontaduro in Spanish) and that operates in the Aguablanca District of Cali. The Cultural House El Chontaduro is a space for constructing identities linked to the Colombian Pacific, open to all creeds and political ideologies. This house represents the resistance and struggle of the women against the violation of their rights (Univalle, 2017). Márquez highlights the importance of the work of groups such as that of the women of El Chontaduro because they provide political training and rights to Afro-descendant women, displaced women and women who have been victims of all kinds of violence, including work in conditions of slavery (DW Historias Latinas, 2022).

Death threats did not stop Márquez's fight for his territory and the environment, Afro-descendant communities, especially Black Afro-descendant women, and the achievement of peace in Colombia. In June 2011, Márquez participated in the first international seminar called "Afro Feminist Conspiracy: Rethinking feminisms from diversity" held in Cali, Colombia. The event was taken as a starting point to discuss the diasporic dimension of Black feminism and the rethinking of feminism from the Afro-Colombian women's perspective (Vergara & Arboleda, 2014). An academic article written by Vergara & Arboleda (2014) resulting from this encounter is an essential part of the theoretical framework of this work.

In 2016, Márquez held the First Meeting of Afro Diasporic Women for the care of life and Ancestral Territories with the participation of women at a local, national and international level held in Quinamayó - Santander de Quilichao as a symbolic act in defense of the territory as living space. That same year, within the framework of the dialogues for Peace between the National Government and the FARC-EP, Márquez supported the organization

Process of Black Communities and the Ethnic Commission for Peace in advocating for the participation of ethnic minorities in the peace process, resulting in the Ethnic Chapter for Peace in the peace agreement (Biografía – Francia Márquez Mina, n.d.).

In a run towards the vice-presidency of Colombia

"I want to be president of this country," wrote Márquez on her Twitter account in 2020. That was the beginning of a journey that ended with her becoming the first Black woman Afro-descendant to be the vice-president of Colombia in 2022 (Moreno*, 2022).

In comparison with her long career as a leader and activist, Márquez's entry into Colombian politics is relatively new. In January 2022, she formalized her presidential pre-candidacy with the support of her political movement, 'I am because we are' (Soy Porque Somos in Spanish), which is also her political slogan. This slogan is the paraphrased translation of "ubuntu" - an expression that refers to a philosophy of life originating from South African peoples- and means "I am because we are". Later, with the approval of the Polo Democrático (a left-wing Colombian political party), Márquez registered her candidacy to compete in the inter-party consultation of the Pacto Histórico (a coalition of seven leftist and social democratic movements and political parties created by) along with other opponents, including the current president, Gustavo Petro. During her campaign as a pre-presidential candidate, Márquez began to disrupt the way of doing politics in Colombia. Her speeches focused on historically excluded communities and regions; a feminist vision of politics; dignity; justice, and rights (El Tiempo, 2022).

Márquez was the electoral surprise of the inter-party consultation on March 13 2022. She got the second-highest votation, after Petro, who was elected the official presidential candidate from the Historical Pact. Moreover, she surpassed the votes obtained by other political pre-candidates from other parties who had longer-standing political careers in the country in comparison to hers (El Tiempo, 2022). On March 23, Petro and Márquez announced their official candidacy for Colombia's presidency and vice presidency, respectively, and on June 19th, 2022, Petro became Colombia's first leftist president and Márquez the first woman Afro-descendant vice president.

A crucial factor in Petro's victory as Colombia's president was Márquez's way of doing politics. She placed racism, classism and sexism in Colombian politics into the public debate bringing Petro closer to groups such as women's and feminist groups, who had considered

the presidential candidate as sexist for his statements on abortion (Serna, 2022). Moreover, Márquez's campaign not only embodied the struggles of Indigenous, Afro-descendants, women and the poor, but her figure also became the hope for a different future for Colombia's excluded and marginalized groups in which they can live with peace and guarantee of rights.

Theoretical framework

Decoloniality

Decoloniality emerges as a critique of the colonial legacy, which has a noticeable influence on the social structures and the historical and cultural construction of the peoples of Latin America. As critical thinking, decoloniality proposes critically and creatively reflecting on the intricate relationships of dominance between Europe and Latin America. It aims to advance a new scholarship that uproots the colonial heritage² still visible in social and cultural relations of Latin American identity forged in the construction of modernity in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Díaz Pérez, 2017).

The sociologist Anibal Quijano is one of the main referents in the decolonial movement. He coined the terms the 'coloniality of power' and the 'matrix of modernity/coloniality' to analyze the relationships of dominance between Europe and the rest of the world and their effects on Latin America. Following these concepts, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, a group of Latin American researchers collaborated to conduct a series of studies giving rise to the so-called decolonial turn, the articulation and dialogue of multiple perspectives: world-systems theory, cultural and postcolonial studies, as well already existing Latin American critical thinking (Villarroel Peña, 2018). Before going deeper into the arguments of decoloniality, it is important to delve more into some concepts that constitute its basis.

Coloniality of power and the matrix of modernity/coloniality

There are two fundamental axes through which the capitalist, Eurocentric, and global power is structured: coloniality and modernity (Lugones, 2014). Anibal Quijano introduced the

² The collection of institutions, power relations, cultural capitals, and symbolic elements legacies of a colonial system that perpetuates the asymmetric relations between the former invader and the invaded constitute colonial heritage (Díaz Pérez, 2017).

notion of the colonality of power to explain the global domination pattern of the capitalist system that originated in European colonialism³.

Quijano (2007) understands the colonality of power as the patron of power that created the social category of 'race', a crucial element to the social classification of colonized and colonizers during Euro-centered colonialism. To him, race is a mental construct that arose in reference to the phenotypic differences between conquerors and conquered and was later expanded to refer to the alleged differential biological structures between those groups. In this sense, the concept of race reimagined humanity and human relationships and was used to legitimise the dominance relations imposed by the colonizers. It positioned the conquered and dominated peoples, along with their phenotypic characteristics and cultural characteristics, in a naturalized position of inferiority (Quijano, 2008).

Race and racial identity were established as primary social classification tools of the population and used to dominate through hierarchization of every aspect of life, from the social organization, forms of work, to gender, knowledge, sexuality and spirituality (Quijano, 2008). Colour was codified as the phenotypic trait of the colonised and assumed to be the emblematic character of the racial category, placing conquered and dominated peoples in a natural position of inferiority (Quijano, 2020). Social relations centred on the idea of race produced new historical, social identities in America, such as Indians, Blacks, and mestizos, and at the same time, redefined others (Quijano, 2008). Likewise, based on the geocultural or country origin and within the racial connotation, European, African, or Spanish identities were also produced (Quijano, 2007).

According to Quijano (2008), the racial principle has proven to be the most effective and long-lasting instrument of universal social dominance since the sixteenth century, making race a fundamental criterion for the distribution of the world's population in ranks, places, and roles in the new current societal power structure (Quijano, 2008).

The other axis of Eurocentric and global capitalism is modernity, a concept invented by Europeans to explain themselves and, by extension, the rest of the world. The essential feature of this concept is the linear construction of world history, in which Europe is the protagonist and starting point, and the antagonists are the barbarians who oppose the civilization that modernity offers, namely Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples. (Lozano

³ Quijano (2007) defines Euro-centered colonialism as the relation of direct, political, social and cultural domination established by the Europeans over conquering all continents back in the sixteenth century.

Lerma, 2019) Modernity on its Eurocentric version, comprehends the condition of nature as the starting point of the civilising course, with European or Western civilisation as its culmination. The idea of modernity gives rise to the Eurocentric perspective that movements and changes throughout history are unilinear and unidirectional (Quijano, 2020). Both modernity and rationality were imagined as exclusively European experiences and products. Therefore, the intersubjective and cultural relations between Western Europe, and the rest of the world, were codified in a set of dichotomous categories: East-West, primitive-civilized, irrational-rational, and traditional-modern, among others (Quijano, 2008).

According to Quijano (2007), the colonial structure of power modernity/coloniality served as and continues to serve as the foundation for other social relations based on classes or estates. These intersubjective constructions resulting from Euro-centered colonial dominance were assumed to be 'objective, "scientific," categories, and thus historically significant. That is not a reference to the history of power but rather a natural phenomenon. They created specific social discriminations later codified as 'racial,' 'ethnic,' 'anthropological,' or 'national,' depending on the times, agents, and populations involved (Quijano, 2007).

By creating these exclusive classifications, the colonial difference is configured, a space in which the coloniality of power is articulated, but also where the restitution of subaltern knowledge is taking place and border thinking is emerging (Mignolo, 2007). It is in the colonial difference where decolonizing beings and knowledge are found.

Knowledge and the coloniality of power

Initially, colonialism resulted from systematic repression and appropriation of the colonised's modes of knowing, producing knowledge and perspectives. Particularly in mining, agriculture, and engineering, as well as their products and labour. During the suppression and appropriation, the colonisers also imposed their modes of expression, beliefs, and representations of the supernatural. When the immediate repression ceased to be constant and systematic, these beliefs and images served as a very effective tool for social and cultural control, preventing the colonised from producing their own culture (Quijano, 2007).

The European paradigm of rational knowledge understands the last a product of a subject-object relationship. This relationship considers only the European coloniser a "subject". The other cultures, considered different, unequal and inferior by nature, following

the logic of race, can only be "objects" of knowledge and practises of dominance. (Quijano, 1992) In this perspective, the relationship between European culture and other cultures was established as a relationship between "subject" and "object", blocking any relationship of communication and exchange of knowledge and ways of producing knowledge between cultures (Quijano, 2007).

Decoloniality of power, knowledge and being

To another central thinker in the decolonial perspective, Walter Mignolo (2007), the decolonial epistemic emerges as opposing the colonial power matrix - modernity/coloniality- in the resistance movements of the peoples of Abya Yala⁴ and the African peoples brought to these lands. Despite colonialism's imposed domination scheme, these movements of resistance configured ways of living and existing that remain in the collective memory of these communities/peoples.

Decolonial thinking aims at the decoloniality of power. Therefore an essential aspect of decoloniality is the critique of colonial legacies such as the permanence of the social scale according to race (racism), patriarchy and the international division of labour. (Díaz Pérez, 2017). Decoloniality strives to overcome the historical-cultural homogenisation that denies the colonized and racialized groups' knowledges and histories, as well as the inequalities and modes of violence grounded on the classification of the population according to race and gender.

To achieve these purposes, many decolonial scholars have proposed concepts such as heterogeneity, which comprises the existence of multiple cultures that intersect and transform in constant interaction. Likewise, the term interculturality as an alternative to liberal multiculturalism, where cultural difference is acknowledged as a fund of creativity, mutual respect, and common justice-building against the existing hierarchical power relations. Thus, interculturality proposes a reconfiguration of cultural and communicative relations based on recognising otherness and questioning "hegemonic impositions" to achieve different ways of coexistence. Otherness, then, is an essential tool in decolonising political and educational processes, which must grant justice and equity to succeed (Díaz Pérez, 2017).

⁴ Abya Yala is the name that the Kuna people (Indigenous people, who live in the territory corresponding to the current states of Panama and Colombia) have used to refer to the American continent since before the European conquest (Abya Yala – MODII, n.d.).

Through openness and freedom of thought to other forms of life, economies and political theories, decoloniality seeks to detach from the discourse of modernity and its imperial imaginary articulated in the rhetoric of democracy (Mignolo, 2007). The genealogy of decolonial thought is pluriversal (not universal). Each nexus in the web of this genealogy represents a point of departure and an opening that reintroduces languages, memories, economies, social organizations, subjectivities, splendors and miseries associated with imperialism and its legacies. Presently, we require decolonial thinking that articulates genealogies scattered around the planet and offers economical, political, social, and subjective possibilities from the 'other' (Mignolo, 2007).

Decolonial feminism

From the epistemic and practical point of view, decolonial feminism is configured as a critique within the feminist movement itself (Villarroel Peña, 2018). It is grounded on research on gender, race, and colonization that includes Third World women's feminisms, American women of color feminisms, and feminist adaptations of Critical Race Theory. These analytical frameworks emphasize intersectionality, showing how non-white women have historically, theoretically and practically been excluded from the liberation struggles carried out in the name of the Woman as a whole (Lugones, 2014). In this sense, decolonial feminism denounces the hegemonic feminist's universal way of thinking about the subordination of women, questioning the very category of gender itself (Villarroel Peña, 2018).

One of the principal exponents of decolonial feminism is Maria Lugones (2014). She developed the terms 'the modern/colonial gender system' and 'coloniality of gender' by analyzing and questioning the ideas developed by Quijano. According to Lugones (2014), gender and race acquire meaning in the pattern of Eurocentric power and global capitalism. Thus, they become inseparable categories to understand the oppressions of women.

In conceptualizing the coloniality of gender, Lugones (2014) complicates Quijano's arguments about the modern/colonial construction of gender and critiques his understanding of gender that only considers it in terms of the disputes for control of "sexual access, its resources and products" (Lugones, 2014, p 16). To Lugones, this is a patriarchal and heterosexual interpretation of these disputes and argues that Quijano understands sex as a

biological attribute⁵, which becomes elaborated as social categories. Thus, Quijano observes the ordering of gender relations around the axis of the colonality of power as a dispute between men over the control of sex, sustained by men's control over resources perceived to be feminine.

To Lugones (2014), gender was conceived as more than access to and control of sex and its resources. It helped to colonize peoples' modes of living, sense of authority, family, etc. To understand how colonization produced a binary epistemic regime based on distinctions between humans and non-humans, which later gave rise to categories of racial and gender differences, she proposes the modern/colonial gender framework. (Villarroel Pea, 2018).

Colonialism imposed a new gender system that produced very different conditions for colonized men and women than for the white colonizers. As a result, it introduced a variety of genders as well as gender itself as a colonial concept and strategy of organizing production relations, property relations, cosmologies, and modes of knowing (Lugones, 2014). The colonized were forced to accept the distinction between humans and non-humans and other dichotomous hierarchical distinctions, including those between men and women. This distinction evolved into a defining characteristic of civilization and humans (Lugones, 2010).

According to Lugones (2014), the colonial gender system has a visible/clear side and a hidden/dark side. The visible/clear side has been characterized by sexual dimorphism. It hegemonized gender and gender relations by only organizing the lives of white and bourgeois men and women in fact and law. It is the very definition of "man" and "woman" in the modern/colonial context. On the other hand, the hidden/dark side of the gender system was and is entirely violent. Those located on the "dark/occult side" were not necessarily understood in dimorphic terms. The colonized males and females, as well as "third gender" people, were deprived of their participation in rituals, decision-making processes, and the economy. At the same time, they were reduced to animals, subjected to forced sex with white colonizers, and subjected to severe labor exploitation that they frequently worked themselves to death (Lugones, 2014).

⁵ Though she claims not to have found whether he refers to sex as chromosomal combinations or in the genitals or secondary sexual characteristics such as breasts (Lugones, 2014, 24)

Overcoming the coloniality of gender

"Coloniality of gender is the analysis of racialised, capitalist, gender oppression and the possibility of overcoming the coloniality of gender is decolonial feminism" (Lugones, 2010, p 747). The coloniality of gender is still present today. It lies at the intersection of gender, class, and race as fundamental constructs of the system of power in the capitalist world (Lugones, 2010). However, instead of focusing on how global, capitalist, and colonial systems have managed to destroy peoples, knowledges, relations, and economies, Lugones (2010) encourages following the oppressing/resisting processes at the fractured locus at the colonial difference to overcome colonial legacies. According to Lugones (2010), the fractured locus corresponds to the colonized subject's intersubjectivity (collective imaginary). Which is fractured because it presents both the subjectification of the colonized and the resisting presence, the active subjectivity of the colonized against the colonial invasion of the self and the community. Therefore Lugones (2010) encourages us to identify the diversity in the fractured locus, including the implementation of the coloniality of gender and the rebellious response from outgroups' sense of the social, self-in-relation, and with the cosmos, which are rooted in people's memory (Lugones, 2010).

Decolonial feminism, as described by Lugones (2010), considers feminism from and at the grassroots and from the colonial difference. The decolonial feminist must first recognise the colonial difference and reject its epistemological habit of erasing it. In seeing it, she sees the world differently, letting go of the universal idea of "woman" and learning of the resistance practices of others at the colonial difference. For this reason, commonality is a central element of the resistance to the colonial difference (Lugones, 2010). Rather than seeking to understand subjects through social-scientific objectification, the reading should focus on the active subjectivity of resistance to the coloniality of gender at a coalitional level. By recognising the fractured locus as a coalition because it is shared, we can dwell on the histories of resistance in the colonial difference, from which we can learn from one another (Lugones, 2010).

Afro-diasporic feminism

The current theoretical framework concludes with an overview of Afro-diasporic feminism based on Vergara and Arboleda's (2014) essay on the first international seminar, "Afro

Female Conspiracy: Rethinking Feminisms from Diversity," held in Cali, Colombia, in June 2011. It is essential to emphasize that Márquez attended the seminar; thus, the reflections taken from this essay will also be used to delve deeper into the ideas of Márquez's political campaign in the thickening analysis.

Vergara & Arboleda (2014) define Afro-diasporic feminism as a complex, broad, and heterogeneous perspective of thinking and practice that emerges from the daily experiences of African, Black, and Afro-descendant women worldwide. Afro-diasporic feminism responds to multiple relations of domination that African, Black, and Afro-descendant peoples face, which differs in each country due to the histories and geopolitical contexts that characterize the African diaspora (Vergara & Arboleda, 2014). Based on the work of José Antonio Caicedo, and in the context of Afro-diasporic feminism in Colombia, Vergara & Arboleda (2014) claim that the notion of diaspora helps to understand Afro-descendant trajectories as a product of colonial power that shaped and continues to shape the realities of Black, Afro-Colombian, and Raizal communities in the present, which face racism, discrimination, and invisibility (Caicedo in Vergara & Arboleda, 2014).

In the reflection about Afro-diasporic feminism as an analytic category, Vergara & Arboleda (2014) reference the work of Sonia Beatriz dos Santos which proposed the concept of diasporic Black feminism to designate the various Black feminisms existing in the diaspora. According to Santos, there are five types of diasporic feminisms: Afro-Latin American feminism, Afro-Caribbean feminism, Afro-American feminism, African feminism, and British Black women's feminism. And they comprise groups of Afro-descendant feminists and activists who articulate the categories of race, gender, and sexuality to comprehend the historical patterns of exploitation, domination, and subordination that shape Black women's current positions in politics, academia, and the labour market and to carry out analyses that generate proposals to overcome the system of injustice against Black women (Vergara & Arboleda, 2014).

Afro-diasporic feminism and conspiracy in Colombia

According to Vergara and Arboleda (2014), Afro-diasporic feminism goes beyond an analytic category. It can be used as a platform to build political action in response to the global struggles of African diaspora daughters. In this regard, the concept of conspiracy is critical. As such, conspiracy can be understood as a space for Afro-descent women to exchange, recognise, discuss, and produce knowledge and complicity.

In the case of the seminar upon which the essay is based, the Afro-feminist conspiracy began when the women of the Casa Cultural el Chontaduro and the then-Afro-Colombian Group of the Universidad del Valle, invited Black women's groups from across the country, along with some international allies to meet. This conspiracy discussed new strategies for addressing Black women's challenges in Colombia and Latin America (Vergara & Arboleda, 2014).

Vergara and Arboleda (2014) argue that feminism's diasporic dimension can contribute to protecting and improving living conditions for future generations of Black women. In the case of Colombia, Afro-diasporic feminism offers a platform for mobilization to change how women are currently active in the Afro-Colombian social movement. This implies a critical examination of the existing differences among the various organizations that comprise the Afro-descendant movement and assessing how they can propose a renewed agenda that prioritizes the collective good over individual differences among members (Vergara & Arboleda, 2014).

As a social mobilization strategy, Afro-diasporic feminism can help deconstruct stereotypical representations of Afro-descendant women and their communities, and to deconstruct the sexist historiographical tradition, writing new stories in Colombian history beyond the narratives of exploitation during slavery. Black women can thus achieve complete dominance over their bodies, minds, and spirits, create new forms of protection for the body politic, and break down institutionalized barriers (Vergara & Arboleda, 2014).

Methodology and research approach

As addressed in the theoretical framework, the decolonial epistemic stance emerges from the struggles against the colonality of power and gender in the resistance movements of marginalized groups. These knowledges are seen as an essential source for overcoming the problems derived from colonality- such as racism, sexism, and classism. Nevertheless, they are often invisibilized in the dominant Eurocentric scholarship.

In this concern, the method of Counterstorytelling from the US Critical Race Theory tradition proves essential. As this chapter explains, it allows one to move across genres to include, grasp and enter into depth with the knowledges, theories and experiences from outgroups, the readings of the problems they face, and the alternatives they develop to solve them.

Critical Race Theory and Storytelling

The US Critical Race Theory (CRT) movement encompasses a collection of activists and scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship between race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CTR on the insights of two previous movements, critical legal studies and radical feminism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Based on them, the founders of CRT sought to cast light on the lived realities of people of color. Derrick Bell and scholars such as Richard Delgado, Charles Lawrence, Mari Matsuda, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Williams, Cheryl Harris and others produced the movement's foundational scholarship (Watson, 2022).

Because the dominant model of academic scholarship has traditionally been detached from the injustices experienced by those who lack power, scholars who follow CRT work to integrate theory and practice. These scholars frequently employ a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating knowledge from various disciplines such as history and African American studies. They also claim that resistance to sexism, homophobia and other forms of oppression must go hand in hand with the fight against racism (Watson, 2022).

One of the methodologies used by CRT scholars is storytelling. The method is grounded in the claim that stories play a significant role in creating social reality. They can present the established order as the best outcome, establishing inequality as normal (Watson, 2022). At the same time, authors of CTR, such as Delgado (1989), claim that stories, parables, chronicles, and narratives are potent tools for dismantling mindsets, that is, the collection of assumptions, conventional wisdom, and shared understandings that serve as the backdrop for legal and political discourse.

CRT stories are more than just anecdotes. They categorize the experiences of the minority into meaningful episodes at specific times. Thus, stories become critical social events because they transform minorities into self-narrating entities with a past, present, and future possessing spatial and temporal characteristics. Furthermore, CRT stories teach sociologists about the social reality of minorities, particularly in topics like victimization and oppression frequently disregarded in conventional sociological research (Aguirre, 2000).

Telling the stories of the outgroups

Delgado (1989) addressed two groups that construct narratives. First, outgroups who have been marginalized and whose opinions, perspectives, and consciousness have been silenced, denigrated, and abnormalized. Second, ingroups- the dominant group whose stories create a shared reality in which its own superior position is accepted as inevitable. When conducting critical research on race and racism, Delgado advocates using both stock stories -that is, the stories told by majority members- and counterstories -the stories told by minority members (Padovan-Özdemir, & Øland, 2022).

Counterstorytelling as a methodological tool focusses on the stories of the outgroups as they aim to subvert the majority story or stock story. Counterstories are essential to challenge the received wisdom -ideology-. They can provide new perspectives on reality by showing us that there are other ways to live beside the one we currently have (Delgado,1989). Counterstories' graphic quality stimulates the imagination in a way that conventional discourse cannot. They can demonstrate that our beliefs are absurd, self-serving, or cruel while also showing us how to escape the trap of unjustified exclusion and when it is time to reallocate power (Delgado,1989).

Authors such as Delgado (1989) and Aguirre (2000) have employed storytelling to engage critically with racism and affirmative action in academia. After elaborating a theoretical framework on the methodology, the authors narrate the story (or stories- as in the case of Delgado (1989), who writes more than one). Most CRT stories are derived from the experiences of minority law professors, detailing both positive and negative experiences, including racial solidarity, the value of tradition and honor, and the fight against oppression (Aguirre, 2000). After each narrative, the authors proceed with an explanation of the story. Through their analytical perspectives, they reflect on whether the events narrated in the stories reinforce social realities that support racism and inequality -stock stories- or, on the other hand, they challenge this social reality - counterstories-.

This work employs counterstorytelling to create three narratives from Márquez's political campaign in order to extract her political theory and identify the knowledges and practices of marginalized groups in Colombia that are constitutive of or relate to Márquez's political approach. It also draws inspiration from the work made by Padovan-Özdemir, & Øland (2022), who, based on the CRT framework on storytelling, create stock stories about Danish welfare work with refugees. In the following, I detail this method further by explaining how I applied it to Márquez' political campaign on Twitter.

Defining the source material

To gather the source material for the counterstories about Márquez's political campaign, I chose the social media platform Twitter for various reasons. First, during the election, Márquez was very active on Twitter. From April 23 2022 - the date she accepted being Gustavo Petro's vice president formula - to May 29 2022 - the date of Colombia's presidential election's first round - she tweeted around 646 times. Sometimes, just in one day, she tweeted more than 20 times. On May 18, 2022, Marquez tweeted 26 times, for example.

Second, the legitimacy Márquez's Twitter account received from Colombia's communication media was an important factor for choosing to center on her Tweets. Different media outlets used Márquez's tweets as personal statements made by the candidate during the election period. Here are some examples. In an article about the threats Márquez has received during the campaign, the recognized Colombian magazine 'Semana' wrote: "Gustavo Petro's vice-presidential formula, Francia Márquez, denounced through her Twitter account a new threat against her by the paramilitaries known as the Black Eagles..." ("Francia Márquez Denuncia Nueva Amenaza De Las Águilas Negras," 2022). Similarly, in an article regarding fake news about Márquez, another major media outlet 'El Espectador' referred to her Twitter account and quoted her tweet: "Márquez responded to the congressman's retraction, also on his Twitter account. "Today, Representative Gabriel Vallejo retracts his statements against me. I appreciate and applaud his good sense in acknowledging the mistake of linking me with illegal groups...." ("Representante Vallejo Se Tuvo Que Retratar Por Comentarios Contra Francia Márquez," 2022). Lastly, the platform Twitter was a place for heated debate around Marquez's political participation, where the candidate received a lot of racist expressions and violence. The critical digital media outlet 'Las 2 Orillas' published an article about a project they worked on with Siglo Data and the Racial Discrimination Observatory of 'Universidad de los Andes'. Through a tool called 'Racismometro' they monitored media (internet, radio and television) and identified the most aggressive messages towards the Afro candidates⁶ who aspire to be the vice president of Colombia in 2022. According to the article, until May 12th, Francia Marquez had received over 550 Twitter attacks from accounts with over 5,000 followers. (Los 550 Ataques a Francia Márquez Y Los 5 Trinos Más Groseros, 2022).

⁶ For the presidential elections on May 29, five people belonging to the black community were candidates for vice president (<https://www.eltiempo.com/elecciones-2022/candidatos/vicepresidencia-estos-son-los-afrocolombianos-que-aspiran-al-cargo-660441>)

Collecting and organizing the source material

Collecting data on Twitter can be challenging, especially from the accounts of public figures, such as politicians like Márquez, who actively interact on the platform and can write more than 20 tweets daily. In this regard, to collect the tweets from Marquez's account that were relevant to this study, Twitter's Advanced Search tool was used. This tool allows users to tailor search results to specific date ranges, people, hashtags, and more- making it easier to find specific Tweets (How to Use Advanced Search – Find Tweets, Hashtags, and More, 2021). For this study, the tool filtered Marquez's tweets, first by account user (@FranciaMarquezM) and second by date range. The period chosen to gather the source material for this work goes from the date Márquez became Gustavo Petro's vice president formula to the date of Colombia's presidential election's first round, that is from March 23 2022 - to May 30 2022 -two months and seven days-.

Based on Márquez's behavior on the platform, one can argue that during this period, Márquez cemented her political practice and discourse on the platform because she tweeted daily and multiple times during the day, continuously updating the development of her political campaign. The tweets she shared included not only the 280 characters allowed in a tweet but also multimedia content, including links to articles, photos, and videos, where she documented different gatherings, community meetings, debates, interviews, and other activities related to her political agenda. Moreover, by repetitively tweeting her political practice daily, one can also argue that Márquez carried out a pedagogy and dissemination exercise. Her tweets often repeated content from previous tweets that addressed her main political messages, knowledge and critiques of Colombian politics. This action is a political-pedagogic exercise because it spotlights Márquez's intention to familiarize her Twitter followers with her political discourse and agenda and simultaneously tries to achieve a significant diffusion of its message using the platform as a strategic channel of broadcasting.

Having collected the tweets using the Twitter Advanced Search tool and following the steps used by Padovan-Özdemir & Øland (2022), the source material (tweets) was logged in an excel table (annexed to this work) in order to gain a chronologically organized overview of the tweets. Six hundred forty-six tweets were collected from Marquez's Twitter account. However, the number of tweets condensed in the table is not exact to the total tweets filtered by Twitter's Advanced Search tool. Some tweets were not included in the table due to a lack of content or repetition of previous tweets. In some cases, the tweet contained no text but

only a link to a video that could not be reproduced. Those tweets were also excluded from the table.

The tweets were logged into an excel chart with eight columns: number, date, tweet (original language: Spanish), tweet (Google automatic translation to English), extra content on the Tweet, descriptive summary of the additional scope of the tweet, classification of themes and patterns, and link to the tweet. As the original language of the tweets was Spanish, it was necessary to have two columns regarding language, one for the tweet in Spanish and another translation to English. It is essential to highlight that manually corrected some of the tweets chosen to write the counterstories in order to make them as close as possible to the original Spanish version. The next section on translation will go into full depth on this subject. The column -Extra content on the Tweet- was used to specify the additional audiovisual material on the tweets, which varies from photos, videos, illustrations, links to articles and quoted tweets from other Twitter accounts.

The column -Descriptive summary of the extra content of the tweet- contains a brief description of the additional content of the tweet. When the different content is a video, the descriptive summary includes a literal transcription, in both Spanish and English, of what was said by Francia Marquez in the video. Due to their length, some video transcriptions are in a separate word document. The row in the table will indicate so by saying - Summary on a word document-. The Word document is part of the annexes of this thesis. The column -Classification of themes and patterns- was also inspired by Padovan-Özdemir, & Øland's (2022) adaptation of the stock story. Repeated themes and outgroups mentioned by Márquez were identified through careful reading of every tweet and based on the theoretical framework of this work. I chose the tweets to write the counterstories according to this. Both the column about -Descriptive summary of the extra content of the tweet- and -Classification of themes and patterns- were written in the table only for the tweets selected to write the counterstories. From the total of tweets gathered in the first approach, the number of tweets chosen to write the counterstories was 66. Finally, the column -link to the tweet- contains a link that redirects to the tweet in Francia Marke's Twitter account.

Counterstories

This work present three counterstories created based on the tweets gathered from Márquez's Twitter account during the period selected for this study. 'The Nobodies and the territory', 'Colombia is a woman' and 'Vivir Sabroso' are the titles of the narratives. They tell

the story of three speeches Márquez gave in three different scenarios during the election campaign.

Each counterstory contains two elements. First, a setting- a description of the scenario where Márquez gives the speech-. It elaborates on who accompanies her and the atmosphere of the place. The scenarios constitute the imaginary part of the narrative, as the events described did not occur in reality. However, they are inspired by the videos Márquez shared in the tweets about her public speeches and gathering with people. The setting of the narratives then is influenced by my own vision and impressions of Márquez's speeches. Each part of the narrative elaborating on the scenario is non-cursive.

The second element of the narrative is the speech. In the counterstory, the speech corresponds to what Márquez says to the people or groups during her various speeches. The parts of the story where Márquez speaks to the audience are cursive and correspond to quotes of what she had written in a tweet or said in a video attached as multimedia content (the material quoted from the videos corresponds to the author's transcript of Márquez's speeches). The reader can find the original Spanish version of the tweet by searching for the date of the tweet in the excel table annexed to this work.

Following each narrative, the reader will find a thickening section corresponding to a deepening into the different expressions, concepts, and ideas condensed in Márquez's speeches in the counterstories. In the thickening, the theoretical framework on decoloniality plays a pivotal role because it configures an epistemic guide to search for the knowledge and perspectives related to Márquez's political practices. It helps complicate her political practice's theoretical content and build connections.

On translation

The original language of the material used to write the counterstories is Spanish. Therefore, there were some challenges when translating the source material to English that is important to address before continuing with the counterstories. First, when translating to English, the primary goal was to get as close to the original Spanish version as possible in order to make visible and seriously consider the knowledges and perspectives engaged by Márquez. In this sense, some words and expressions were considered 'untranslatable' because their English equivalent would significantly compromise meaning. As a result, some of these words and expressions are in Spanish in the counterstories. To understand the counterstories, the

reader will find an annexed glossary of these words and expressions. It is necessary to highlight that the definitions in this glossary are simple and that complex issues related to their meaning through Francia Marquez's perspective will be addressed in the thickening of each counterstory.

Secondly, some words did not have a translation in English. That was the case of the terms/nouns concerned with places or names of communities and groups and people that belong to these places and communities (demonym). In the glossary, the reader will find a brief explanation of these terms/nouns. Third, the challenge of gender as a grammatical property in Spanish and the use of inclusive language by Márquez in her texts. In the context of Morphology⁷, the Royal Spanish Academy (Spanish: Real Academia Española, generally abbreviated as RAE) defines *gender* as "a grammatical property of nouns and some pronouns that affects the concordance with determiners, quantifiers and adjectives or participles" (Española, 2010, p. 23). Based on gender, nouns are classified as masculine and feminine in Spanish, and their respective determiners are -el- and -la-. For example, the Spanish equivalent of 'the woman' is -la mujer- and 'the man' is - el hombre-. In Spanish, the masculine is the unmarked gender, and the feminine is the marked one. Nouns of the masculine gender are used to refer to individuals of that sex but also to designate the entire species, whether singular or plural (Española, 2010). In recent years, an important debate has erupted in the Romance languages about the resources available for representing, making visible, and equitably including genders and historically marginalized groups in the language (María Luisa Parra & Ellen J Serafini, 2021). The term Inclusive Language has played a crucial role in this debate. It refers to the use of verbal and written language to represent and make visible groups and communities that have historically been excluded, marginalized, or discriminated against (women, communities of color, people with disabilities, and members of the LGBTIQ+ communities) (María Luisa Parra & Ellen J Serafini, 2021).

Discussions about inclusive language have questioned the use of the masculine grammatical gender as the universal gender in Spanish, considering it sexist because it excludes women and those who do not identify with the binary masculine-feminine from the language. In Spanish, the letter -x and, later, the -e have been proposed as attempts to give representation to non-binary groups. (María Luisa Parra & Ellen J Serafini, 2021). When referring to people in general, Márquez uses gender pronouns for both women and men and sometimes a neutral pronoun to refer to people who do not identify with the binary masculine-feminine in Spanish. To be true to Márquez's words in the counterstories, the

⁷ Morphology is a branch of linguistics that is concerned with the formation and structure of words. (Zuluaga Jaramillo, L. S, 2016).

determiners in English will be accompanied by the grammatical gender used by Márquez in Spanish its way: - (she) when referring to a female, (he) to a male and (x) when it refers to non-binary identity. Here are some examples.

Original version, Spanish:

*“Con **todas, todos, todes**, nos hemos ido encontrado y reconstruyendo en la diferencia.”*

Counterstory version, English:

*“With **(she) everyone, (he) everyone, (x) everyone**, we have been meeting and rebuilding in the difference.”*

Original version, Spanish:

*“Somos **uno y una** de la resistencia al poder, hasta que la dignidad se haga costumbre”*

Counterstory version, English:

*“We are **(he) one and (she) one** from the resistance to power until dignity becomes a habit.”*

Finally, it is essential to highlight that, as the main intention was to get as close to the original Spanish version of the material as possible, there is the risk that the translation to English in the counterstories can compromise the grammatical correctness of English. Some sentences may be perceived as redundant, incorrectly constructed or written by the readers. However, these are the challenges of undertaking studies grounded in the knowledges produced outside of Eurocentric and western rationality.

Counterstory 1. The Nobodies and the territory

*“The reason why we men and women with **calloused hands**, empathetic smiles and noble souls stand up and raise our voices to fight for a better Colombia can be summed up in one powerful word: dignity.”*

-Francia Márquez-Mina, 28/05/2022

Around 10 in the morning, Francia Marquez arrived at a big hall where thousands of people were waiting for her. People of all ages, genders, skin colors, regions, religious beliefs, groups, and professions attended. The euphoria was felt in every corner. Some people shouted her name: 'Francia, Francia...' while others applauded. Others remained silent,

perhaps skeptical but willing to listen. After a couple of minutes, Francia sat down on the ground, and people began to sit next to her, one next to the other, until they formed a large circle. After everyone was seated, Francia took the microphone and said:

*"For me, accompanying Gustavo Petro today is not only an act of gender justice but also an act of racial justice. For many years, the people and women were silenced and erased from politics" (03/04/2022). "It is not first (Gustavo Petro) and second (Francia Marquez); we are **(he) one** and **(she) one** from the resistance to power until dignity becomes a habit" (23/03/2022). "**(he) Caretakers** and **(she) caretakers** of the big house, **(he) leaders** and **(she) leaders**, childhood and youth, thank you for maintaining the resistance and deciding to go from resistance to power" (03/04/2022)... "A year ago, **(x) nobodies** stood up, like our grandmothers and grandfathers centuries ago... Today, **(he) nobodies** and **(she) nobodies** come together in a hug to take care of ourselves and keep hope alive on this path that we have been doing for '**vivir sabroso**' in Colombia" (29/04/2022). "We have woven relationships, memories, and struggles of many years that did not begin with this campaign. We have spent years and years weaving efforts of resistance and struggle. With **(she) everyone**, **(he) everyone**, **(x) everyone**, we have been meeting and rebuilding in the difference. Seeing in the difference a great virtue to build." ... "**The nobodies, the people on foot, the people with calloused hands** believed that politics was not for us. Today we stand up on the periphery, the '**vereda**', the neighbourhood and the '**comuna**' to reach the power of the State and build the first popular government in Colombia... We are here to make politics from below, from the roots (04/05/2022). "We, **the nobodies**, got tired of war and corruption that stopped us from living in dignity. The corruption steals billions of pesos yearly while education, health, water or the possibility of decent housing do not reach many areas of the country... That is why we entered politics, to dispute the power of the state and, from there, build peace and social justice. (07/05/2022). "As people, we have put up the dignity to resist the politics of death. Today we walk the path of change for life, making a path as we walk. And we are not going alone. We are the majority of Colombia who is advancing" (29/05/2022).*

With the crowd clapping louder, Francia paused. An emotional atmosphere filled the room. Francia stood up and approached a group of young people, sitting near them, and saying: *"We are the youth of Colombia advancing."* -The young people at the hall shouted louder- *"At the beginning of the 1990s, young people took on the challenge of changing Colombia and thanks to them, we have the Constitution of 1991 and the Constitutional State. Today, I invite the youth of Colombia to assume this historic moment for the defense of the Constitutional State and for the deferred promises of the 1991 Constitution to be fulfilled."*

Young people, thanks to you, Colombia woke up. Let's build together the government of change. A government of the people" (18/05/2022). "Young people from eastern Cali⁸ have a lot to give. But the minorities that have governed us only see them as a threat. The blood of those who stood in 'primera línea' to defend our rights has not yet dried (17/05/2022). "...Today, many young people are being co-opted by armed actors because, first, they do not have access to education and, second, they do not have access to decent employment, and I think that is part of what should be considered before militarization" (16/05/2022).

Some young people in the hall cried at Francia's words; others raised banners with messages supporting Francia's campaign. After she hugged the two young people next to her, Francia stood up and walked over to various Indigenous members seated in the corner of the room. Once there, she sat next to them and said: *"...We are also advancing with the Indigenous communities"... "Being here as a Black woman with my Indigenous sisters and brothers is a historic moment... I think that every time that the Indigenous and Black communities have held hands and knitted each other, we have achieved to make Colombia and the world a better place. That is something that history tells us." (02/04/2022). "We have the legitimacy and the millennial experience to guide the course of this country towards peace and social justice, and that it is assumed that we are a multi-ethnic and multicultural country" (16/05/2022).*

"We are making this path with the Afro-descendant, Black, 'Raizal' and 'Palenquero' people too." Said Francia as she walked towards various groups of Afro-descendant, Black, 'Raizal' communities and 'Palenquero' people present in the hall. She continued: "It comforts the soul to see the Black people united, assuming this historical moment to be the government and transform Colombia. And we are not asking permission to enter. We are pushing the door. And we are going to achieve it...The Afro-descendant, Black, 'Raizal' and 'Palenquero' people have historically fought for freedom and dignity. Today we tell Colombia that they count on with that experience so that, with all of us, we build the government of change. The government of life and peace. Come on, yes, we can!"..."Today we have the historical responsibility to assume this moment of messing with politics to leave our re nascent, our sons and daughters, our grandchildren a different Colombia, a different nation, a nation that recognizes us in our diversity, a nation that respects our humanity" (27/05/2022). "In San Andrés⁹, they told me: "we want the rest of the world to see us as part of Colombia. The government promised to rebuild the island, and we do not see any

⁸ City, capital of Valle del Cauca, department of Colombia.

⁹ It refers to the Caribbean region or Caribbean coast of Colombia, which is located in the northern part of the country and includes the departments of Atlántico, Magdalena, La Guajira, Cesar, Bolívar, Sucre, Córdoba and San Andrés and Providencia (Lozano Daza et al, 2006).

results...". They are **the nobodies**, forgotten by the state" (21/04/2022). *"**'Raizal'** brothers and sisters, above the borders, are the human rights and the dignity of the communities. We accompany and embrace you on this path to safeguard your rights and ancestral practices...The ancestral practices that for more than 200 years have given food to the families of the islands through artisanal fishing are unknown. The National Government must guarantee the navigation and fishing rights of the **'Raizal'** community"* (22/04/2022).*"From the **'Pacto Histórico'**, we make a pact with the Black, Afro-descendant, **'Raizal'** and **'Palenquero'** people. For the recognition of our ethnic-territorial rights until dignity becomes a habit"* (04/04/2022)

After Francia's words, members of the Afro-descendant, Black, 'Raizal' and 'Palenquero' people and the Indigenous communities started to hold hands. While the rest of the crowd clapped louder. Francia stood up again and pointed to various soccer fan groups that also attended the gathering. Some fans waved the flags of the soccer teams they supported. Francia said while walking toward them: *"This path to the government of change also includes the **'barrismo social'**" .**"With the passion of people**, we are also going to **'vivir sabroso'**, because we will dignify the work of **'barrismo social'**. The soccer fans groups will be a world power of life"* (10/05/2022). *"I believe that this act of you being here, in the midst of the differences of passion, but being here together as a country, ready for a change, I believe that it is already a fact; it is a historical fact to see the **'barrismo social'** united. We were taught that difference was a reason to exterminate us, kill us, hurt us, and harm us. I think not; Difference here is a reason to build, and therein lies the great potential we have. I believe that this diversity, this rainbow is wonderful, and it is wonderful because we make it up with all the colors of the passion that you represent, and that is our country. Sadly, they taught us to see evil in that rainbow. And we stain it with blood and pain because we have had to bury our loved ones. Because life has not been easy for us, and neither for you, for anyone; for **(she) nobodies** and **(he) nobodies** life has been difficult in this country"* (27/05/2022).

Francia took a break while walking towards various groups of artists in the hall. Some artists stood up and began dancing, others played music, and others started raising posters and singing with their artwork. Francia stood next to them and said: *"I thank the popular artists who have always been there, placing their art as a form of rebellion, denunciation and protest. But also as a way to heal wounds, reconcile and build peace. The change is with you"* (28/05/2022). Next to the artists were groups of the military; Francia looked at them and said: *"It is very important to recognize that we have the challenge of reconciling this society*

that is broken, that is wounded. That implies taking into account the military who, in one way or another, participated in the war but who are part of this nation” (30/04/2022).

Francia continued her round around the circle. There was a group of teachers that called her name. She approached the teachers and said: *“Thank you **(he) teachers and (she) teachers** for putting knowledge for life”(21/05/2022) ...the people in the room applauded loudly. Francia grabbed the hand of one of the teachers and continued saying... “ **(he) teachers and (she) teachers** of Colombia, those who get up every day with precarious situations in the regions, in the most impoverished places, in the peripheries, to put their wisdom and knowledge to edify this society, to build nations, to train men and women of this society. Thank you for the struggle to put knowledge at the service of life, social justice, human dignity, and peace. With the **(she) everyone, (he) everyone, (x) everyone**, we need to take on the challenge of an educational policy that places value on human dignity, that places value on caring for the ‘**casa grande**’, that places value in terms of distributive, racial justice, ecological and economical” (16/05/2022). “**“Yo soy porque somos**’. I am because many teachers sowed the seed so that today I am here ‘**parada en la raya**’, standing in ‘**primera línea**’ to dispute the politics of this country” (21/05/2022).*

At this moment, there were no longer people sitting on the ground in the big hall. Everyone stood up in a big wave of energy, euphoria and emotions. Next to the teachers was a group of recyclers and their families that came to the gathering. Francia walked toward them, saying: *“Today, the union of **(he) recyclers and (she) recyclers** in Bogotá¹⁰ accompanies me.“**(he) and (she) recyclers** are environmental heroes and heroines. When dignity becomes a habit, Colombian society will recognize it”... “We have a huge challenge, and that is to stop the environmental crisis on our planet, and there the recyclers are fundamental. I propose to recyclers families be a **world power of life**, and that means that the work you do is hand in hand with our government, that the savings you receive for the institutional support that the government offers you allow you to live in dignity and that contributes to taking care of ‘**casa grande**’” (21/04/2022).*

The last group present in the big hall was the group of workers in the sugarcane industry. Francia stood with them and said: “Thanks to the mobilizations and the unity of the workers in the sugarcane industry in 2008, progress was made in labor guarantees that broke the outsourcing and dignified in part the work of the cane cutters. However, there is a historical debt with sugarcane cutters regarding occupational risks and industrial safety because, after 15, 20 and 25 years of manual cutting, the musculoskeletal system of a cutter is extremely affected to the point of losing mobility in their extremities...The foregoing demonstrates a

¹⁰ City, the capital district of Colombia.

scenario of an unfair lack of protection against workers who have literally given their lives in favor of the sugarcane industry and who do not deserve to end their working lives sick and affected in their working conditions”.... Many workers cried with Francia's words. Others held hands while she spoke“... The communities do not have state aid, they do not have ways to market their products, and they do not have irrigation systems or market stabilization funds, which prevent them from developing their projects and generating wealth and production.” ... “In addition, the wear and tear of the water basins by arranging the irrigation systems in favor of the sugarcane mills affect life, and in real terms, if the action of the mills is damaging, this has a direct impact on the living conditions of the population. and the ecosystem.”...We will always respect the properties and the market of the mills, but we cannot speak of development when the population located on the periphery lives in indignity conditions with eroded and unproductive lands. We all fit in the country, and we can all ‘vivir sabroso’” (02/04/2022).

After going to all the groups in the hall, Francia stood in one corner and began talking about the territory. She said: *“We walk the territories to listen and sing with their people the dreams and the joy that the war has not been able to take away from us. The dignity of their struggles is our song for life, hope and transformation” (27/04/2022). We go through those cardinal points, peripheral territories, forgotten but with a lot of history” (01/04/2022). “The freedom seed first sprouted in the Greater Colombian Caribbean¹¹ during colonial times... you were America's first libertarian men and women. Do not forget that the ancestors who liberated Colombia and America were in this region of the Caribbean” (29/04/2022). “In Cauca, we know that the excluded territories in terms of social investment have color. They are Black, Indigenous and peasant territories. I want to be Vice President and Minister for Equality so that there is distributive justice and the resources of the state reach these territories” (15/05/2022).*

*“The mountain taught me the value of work and the need to protect the territory”. (19/04/2022)...” Regarding the care of the ‘casa grande’, it is important for us that the territory is conceived as a living space, not simply as a space for accumulation. In Colombia, this has been happening under the promise of development, but for the people, it has left nothing but poverty and indignity. In this sense, what we propose is to move towards a productive economy that does not put at risk the different forms of life and that does not violate rights or destroy the social fabric of communities”(18/05/2022). “The **people with calloused hands** have another relationship with our ‘casa grande’, and that has to be taken*

11 It refers to the Caribbean region or Caribbean coast of Colombia, which is located in the northern part of the country and includes the departments of Atlántico, Magdalena, La Guajira, Cesar, Bolívar, Sucre, Córdoba and San Andrés and Providencia (Lozano Daza et al, 2006).

into account when making environmental policies. Listening to the communities and understanding their relationship with the land is our challenge” (23/04/2022). “We have a shared history of defending the territory and the Colombian Massif¹² against projects sold as development, which, in reality, end up degrading our lives, subjecting us to impoverishment. We commit ourselves to dignify the lives of all the communities that have been victims of this type of megaproject. And so that these stories do not repeat themselves, our government will move forward in changing the energy matrix hand in hand with the communities, providing them with energy and generating economic benefits without ignoring their autonomy over the territory” (18/05/2022). “Taking care of our country as our ‘**casa grande**’ will allow us to live in spaces where life and equality are possible. We will promote economies for life with food and agroecological systems, recovering knowledge from the countryside” (09/05/2022).

After almost half an hour of the speech and with people’s emotions over the top, Francia finished saying: *“Today, the world looks toward Colombia because **the nobodies** dared to challenge the elite that has badly governed this country, leaving a legacy of violence and social injustice. We will reach the power of the state, and we will write a new history for Colombia”* (08/05/2022). *“We matter to the elite when it’s election time. But politicians never go to the regions. But I am from the territory. I walk into the territory. They talk about hunger, but we know what hunger is, and we have had to put our children to bed hungry”* (21/04/2022). *“We carry on our shoulders years and years of struggle. The struggle of Indigenous peoples, peasant peoples, Afro-descendants, the struggle of us as women. The struggle of the young people who have put their voices and dignity on the streets. The struggle of the artists, who have always been there, putting art as a form of rebellion, as a form of denunciation, as a form of protest but also as a way to heal our nation and our country”* (29/05/2022) *“....We will build a Colombia with opportunities, peace and equity, decent work, taking care of the ‘**casa grande**’, and placing life at the center. It is now time for a government run by and for the people; the time of the **(she) nobodies** and **(he) nobodies**. Now is the time to move from resistance to power until dignity becomes a habit. My dear Colombia, today we have the opportunity to recover the joy of our country, the opportunity to ‘**vivir sabroso**’”* (27/05/2022).

12 The Colombian Massif, recognized by UNESCO as a Biosphere Reserve, is one of the main freshwater-producing regions in Colombia. It extends over the departments of Cauca, Huila and Nariño (Spanish in Colombia, n.d.).

Thickening. The Nobodies and territory

Who are the nobodies?

To go deeper into what The Nobodies entails in Márquez's political agenda, it is essential to acknowledge that, during election season, Márquez tweeted¹³ a link to the poem "Los Nadie"¹⁴, which in English translates as "The Nobodies", written by the Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano. Márquez could have drawn inspiration from this poem and used it as a starting point for building such an emblematic term in her political campaign.

Widely known throughout Latin America, Galeano's poem refers to a group of people who, for years, have been marginalized, stripped of their dignity and condemned to living death. From the angle of decolonial thinking, the poem describes very well how the coloniality of power continues to operate to this day, especially in its sphere of racial and cultural domination and its relation to capitalism. Galeano describes The Nobodies as those who speak dialects, profess superstitions, make crafts, and practice folklore, contrasting them with its Eurocentric opposite- language, religion, art, and culture-. To Galeano, The Nobodies are those who have nothing, who are considered human resources instead of humans and, as the poem ends, are "worth less than the bullet that kills them".

Galeano's poem could have provided a foundation for Márquez to coin the term The Nobodies in her campaign. She frequently employs it in her speeches to refer to different groups of the Colombian population that have long been marginalized, oppressed and outraged. Following Critical Race Theory, The Nobodies can be understood as outgroups.

However, her usage of The Nobodies goes beyond what is in Galeano's poem. Márquez complexifies it by giving The Nobodies an actual identity through different communities and groups of various sectors. By approaching the material, she consistently mentioned eleven groups when referring to The Nobodies. Those groups are the ones she speaks to directly in this counterstory. Youth, Indigenous communities, Afro-descendant, Black, 'Raizal' and 'Palenquero' people, soccer fan groups (barrismo social in Spanish), artists, military, teachers, recyclers, cane industry workers, women, and 'Mayores' and 'Mayoras'¹⁵ are among them.

¹³ For my people I share this poem by the master Eduardo Galeano. The Nobody [https:// youth.be/OxEi4GxPbRw](https://youth.be/OxEi4GxPbRw) via @Youtube. #IamBecauseWeAre. From resistance to power

¹⁴ Link to the poem: <https://holywaters.wordpress.com/2011/12/08/los-nadiesthe-nobodies-by-eduardo-galeano/>

¹⁵ Both the group of women and 'Mayores' and 'Mayoras' have their own counterstory, where issues of gender and ancestry are approached.

In this sense, with the figure of The Nobodies, Márquez gives a name to those who have never existed in Colombia's political scenery. Those groups and people whose history, cultural practices, knowledge, struggles and resistance have been erased from the national history and places where the power is exercised.

The way Márquez employs the term The Nobodies resonates with the purpose of the method of counterstorytelling from the Critical Race Theory of giving voice to the outgroups. In her speeches, Márquez brings concrete examples of the marginalization, violence and oppression The Nobodies' experienced by a sexist, classist, and racist state. Furthermore, she made visible life from the otherness, both in the national political sphere and in the national and international media; Life that matters and has brought on their shoulders years and years of resistance in the fight for freedom, justice and dignity in Colombia.

From Márquez's descriptions of The Nobodies, some traits in common can be identified among the groups she considers part of this term. First, they shared experiences of violence, inequality and discrimination, often perpetrated by the state's action and inaction and grounded in the coloniality of power. That is why she claims them to be -forgotten by the state-. Second, they share struggles and acts of resistance dating back years before her campaign. According to Márquez, the various groups that comprise The Nobodies have always resisted from their territories and subjectivities—their beings. They have put up their dignity to resist the politics of death, a term that is used consistently by Márquez and Petro, and that resonates with the notion of the death project used by the Nasa Indigenous people from the Cauca region and the National Indigenous Organization in Colombia (Suárez-Krabbe 2015).

According to Suárez-Krabbe (2015), the Nasa people argue that conquerors brought their death project to these lands. "They came with the urge to steal the wealth and to exploit us in order to accumulate [wealth]. The death project is the disease of egoism that turns into hatred, war, lies, propaganda, confusion, corruption and bad governments" (Suarez-Krabbe, 2015, p. 16). It is evident that the Nasa people establish a direct relationship between the death project and coloniality; as Suarez-Krabbe (2015, p 16) claims, "the death project is the exercise of violence in coloniality, which targets the actual processes of life and the conditions for existence: in short, plurality". In Márquez' tweets, The Nobodies, primarily Indigenous and Black communities, have felt the effects of the death project and its brutal violence that promotes extermination. They resisted and survived colonialism centuries ago and since then have resisted and survived coloniality. Therefore they have the wisdom and knowledge to create a reality outside the death project.

This leads us to the final common trait among the groups that Márquez considers part of The Nobodies, and it is that they, from the difference they represent, have been united in her campaign with the common objective of changing Colombia. Together, The Nobodies are challenging the traditional politics that have excluded them from all areas of political power. This resonates with Lugones's (2010) claims that coalition and commonality are central elements of the resistance to colonial difference. She argues that when individuals move to a coalition, they are driven to understand one another as dense beings, in relation, in alternative socialities, and grounded in tense, creative inhabitation of the colonial difference (Lugones, 2010). In the case of The Nobodies, for them to unite to reach the state's power, restore their dignity, build peace and achieve justice, it was fundamental to learn from one another about their knowledges and experiences from the colonial difference. Then, through openness and freedom of thought to other forms of life, economies, and political theories (Mignolo, 2007), The Nobodies embodied the unity for the hope for a better country for all Colombians by joining Márquez and Petro's campaign.

The Nobodies and building from the difference

Márquez faced a significant challenge in her campaign: bringing together different peoples, groups and sectors and fostering camaraderie among Colombian citizens in a highly unequal, politically polarized country broken by prolonged internal conflict and regionalism. Thus, fostering unity is another purpose Márquez has with the term The Nobodies. She constantly emphasizes that her political project aims to build from the difference. Therefore, her efforts are always directed at building alliances from various groups and sectors to reach the state's power and fight against racism, sexism, and classism. Here it is essential to clarify that The Nobodies is a figure that aims to unify diverse groups and communities towards the same goal. The fact that common characteristics were identified between the different groups Márquez considers as The Nobodies does not mean that Márquez's intentions with the term are interpreted as homogenisation; in fact, quite the opposite. Márquez always acknowledges the differences among The Nobodies in her speeches, demonstrating how the intersection of categories of class, race, gender and sexuality produce different types of marginalization, invisibility, oppression, and processes of resistance within the outgroups. As Lugones (2010) claims intersectionality as critical when demonstrating institutional failures, such as discriminatory practices or marginalization against women of colour. Márquez, seems aware that intersectionality is essential to make visible the ways the states have permitted or exercised violence, discrimination and

marginalization of the outgroups. Not making it visible will consist in continuing to be involved in the logic of modernity/coloniality and its tendency to invisibilize and homogenize people.

In this context, during the counterstory Márquez spoke directly to each group. The purpose was to portray what she did during her political campaign- meetings and gatherings with different groups, addressing their particular problems and highlighting their unique ways of resistance. Another way Márquez recognizes the heterogeneity within The Nobodies is the language. Márquez speaks to each group with terms and expressions familiar to them. One example is when she speaks to the group of soccer fans in the counterstory and uses the expression “differences of the passion” because -the passion- is an expression widely used in Colombia to refer to soccer passion-. Likewise, when she says, “I believe that this diversity, this rainbow is wonderful”, she refers to the gathering of Colombian soccer teams (the rainbow comprises the union of the colors of the various teams) who have come together and tried to overcome years of violence and intolerance between them.

The Nobodies and the territory as a place to be and resist

As previously stated, processes of resistance of The Nobodies have taken place in their territories; thus, the territory is an essential component in Márquez's efforts of building from difference through the figure of The Nobodies'.

Márquez criticizes the treatment given to the territory in Colombia as simply a space for accumulation under the premises of development. In the latter half of the 20th century, development was erected as a hegemonic way of life, sustained by constant economic growth, an anthropocentric and instrumental view of nature, and unlimited consumption. Development typically involves a continuous process of progress characterized by economic growth, advancements in science and technology, or the developing of a political and cultural image that mirrors those of industrialized nations (Cruz, 2014). Márquez's critiques of the rhetoric of development embedded in Colombia resonates with the critiques of decolonial thinkers to the Eurocentric idea of modernity and rationality, where development, as progress and economic growth, involves the excessive exploitation of nature and its resources and the violation of the rights of outgroups, constructing their image as obstacles to development (Quijano, Lugones and, Mignolo) . Márquez exemplifies how processes of development have taken place in the country. For example, when referring to sugarcane workers about how the mills' actions are detrimental to the population in the zone and the ecosystem's living conditions. She claims that we cannot speak of development when the people on the outskirts live in deplorable conditions on eroded and unproductive lands.

According to Márquez's ideas, development in Colombia is a tool in the hands of elites with privileges in the country that follows the logic of the capitalist system to fulfill their interests. They use it to exploit the land endlessly and promote war, affecting the quality of life of communities by pushing them into poverty and marginalization and violating their rights to the territory.

Márquez understands de territory as an -space of life- where life and equality are possible. When referring to the territory, Márquez sometimes uses the expression 'casa grande' (big house in English) or 'útero mayor' (greater uterus/womb in English). These experiences can be related to Black women's understanding of the territory. According to Black women, the territory is more than just political-administrative divisions, or natural resources, as viewed by state institutions and environmental NGOs. When referring to the territory, they strongly emphasize relationships, life, and coexistence. Territory for Black women can be summarized by the saying, "territory is one's mother." (Lozano Lerma, 2019)

Márquez's understanding of the territory also resonates with the work of Escobar (2014). He studies the territory from the view of the so-called ethno-territorial movements in Colombia, which primarily represent Afro-Colombian and Indigenous peoples, with the possibility of adding peasant and environmental movements. In his intent to define the territory, Escobar (2014) addresses the issue from the theoretical-political perspective that implies the generation of knowledge between movements and communities and specific academic positions that resonate with them. Escobar (2014) exemplifies the theoretical-political perspective through the work of Carlos Walter Porto Gonçalves, one of the authors who has reflected the most on the issue of territoriality¹⁶, mainly through his connection with the 'seringueiros'¹⁷ movement led by Chico Mendes¹⁸ in Brazil in the eighties. According to Escobar (2014), Porto Gonçalves asserts that under the rhetoric -we do not want land, we want territory- Indigenous, peasant and Afro-descendant groups in countries such as Bolivia, Colombia, and Brazil resignify the territory. For some Black community organizations, such as Black Communities Process, for example, the historical marronage project served as the starting point for the territorial dynamics, which has continued into the present with the cultural resistance to the capitalist system. According to a text from the Black Communities Process that Escobar (2014) cited, Black communities have historically constructed ancestral territories based on their ancestors' struggles to overcome slavery and preserve the memory of the African diaspora for 500 years. In the ancestral territory, Black

¹⁶ Identities created in processes of appropriation of the territory -territorialization- (Escobar, 2014).

¹⁷ Name given in Brazil to those who are dedicated to extracting latex, rubber, from *Hevea brasiliensis* trees.

¹⁸ Brazilian trade unionists, ecologist and environmental activist who stood out nationally and internationally for his fight in defense of the Amazon and for promoting the Alliance of the Peoples of the Jungle. Taken from México. (n.d.). CNDH Mexico.

<https://www.cndh.org.mx/noticia/asesinato-de-francisco-alves-mendes-filho-activista-ambiental-brasileño-defensor-de-la>

communities have achieved the reproduction of their lives, reviving their cultures and giving new meaning to their beliefs (Escobar, 2014). Thus, to them, the territory is a space to be, to live in dignity, tell their stories, practice their beliefs, produce their knowledge, and develop relationships with the land. As Porto Gonçalves claims, the territory is material and symbolic simultaneously, biophysical and epistemic. However, above all, it is a process of socio-cultural appropriation of nature and ecosystems that each social group carries out from its "worldview" or "ontology" (Escobar, 2014, 91)

Organizations like the PCN reinvent the territory as a "space of life" based on a politics of difference in opposition to the de-territorialisation of neoliberal globalization, just as Márquez does. When reinventing the territory as a "space of life" they advocate for -re-existence- in a proposal to face global climate change and the biodiversity crisis (Escobar, 2014). According to decolonial thinking, re-existence means more than merely enduring; it means creating and reinventing, transforming, and conquering autonomy for life (Palacios & Elba 2019). It involves calls from ethno-territorial communities to create sustainable life-worlds based on their worldviews and cognitive processes, as well as their cultural ways of inhabiting the planet and their territories. (Escobar, 2014) . As Márquez emphasized, The Nobodies have a different relationship with the 'casa grande' than the one associated with the development, which must be considered when enacting environmental policies. This relationship can be understood as a way of -re-existence-.

Moreover, Márquez acknowledges the territory as a place built collectively where The Nobodies have carried out resistance and struggles and knitted together the yearnings for life, hope, and transformation. As Palacios & Elba (2019) state, the Black, Indigenous and peasant peoples' territories are "territories of resistance" because injustices and disrespect for the historical dignity of their people have manifested there. Consequently, in these territories, it is crucial to interweave efforts for peaceful coexistence, including racialized women, fostering critical thinking from an anti-racist feminist perspective.

Oppression and marginalizations grounded in the colonial past

Márquez illustrates how the experiences of violence, inequality and discrimination suffered by 'The Nobodies' in their territories are in one way or another connected to the colonial past of the country and therefore caught in the power matrix of coloniality/modernity. As Márquez in the counterstory states: *"we were taught that difference was a reason to exterminate us, kill us, hurt us, and harm us"*. This statement echoes the ways that the coloniality of power operates. She exhibits that racial logic is still dominant in social dynamics in Colombia. The category of race continues to justify all forms of violence against Black, Indigenous, and rural

communities in Colombia, evidencing the entanglement between race, class and territory (Viveros Vigoya, 2015). Many of the places she mentioned in her speeches as being affected by violence, inequality and poverty are the same places where most Black and Indigenous people live in Colombia. For example, she states: *“In Cauca, we know that the excluded territories in terms of the social investment have color. They are Black, Indigenous and peasant territories”*.

Regarding the social investment Marquez refers to in the example mentioned above, it is essential to address that throughout the counterstory, she positions the state as complicit in the death project as has always been in the hands of elites -minorities with class, race and gender privileges. With its presence (e.g. social investment) and absence (e.g. lack social investment and protection), the state perpetrates and contributes to normalizing and systematizing the different forms of violence against The Nobodies.

One example is the Raizal people on the Island of San Andres. Since the conflict between Colombia and Nicaragua over sovereignty over the island and the territorial sea surrounding it, the Raizal people have struggled for their rights and ancestral practices. The Court in The Hague granted Nicaragua sovereignty over a section of the sea in a 2012 decision, dividing the three most significant and most populous islands in the archipelago—San Andrés, Providencia, and Santa Catalina—from the keys and islets to the north. As a result, the Raizales' ancestral territory was split up, and they lost access to the waters with the most fish. With this verdict, the Raizal community lost their fishing rights, which has put their food sovereignty and survival at risk (González Palacios, 2022). Leaders from Providencia Island claim that the Colombian defense in the lawsuit against Nicaragua never mentioned that there were people who relied on these waters for their subsistence, which is equivalent to denying the existence of the Raizal people who have inhabited those territories for centuries. In this way, the defense of Colombia left aside a weighty argument that probably would have changed the meaning of the verdict (González Palacios, 2022). Here is a clear illustration on how the state fails to acknowledge the ancestral practices of the Raizal people, resulting in the denial of its existence and racialised violence against an Afro-descent community in Colombia.

Going from the resistance to power while knitting reconciliation

A signature phrase of Márquez's campaign when referring to The Nobodies is - from the resistance to power until dignity becomes a habit. This implies that the groups that have resisted marginalization, disposition, and violence for years reach the power of the state and

strive for the respect for their culture, subjectivities, knowledge, and rights until it is normalized.

Throughout the counterstory, Márquez highlights how the struggles and efforts of resistance of The Nobodies have a long-standing history that continues for centuries until today. She insists on acknowledging that years of memories, relationships, struggles, and acts of resistance preceded her campaign. One example is when she states: "A year ago, (x) nobodies stood up, like our grandmothers and grandfathers centuries ago". First, she refers to the 'Paro Nacional' in Colombia, which started in April 2021 and extended for months. The 'Paro Nacional' consisted of massive mobilizations during COVID-19's crudest effects. They were the result of the public's discontent with the government's actions—including the implementation of a tax reform that hurt the middle class's finances, flaws in the healthcare system, precarious employment, and a lack of benefits for pursuing formal education—(Rozo, 2022). Secondly, she refers to the ancestors and their struggles for freedom in this land centuries ago during the European colonization of America. By connecting the past and present struggles, Márquez establishes a history of continuity in social struggles.

Additionally, the examples above illustrate that resistance is collective. She gave the example of the union of the Indigenous and Black communities, who, across history, have joined efforts of resistance to make Colombia and the world a better place. Márquez knows that the changes Colombia needs are only possible through coalition, unity, and solidarity. That entails the challenge of reconciling a Colombian society that is broken, that is wounded, taking into account all Colombian citizens -including the privileged minorities that have contributed to the marginalization of The Nobodies, the military and armed groups that, in one way or another, participated in the war but are part of this nation.

Counterstory 2. Colombia is a woman

"Colombia is a woman who works from morning to nightfall and dreams of a roof over her children. Colombia is the woman who cries out for equality, rights and justice."

-Francia Márquez-Mina, 11/05/2022

Francia met with a large group of women on one of the streets of Bogotá. There they began a walk around the city. Along the way, Francia spoke through a megaphone, not just to the

women who joined the walk but to the people they encountered in the streets. She said as they walked: *"...Today, our challenge as a society is to change the hegemonic, racist, patriarchal, exclusionary politics that has not allowed us to live peacefully with social justice and guarantee of rights. A political system in which 52% of Colombia's population, which is female, lives in inequity, inequality, violence based on gender and structural violence that extends beyond gender into economic, racial, sexual, and psychological violence that affects our lives and integrity...I invite all the women of Colombia to make 'juntanza', to come together in a commitment to change and transformation. Making this great 'juntanza' is going house to house, neighbor to neighbor, neighborhood to neighborhood, 'comuna' to 'comuna', municipality to municipality"* (04/04/2022).

And so were the women together with Francia doing 'juntanza' from house to house in Bogotá, spreading the word in every neighborhood they walked. Francia continued the walk, saying: *"...Colombia is a woman, but we need a diverse Colombia where we recognize ourselves as women, but we also recognize the collective construction with men. Although we are making this commitment as women, this is also a call to men to assume this mandate to depatriarchalize politics and dignify life, achieve peace, and achieve social justice. We need men to create new masculinity mandates so that those masculinities imposed on us and that, as women, we are not excluded from them can be deconstructed as a society, as humanity. Those mandates of masculinity have sustained patriarchy, racism, and classism and have not allowed us to live in peace"* (19/04/2022). *"We have to give in...Those who have racial and gender privileges must recognize those privileges so that together we can push the door open for all of us. We invite men to this because we alone cannot deconstruct patriarchy. We need men who think from other masculinities and who are willing to deconstruct the mandate of patriarchal masculinity that has also hurt their being... Petro has to keep learning, this whole society has to learn and has to deconstruct itself"* (18/04/2022). *"And well, we can also allow each other to open up, weave ourselves into the difference and recognize the difference. I believe in a commitment to change and transformation that generates equality and equitable conditions for the women of this country, for girls and boys... Not only for heterosexual women but also for women in their sexual diversity, including trans women who experience a lot of violence in this sexist and misogynist country"* (19/04/2022).

Having walked for some time, they stopped at the home of one of the women who had joined them. She offered a big backyard at her place where many of the women could fit in and share a cup of coffee. Once almost all participants had entered the home, Francia continued her speech, saying: *"...We have always said since we started this path through politics that*

*change is with women or it will not be; Women are not only the majority of this country. They are also the mothers who are afraid that their children will go out into the street and not come back, those whose children have been victims of the war, and women who want a guarantee of rights; they are the women who are victims of the armed conflict. Ethnic women victims of structural racism” (19/04/2022). “The ‘Caucanas’ who have resisted dispossession, violence, and structural racism inherited from colonialism” (12/05/2022) So talking about equality implies talking about the intersectionality of race, class and gender. How the violence we experience as women in general affects women differently. Women from the territory who want, beyond being told about the norms and regulations recognized for us, to know how they access property, land, decent housing, health, and education. How do they access conditions of dignity? How are they allowed to live in freedom in their territories? We cannot talk about women's rights when we do not look at the conditions in which the majority of women in Colombia are impoverished, racialized, oppressed and systematically and structurally violent... Several years ago, I had to see in my own home how my sister lost her 8-year-old daughter in her own home. But it is happening in Buenaventura¹⁹ now, we saw how an eight-year-old boy was murdered, and in two weeks, we have seen in Buenaventura, we have found dismembered women's bodies... It is structural and systematic violence that affects us as women and as a society”... “We want to go with the women from resistance to power until dignity becomes a habit. We want the wisdom of our **"Mayoras"** and elders to contribute to this path; we want the midwives' knowledge for a health system that has to put life at the center. We wish that the **'Madres Comunitarias'**, who for more than 20 years have played a fundamental role in raising and caring for the most impoverished children in this country, have their labor rights and are recognized as public workers of the state... Here social class does not matter; what matters is holding hands as sisters, as **'comadres'**. We can change this country together and achieve a state that guarantees rights and constitutional mandates. Together with the peasant women who instructed us to cultivate the land, the Indigenous women and the Afro-descendant, **'Raizal'** and **'Palenquera'** women who taught us to protect biodiversity, and the **'gitano'** women, who taught us how to build a society in which we can all get ahead. Together with women in domestic services, which have not only contributed to domestic labor but raising the children of the families they have worked for... With all women in Colombia” (19/04/2022).*

An enthusiastic atmosphere filled the place. The women were moved by Francia's words and ready to continue the walk. Francia gave a hug and thanked the woman that offered her home. She then left to continue walking with the women while saying through the

¹⁹ Coastal seaport city located in the department of Valle del Cauca, Colombia

megaphone: *"...How to imagine and feel politics based on love, joy, and care to heal the wounds left by the politics of death in this territory and across Colombia"*(16/05/2022).*"We women have always resisted the politics of death, giving birth to dignity in the fields and cities"* (27/04/2022). *"We are holding hands to break the fear and sow hope because we know that change will not come from above. We want a politics that allows us to live without fear of violence in the street or murder for being women. We want our work to be valued because we work a lot and do not earn equitably to our male colleagues. Nor is our contribution in terms of care recognized. We do not want women to be victims of violence, discrimination, or exclusion, particularly impoverished, racialized, or trans women. We want land distribution for women because the land in women's hands is protected and guarantees family sustainability. We want to '**vivir sabroso**' and are ready to transform Colombia"* (16/05/2022). *"Today (**she**) everyone, (**he**) everyone, (**x**) everyone, we have to hold hands, and make politics from our emotionalities, showing our sensitivity as women. We have the possibility of radiating from our condition as women a different way of doing politics. Men have not been able to dignify life"* (19/04/2022).

While they walked, Francia saw a group of 'Mayores' and 'Mayoras' in the street, they were calling and greeting her from a distance. Francia approached them, asked them for their blessing and said: *"...My ancestral greetings to the '**Mayoras**' and '**Mayores**' of Nazareth²⁰, who guide with spirituality the course of this path that we have decided to undertake... May your wisdom guide us on the path we take today to lead the change Colombia needs to '**vivir sabroso**' and with dignity"* (02/04/2022). *The challenge is to follow the steps of our '**Mayores**' and '**Mayoras**' who give birth to the independence and freedom of this country"* (02/04/2022).

Francia stops to refer to the critics she heard about the term '**Mayoras**' along the way. She said: *"For your information, '**Mayoras**' means wise women who have the ethical and moral authority to guide the course of our people. I am very sorry that, for you, the only correct language is the one inherited from the colony"* (23/03/2022). She continued her speech, saying: *"Today we follow the legacy of '**Mayor Benito**', who was awarded the Goldman Prize in 1998 and who has taught us how to take care of the '**casa grande**', the '**útero mayor**'"*(20/04/2022). *"I did not start this path of hope and dignity, this path was started by our ancestors, our grandmothers and grandfathers, and I am one more link in that chain of life and resistance"* (21/04/2022). *"I am because we are -soy porque somos- means 'Ubuntu', a philosophy of life of the African ancestral peoples that means building ourselves*

²⁰ Administrative territorial entity of Colombia (Spanish: corregimiento), located in the department of La Guajira, Colombia.

collectively, seeing ourselves as a community living life in harmony, feeling part of nature and not owners of it. This country needs to see us in the eyes; people who look at each other in terms of equality and equity, which implies that I am as much as you are” (18/04/2022).

A small city square was nearby where the ‘**Mayores**’ and ‘**Mayoras**’ were gathered. Francia and her companions decided to end the tour there. At that time, there were many more women than those who started the walk. Many joined along the way, being moved by Francia's words. Once they were all in the city square, Francia referred to ancestral knowledge before finishing her speech. She said: *“We need an education that recognizes sexual and gender diversity and the relevance of people's own knowledge. An education that allows eradicating racism and patriarchy. And, of course, rigorous education in science and technology” (16/05/2022). “About the role that science and ancestral knowledge have in our program, in a commitment to the dialogue of knowledge to decolonize our society and, specifically, our universities. Indeed, it is important for us to rely on scientific knowledge so that this country can advance in productive terms. But it is clear that science has also been used to destroy and endanger all forms of life. In that sense, ancestral knowledge has a lot to offer. Ancient knowledge has served us to have a harmonious coexistence with the territory and survive the different forms of extermination”(18/05/2022). “Recovering agriculture and preventing anyone from dying of hunger in this country means recovering that traditional ancestral knowledge of the peasants who, like me, have harvested the land, who taught us to sow with the phases of the moon, to use the ash from the stove” (20/04/2022). “This commitment to the dialogue of knowledge is framed in the challenge we have to make a reality that Colombia is a multiethnic and multicultural country and, in this way, combat classism and structural racism” (18/05/2022). “Racism hurts, damages, and destroys our humanity, but racism kills. How many racialized youths are killed in popular neighborhoods, leaders are killed in the territories, and how many racialized and impoverished children die of hunger every day in this country? that is what we are facing....I send you the ancestral hug that my grandmother taught me so that you heal because not only does racism harm us, but it also harms those who express it because they inhibit the possibility of expressing love and building from the difference” (18/04/2022).*

There was loud applause, hugs, and tears among the women present. In the atmosphere, emotions overflowed. Francia ended her speech with a hopeful note: *“Sisters, we will assume this historical moment. Together, we will be able to change this country. Occupying the spaces of power and representation to dignify politics. If we dare to do politics from joy, from love using the instinct of care, using our maternal love, with the decision of all women, we will change Colombia, I believe we can change Colombia” (19/04/2022).*

Thickening. Colombia is a woman

Resisting the coloniality of gender and power

One of the main topics Márquez addresses in this counterstory is how women in Colombia are affected by Colombian politics, which, to her, have always been hegemonic, racist, patriarchal, and exclusionary. In this context, she acknowledges that the intersection of gender with other categories of difference, especially race, is the ground for the discrimination and violence women in Colombia suffer and portrays the state as an accomplice of violence towards women. To her, the political system in Colombia is embedded in the coloniality of power and gender; therefore, it has enabled women to experience discrimination, inequality, and gendered violence that extends to economic, racial, sexual, and psychological violence.

Given the scenario, Márquez argues that the challenge faced by Colombian society is to change its hegemonic, racist, patriarchal, and exclusionary politics. To achieve this, Márquez spotlights various crucial elements, first recognising women in their diversity. To her, it implies openness to women in their sexual diversity and gender identity, ethnicities and knowledges. In this context, she denies the usage of the category of women as universal. Márquez clearly states that we cannot discuss women's rights unless we examine the conditions under which most Colombian women are impoverished, racialized, oppressed, and subjected to systematic and structural violence. In other words, discussing women's rights implies acknowledging that the violence women experience as women, in general, affects women differently. This argument resonates with the claims of decolonial feminism as they proactively criticize the system of gender coloniality, recognizing themselves among diverse feminists with diverse positions but a common point, being a feminist from the roots, periphery and margins (Villarreal Peña, 2018).

Another element Márquez highlights is the collective construction with men. She recognises the importance of constructing other masculinities, that is, other ways to be a man that do not sustain patriarchy, racism, and classism. Including men in the struggles to end patriarchy is characteristic of African feminism. According to African feminists, true liberation must affect the consciousness of both men and women because they all share a common foundation, experience, and cultural heritage. Men are always invited to join as partners in problem-solving and social change. (Vergara & Arboleda, 2014, p118)

Finally, Márquez claims that women's practices of resistance contain cosmovisions, knowledge, experiences, and ancestral legacies that are fundamental sources for changing Colombians' politics and building a country where all can live in dignity. As Lugones (2010) claims, resistance to coloniality has preserved ways of being, appreciating, and believing that value life over profit, community over individualism, and beings in relations over beings divided into hierarchically and violently ordered fragments (Lugones, 2010). It is in resistance that the knowledge to overcome coloniality is forged. To Márquez, going from the resistance to power with women means considering the diverse knowledge that women have to offer to the project of creating a new government: the wisdom of 'Mayoras,' 'Madres Comunitarias,' Indigenous women and Afro-descendants, 'Raizal' and 'Palenquera' women, 'gitano' women among others. By recognizing the pivotal role of women in changing Colombian politics, the quote -Colombia is a woman- thus does not refer to Colombia as a woman to take, conquer and exploit. She moves from a Eurocentric/colonial understanding of the notion and womanhood and the feminisation of the nation-state, to an Afro-diasporic perspective on land and gender, which is discussed in depth below.

Promoting gathering of women to change Colombia

Resonating with Lugones (2010), Márquez recognizes that the coloniality of gender cannot be resisted alone. As communities, rather than individuals, enable doing, the coloniality of gender is thus resisted within a community that shares common ways of understanding the world and living (Lugones, 2010). To enhance a collective resistance to the coloniality of gender, Márquez invites the women of Colombia to make Juntanza and come together in a commitment to change and transformation.

The term Juntanza usually refers to a gathering of people for social struggle, and it is commonly associated with the gathering of Afro-Descendant and Indigenous people. Juntanza is also synonymous with other terms associated with the struggles and resistance of the Black, Afro-Descendant, Raizal, and Palenquera communities. 'Uramba,' for example, is an expression from the Black community that means union, Juntanza, or Minga. The word Minga or Minka in Quechua (the language of the Incas) refers to the meeting of various actors, knowledge and tools in search of a common goal (BBC News Mundo, 2021). Following the cosmovision of the Black woman community, Juntanza can also be a gathering of women for accompaniment in healing processes. An example is 'La Red Mariposas de Alas Nuevas Construyendo Futuro', a group of women who defend rights and life in

Buenaventura. They accompany other women who have experienced violence and help them heal through Juntanza and their ancestral tradition (Comadrear La Pérdida, n.d.-b).

In Márquez's political agenda, Juntanza is both gathering in a commitment to change and transformation and the act of spreading the word about this commitment. As Márquez says, "Making this great 'juntanza' is going house to house, neighbor to neighbor, neighborhood to neighborhood". Thus, Juntanza portrays the crucial role of group pedagogy in Márquez's political practice and resonates with strategies implemented by Afro-diasporic feminism, such as conspiracy and the struggles of decolonial feminists who have preserved a pedagogical practice expressed in the close relationship between doing and thinking. To them, it is only by generating dialogues of knowledge that respond to their realities and listening that it is possible to see decolonisation's visible and non-visible characteristics and overcome them (Villarroel Peña, 2018).

Resistance and motherhood: giving birth freedom and dignity

Márquez compares women's processes of resistance with the act of giving birth and motherhood. According to her, Colombian women have consistently resisted the politics of death by giving birth to dignity in the countryside and cities. Likewise, she asserts that women have a different approach to engaging in politics fueled by love, joy, and maternal instincts. These ideas resonate with the understanding of motherhood from an Afro-diasporic perspective. In this regard, the work of Oyěwùmí (2015) is relevant as it highlights some analytical points about motherhood within the Yorubá epistemology, where the category of òyá constitutes a socio-spiritual category much more complex than its translation into the English word -mother- which carries the dominant theoretical gendered approaches to motherhood.

To Oyěwùmí (2015), òyá is at the core of the seniority-based system in the Yorùbá society; this symbolizes what she describes as the *matripotent* principle. "Matripotency describes the powers, spiritual and material, deriving from òyá's procreative role"... and "the matripotent ethos expresses the seniority system in that òyá is the venerated senior in relation to their children. Since all humans have an òyá, we are all born of an òyá, no one is greater, older or more senior to òyá" (Oyěwùmí, 2015, p. 58). The procreative role and venerated seniority of òyá in the Yorùbá society resonate with Márquez's addressing of the land and the environment as the biggest womb- the most significant and oldest life-creating force.

According to African maternal ideology, Motherhood is the primary source of life and the cornerstone of social order. In contrast to what is commonly found in Europe and the US, being referred to as a mother in African politics is acceptable because the title is linked to leadership and responsibility and, therefore, has the potential to win over voters (Oyěwùmí, 2015). To illustrate this, Oyěwùmí (2015) presents the case of Liberia's president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf who came to power with a massive surge of support from women voters because she was perceived by the people and perceived herself as the mother of the nation. The symbolism of Motherhood, as a mobilization tool, represented a chance for rebirth and renewal -after 14 years of civil war that traumatized and fragmented her country, Sirleaf was viewed as a mother capable of healing the war's wounds.

In the same way, Márquez portrays maternal love and the instinct of care as fundamental to healing Colombians society wounded by its longstanding internal war. At the same time, because of this maternal love, women have a capacity to care for others- the community- to see beyond personal gain. Márquez provides an example of this in one of her speeches when she asserts that land in the hands of women represents housing and food for the communities, whereas, in the hands of men, it reduces to a simple business. In conclusion, like African feminism's socio-centric ethos (Oyěwùmí, 2015), Márquez's political agenda focuses on the well-being of the community.

Ancestralidad, African diaspora and decolonization of knowledge in Colombia

As drawn in the counterstory, Márquez's political agenda strives to decolonise various spheres in Colombian society, especially knowledge. One of the tools Márquez utilized in her decolonizing agenda is language. With terms such as *Mayoras*, Márquez used the language as a form of resistance to the colonality of both knowledge and gender because by employing a term derived from African ancestral knowledge, Márquez made visible other knowledges and identities often invisibilized by the power patron of colonality. According to Márquez, the term *Mayoras* means wise women with the ethical and moral authority to guide the course of Black people. By using the term *Mayoras*, Márquez always makes visible the role of her ancestor women, who are often rendered invisible not only in the language of Spanish but in the history and academia, and expresses her profound respect for their wisdom and life.

However, during election season, the term *Mayoras* generated debate in the media, especially on social media. Some Twitter users considered it incorrect, supported by

arguments of the Royal Spanish Academy. Márquez constantly challenged these critics and claimed to feel sorry for those who criticized this term with the argument that it does not exist in Spanish and the dictionary of The Royal Spanish Academy because the only correct language for them is the one inherited from the colony. She further implies that they are not open to widening their horizons beyond the impost by the colonality of language and knowledge.

Márquez frequently expresses the importance of ancestral knowledge and practices in her aim to decolonise knowledge. She highlights that Colombian society needs an education that allows eradicating racism and patriarchy, recognizes sexual and gender diversity and the relevance of people's own knowledge. In that sense, ancestral knowledge has a lot to offer. Additionally, Márquez acknowledges that both Mayoras and Mayores are at the forefront of Black communities' resistance because they are the bearers of ancestral knowledge, responsible for its transmission and persistence for centuries through orality.

One of the many ways Márquez has integrated ancestral knowledge into her political practice is through the political movement- Soy Porque Somos- which Márquez created in 2021 to support her presidential candidacy before she joined Gustavo Petro as a vice presidential candidate. Later the motto - Soy Porque Somos- became insignia during her campaign as a vice presidential candidate. Márquez created this movement based on the philosophy of life of the African ancestors called -Ubuntu-. According to Volmink (2019), the Nguni-speaking people of southern Africa developed a worldview that sees humanity as a group of individuals who are only human because they coexist with other humans in the global community. This worldview is encapsulated by the word Ubuntu.

Nguni speakers claim that the Ubuntu philosophy is characterized by a close relationship with nature. It is based on natural ecosystem models of mutualism, the relationship between two species of organisms in which both benefit from the association and, to a lower extent, commensalism, the relationship between two species of plants, animals, fungi, in which one lives with, on, or within the other without harming either (Volmink, 2019). In this context, Ubuntu aims to integrate sustainable and synchronous mutualism and commensalism into the fabric of human society for the good of all individuals, the planet and all of its resources, and all living things. As Márquez states in her speeches, Ubuntu means building ourselves collectively, seeing ourselves as a community living in harmony, and feeling part of nature and not the owners of it.

Counterstory 3. Vivir Sabroso

“For years, we have worked despite adversity, protecting life and our ‘casa común’. Today we take a huge step from the resistance to power to represent hundreds of people who dream of a country where we can ‘vivir sabroso’”.

-Francia Márquez-Mina, 28/04/2022

A couple of days before the first round of the Colombian presidential election, Francia traveled to Pereira, the capital of the department of Cauca. In the city's central square, she convened people from all over the department, including La Toma, the town she is from. Around 1 pm, the central square was filled with people. Francia went to a little stage, took the microphone and said:

“Dear Cauca and dear Colombia, when I speak of ‘vivir sabroso’, I am speaking of living in peace, of living calmly, without having to go out in the street in fear, of living with joy, of living in the midst of love and happiness, and above all, of living with hope to realize our dreams” (11/05/2022). “Today I introduce a series of popular mandates to ‘vivir sabroso’ in Colombia”...“One popular mandate is to end the war by restoring social dialogue. We want total peace to heal ourselves. From the internal enemy, we will pass to the protection of national sovereignty. In the government of change, we will comply with the Agreement²¹, we will repair the victims and protect the signatories of peace” (08/05/2022). “Peace implies resolving economic insecurity, social insecurity, and hunger. Peace implies an institutional framework that addresses the challenges we face today as Colombian society”...“The armed confrontation, which has been going on for years and years, has not given us an answer. The path to peace began with an agreement signed between the FARC²² and the Colombian state, but it is falling apart.”...“We want to work for peace with all the armed actors” (30/03/2022). “Peace is more than the silencing of rifles, peace is drinking water, preventive health, ancestral medicine, art and sports to heal...We want preventive health that recognizes our traditional and ancestral knowledge and midwives recognized as a source of life. Strengthening cultural and ancestral practices is part of the path to healing Colombia dignified life” (03/04/2022).

²¹ The peace agreement signed between the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) in 2016.

²² Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Spanish: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—Ejército del Pueblo, FARC-EP or FARC after the initials in Spanish) is a Colombia's Marxist-Leninist guerrilla group (Padinger, 2022).

“Another popular mandate is decent work for a quiet life, confront poverty, offer opportunities, recognize and guarantee labour rights. To ‘vivir sabroso’, we will promote women and youth enterprises, we will support micro, small and medium-sized companies that contribute 80% of employment in Colombia, and we will work for sustainable agricultural production to nourish life. ‘Vivir sabroso’ is having decent work” (11/05/2022). “Education for free and quality life, that recognizes ancestral and traditional knowledge, that directs knowledge to live in harmony with nature is another popular mandate to ‘vivir sabroso’ in Colombia. The government of change will guarantee free and quality higher education and coordination between secondary and higher education. To dignify education is to take care of youth; it is to ‘vivir sabroso’” (12/05/2022). “Another popular mandate is to fight against hunger. No more children will die of hunger in Colombia. We will strengthen the countryside and the peasant family, we will live with food sovereignty... In the government of change, we will give the frontal fight against hunger by reactivating the peasant and popular economies. We will eradicate corruption from school feeding programs. Living with food and nutritional sovereignty is living without hunger; it is ‘vivir sabroso’ ” (13/05/2022)

“Going from inequality to a society that guarantees rights and historical reparation is another popular mandate to ‘vivir sabroso’ in Colombia. The ethnic groups and the peasantry, guardians of the Casa Grande and born in freedom, will see their rights, autonomy and participation guaranteed, to protect the territories as spaces of life” (15/05/2022). Francia finished her speech by saying: “I also have a dream, to see my nation in peace, with joy, with enthusiasm, to see my nation with dignity, to see every Colombian with rights. I have a dream that in Colombia, we can ‘vivir sabroso’” (24/05/2022).

Thickening. Vivir Sabroso

In this counterstory, Márquez introduces the notion of Vivir Sabroso, as an alternative to the lifestyle promoted by current Colombian politics, which, as has been demonstrated, encourages violence, inequality and extermination of human and non-human lives; and is based on the colonial legacies of racism, sexism, classism, and progress/modernity.

The notion of Vivir Sabroso resonates with other notions, such as Vivir Bien o el Bien Vivir, which have emerged as alternatives to the dominant and Eurocentric idea of development. According to Quijano (2020a), Bien Vivir is the most ancient form of Indigenous resistance to the Coloniality of Power. Quijano (2020a) understands it as a set of social practices aimed at the democratic production and reproduction of society—another mode of social existence with its own distinct historical sense horizon, radical alternatives to coloniality of power and

European colonialism/modernity. To Quijano (2020a), Today, Bien Vivir can only take the meaning as an alternative social existence- as a decoloniality of power.

Authors such as González-Madera (2021) and Toro (2016) have directly addressed the notion of Vivir Sabroso in their collaborative work with communities in Colombia. In the case of Toro (2016), the author monitors the trajectories of various atrateña practices (belonging to the Afroatrateños community in Bojayá, Chocó, Colombia) associated with the search and creation of a Vida Sabrosa.

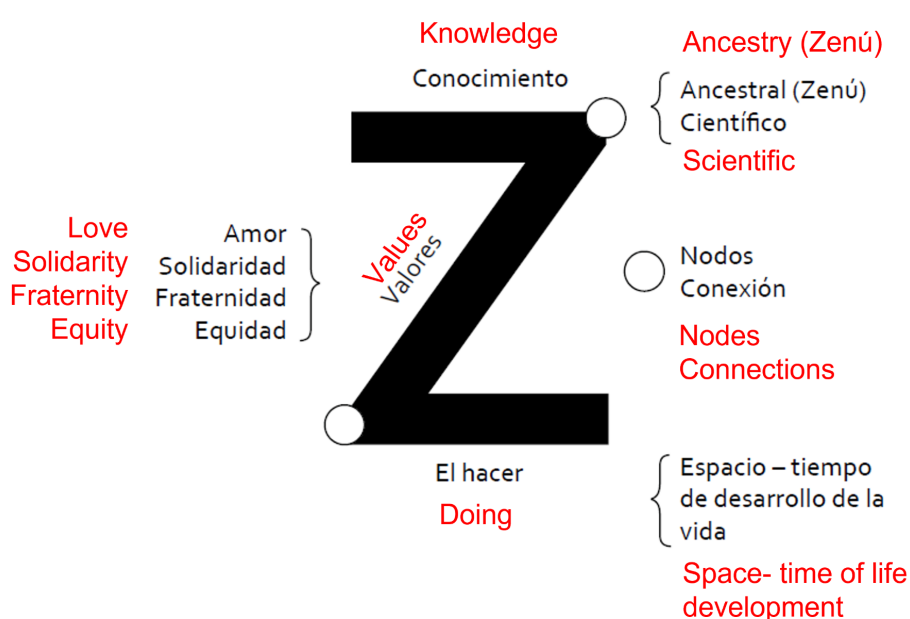
Toro (2016) states clearly that the Afroatrateña idea of Vivir Sabroso does not seek to become an analogy of the Indigenous notion of Vivir Bien. For Toro (2016), Indigenous movements and Latin American anthropology have shown the different philosophies existing in the Amerindian worlds about Vivir Bien. These allow exploring other conceptual horizons that offer unique ways of making people, peoples and territories and carry other concepts of politics, nature, society and person. Therefore, to understand these philosophies, Toro (2016) emphasizes that it is essential not to homogenize the notions of Vivir Bien and Vivir Sabroso since their power resides precisely in the singularity of the concepts that compose them and not in universal ideas of good and evil. This argument resonates with decolonial thoughts, which always seek to exalt the plurality and heterogeneity of people and their knowledges.

With this clarification, Toro (2016) expresses that the idea of the Vivir Sabroso of the Afroatrateño peoples appears around the defense, struggle and construction of daily life and territory. Therefore, it is a process that involves various agents such as the saints, the dead, the plants, the relatives, the mountain and the river. Toro (2016) points out that when she addresses the practices and mechanisms associated with creating a Vida Sabrosa, she does not refer to an ideal model -a harmonious field characteristic of the Afroatrateños communities. Instead, it is a field where risk, tension, danger, and conflict exist but are handled in a way that does not include violence or the eradication of the other (Toro, 2016). Vivir Sabroso is not a goal or an end but a process, a doing, a day-to-day existence.

González-Madera (2021) addresses the concept of Vivir Sabroso in his work on the territorial development proposal developed by the Asociación de Pescadores, Campesinos, Indígenas y Afrodescendientes para el Desarrollo Comunitario de la Ciénaga Grande del bajo Sinú – ASPROCIG (Association of Fishermen, Peasants, Indigenous, and Afro-descendants for Community Development of the Ciénaga Grande del Bajo Sinú). In this territorial

development proposal, Methodology Z and the notion of Vivir Sabroso stand out (González-Madera, 2021).

According to González-Madera (2021), the methodology Z incorporates both ancestor and scientific knowledge at its upper base and, at its lower base—doing—its foundation, united cross-sectionally by the creation of values like love, solidarity, fraternity, and equity, keeping as a principle the profound and peaceful relationship between humans and non-humans (see graph 1).



Graph 1. Symbolology of the letter Z in the socio-ecological territorial development proposal by ASPROCIG. (González-Madera, 2021, p 215) -The author's translation is added to the original figure in red letters.

According to methodology Z, knowledge is created collaboratively, as part of a territory, a whole, and taken up and transformed with the addition of new elements to enhance and improve the community, managing to co-evolve and remain in the territory in harmony with ecosystems (González-Madera, 2021). Since knowledge can be transformed and is not individual, it does not function as a property in methodology Z. Instead, it is the outcome of a community's dynamics and logic with the participation of its members, as well as its culture and collective leadership (González-Madera, 2021).

González-Madera (2021) argues that spiritual tranquillity expressed in ways of living, feeling, and relating in harmony with the territory is Vivir Sabroso within the framework of methodology Z. Care and love are also foundational of Vivir Sabroso and can only be achieved with -the other- building waking dreams whose meaning is to live in movement and

transcending visions of superiority: nature over humans or humans on nature (González-Madera, 2021).

In the counterstory Márquez describes *Vivir Sabroso* as a way of living characterized by peace, calm, love, happiness, joy, the absence of fear and with the hope to realize one's dreams. Moreover, she provides a more concrete elaboration on the notion of *Vivir Sabroso* in her political agenda by addressing a group of popular mandates she claims are crucial to *Vivir Sabroso* en Colombia. The mandates described by Márquez include ending Colombian internal war, restoring social dialogue and achieving peace, decent work, free and quality education that recognizes ancestral and traditional knowledge, achieving food sovereignty and the end inequality to achieve a society that guarantees rights and historical reparation.

Through González-Madera (2021), Toro's (2016) and Márquez's approaches on *Vivir Sabroso*, it is possible to see that, despite differences in context and subjects who addressed the notion (ASPROCIG and Afroatrateños), *Vivir Sabroso* is configured as proposal resistance to colonial legacies, evidencing against the plurality and heterogeneity of decolonial thought.

Concluding Remarks

From the counterstories and their thickening, it was possible to identify the various way Márquez used knowledge and practices, especially ancestral, from outgroups in Colombian politics, to create a political campaign that differs from and challenges Colombia's current political imaginaries and proposes alternative ways of living in Colombia. In this context, it is possible to extract concrete points that could encompass the political theory produced by Márquez during her campaign towards the vice-presidency of Colombia, and that shows how to make politics from a decolonial perspective.

During her campaign, Márquez criticized coloniality and the death project by giving clear examples based on the experiences of The Nobodies on how they operated. This action is crucial to show how coloniality encompasses violent and discriminatory actions and behaviors that go unnoticed because they are institutionalized and structured in Colombian society. It is clear that as the decolonial and Afro-diasporic feminisms expose it, only by making visible and teaching others how coloniality operates in the different spheres of life and mainly towards racialized and gendered identities will it be possible to find a way to overcome it.

Thus, Márquez's political practice demonstrates that it is possible to make a political campaign promoting pluralism and heterogeneity following the arguments of decolonial thinking. She does it by visualizing, through the notion of The Nobodies, the different groups, communities and people that Colombian politics and the actions of the State have marginalized. Márquez recognizes their various knowledges, experiences and worldviews and promotes a political agenda in which this diversity is included to construct a political project that opposes coloniality. Moreover, through The Nobodies, Márquez introduced a strategy to foster coalition and unity between outgroups and strengthen the incidence of collectivity over individualism.

Márquez demonstrates that in the resistance, rebellion, denunciation and protest of The Nobodies, there is the knowledge that is crucial to overcome coloniality and the forms it manifests in everyday life - racism, classism, sexism and deprivation of the environment- She also acknowledges that resistance is the keys to heal wounds, reconcile and build peace in the country. As Lugones (2010) claims, resistance to colonialism has preserved ways of being, valuing, and believing that value life over profit, community over individualism, and beings in relations over beings divided into hierarchically and violently

ordered fragments. Thus, the outgroups' resistance processes are the ones we should always look up to when decolonizing politics.

Moreover, Márquez's political practice demonstrates that Afro-diasporic feminism is a decolonising force. It was clear to see the influence of her participation in spaces of Juntaza and conspiracy with other Black women, which encompasses the exchange of life experiences of oppression, struggles, practices of resistance and the collaborative production of knowledge. During her campaign, Márquez always aimed to revindicate the role of women and especially Black women, in politics, as it is the agenda of Afro-diasporic feminism - to deconstruct the sexist historiographical tradition in Colombian that either erases women from the political history of Colombia or reproduces narratives stereotypes from the times of slavery.

Additionally, Márquez gave an example of how to do a political practice integrating the African diaspora -that is, being in Colombian territory and utilizing African knowledge to practice politics. She does this by creating the political movement -Soy Porque Somos- inspired by the African philosophy of the Ubuntu or by integrating the African notion of Motherhood and the notion of Vivir Sabroso in her political message. The focus here is on the potential of Vivir Sabros and the need to investigate it in realms as diverse as music, gender relations (Toro, 2016), and politics. More research can be done to determine how Márquez, now Vice President, incorporated the concept of Vivir Sabroso into public policies and state action.

Márquez's political campaign can be considered an exercise in the decolonization of politics since it seeks to detach from the discourse of coloniality/modernity through openness and freedom of thought to other forms of life, economies and political theories (Mignolo, 2007). Being herself the embodiment of the resistance to the coloniality of gender and power, she built a campaign from her profound and dense knowledge of her experiences as an Afro-descendant woman, leader and activist for the defence of the ancestral territory of La Toma, Cauca, a participant in spaces of Juntaza and conspiracy with other Black women, in the framework of an Afro Diasporic feminism, winner of awards worldwide for her work as environmental and human rights activists and survivor and resistant to forced displacement and the politics of death.

Finally, this work has allowed me to understand in greater depth the historical and structural causes of inequalities in the country by providing me with theoretical concepts that reveal how colonial legacies - sexism, classism, racism - operate in daily life not only through the

actions of individuals but on a large scale through the actions of the state and the elites. Additionally, Márquez's political practice has demonstrated how it is possible to carry out decolonial resistance through language, gatherings (Juntanza) and openness to worldviews and knowledge of others from the colonial difference. Through her political message, Márquez showed us that there is ancient knowledge, such as that transmitted and preserved by the Indigenous (Bien Vivir/ Vivir Bien) and Afro-descendant (Ubuntu) communities that propose ways of life that promote the recognition of the other in their humanity and dignity, that encourages to make a politics of love where motherhood and womanhood from an Afrodiasporic perspective break with the stereotypes imposed by the colonial legacy, that encourages the respect and preservation of the environment and strives for a society in which we can all live with equality and guarantee of rights.

I will carry all of these reflections from this work with me as I continue my ongoing journey of decolonizing my being and supporting decolonizing processes in Colombian society through my academic work and daily activities. As Lugones (2010, p 157) claims, "we are moving on at a time of crossings, of seeing each other at the colonial difference constructing a new subject of a new feminist geopolitics of knowing and loving".

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