

Former Combatants Change Colombia

By: [Survivor Corps](#) / [Nate McCray](#) (2010)

URL: <http://vimeo.com/9579831>

Length: 4.20 min.

Key words: Colombia, reconciliation, community empowerment, ex-combatant integration

SUMMARY

This documentary introduces a unique post-conflict reconciliation project in Colombia. San Francisco, a town in [Antioquia Province](#), is a community that has been heavily affected by the conflicts in Colombia. An American non-profit, Survivor Corps, and Colombian organizations [Fundación para la Reconciliación](#) and [Corporación ConCiudadanía](#), are confronting the problem by empowering civilians, former combatants who had been on different sides of the conflict to work together to break the cycle of violence.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does this program seek to rebuild the community and prevent future conflict locally? What kind of tangible results might a program like this have?
2. The word “trauma” is repeated throughout the video. How do you think trauma hinders a community from rebuilding post-conflict?
3. In what ways do you think the presence of ex-guerrilla and paramilitary combatants in the program and in the community help or deter victims from recovering from trauma?
4. Do you think that peer support outreach programs like this one can establish long-term peace, or do you think they are mainly for personal remedial purposes with short-term community benefits?
5. What does “empowering the community” mean? Assuming that the residents of San Francisco are “empowered,” how does this empowerment prevent future conflict? Is it possible for one small community to determine whether or not it is embroiled in a broader conflict over lucrative drugs?
6. The program appears to be straightforward, self-sustaining, and self-expanding. How can we know if it is as effective as the video says? If it is effective, why isn’t it replicated in other communities all over Colombia?
7. How is community reconciliation related to long-term peace?

BACKGROUND TO THE CONFLICT

The armed conflict in Colombia has terrorized communities for almost 50 years. In the context of the Cold War, the United States backed the Colombian government in its attacks on rural poor and peasant groups believed to be supportive of communism. This resulted in peasant-led guerrilla armies, of which the FARC is the most notorious. Today, these guerrilla armies are known for their [drug trafficking operations](#) and terrorizing communities that they have sworn to protect. This conflict has killed tens of thousands of people and has displaced millions. [MORE](#)

[FARC, ELN: Colombia's Left-Wing Guerrillas](#). Council on Foreign Relations (Aug 2009)

[Colombia's Right-Wing Paramilitaries and Splinter Groups](#). Council on Foreign Relations (Jan 2008)

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[Facilitating Peace & Reconciliation Between Conflict Survivors and Ex-Combatants](#). US Institute for Peace (June 2011)

[Colombia risks 'failure' in demobilization of violent groups: Report](#). Columbia Reports (June 8, 2012)

[Colombia: Fix Flaws in Transitional Justice Bill](#). Human Rights Watch (June 12, 2012)

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