

RAZONES DE VIDA BY VERA GRABE: PRO-PEACE NARRATIVE
OR THE SEARCH FOR MEMORY

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While conflict and civil strife are commonplace for those who study Latin America, scholars generally consider the case of Colombia to be especially intractable. Rich in natural resources and strategically located between the Caribbean and the Pacific, Colombia has been, for over sixty years, a nation divided by war, with astounding numbers of displaced people, kidnapped children, disappearances, and extrajudicial killings. The nature of the Colombian conflicts ranges from drug-related violence and guerrilla warfare to paramilitary, military, and state terrorism. Violence has sent millions into exile; many journalists, writers, and judges have left after receiving threats while doing their jobs, and others have fled the country as a result of racial, gender, and sexual discrimination. Many who have remained in Colombia live in fear because they are targeted for their political beliefs, or for their involvement in human rights organizations or workers' unions. Academics who have analysed the labyrinthine nature of the country's history have found themselves compelled to explain that, contrary to what many may suppose, Colombians are generally a happy and hard-working people who, above all, desire to live in a peaceful country.

In the midst of this conflict, women have been deeply affected. About half of all the displaced people in Colombia are women. Their bodies have been considered spoils of war; many have been detained illegally, tortured, and killed; some have simply disappeared. Colombian women, in general, have had to endure great losses, including the deaths, kidnappings, and disappearances of their husbands, children, and other loved ones. Many have also taken the lead in denouncing impunity and claiming reparation, they have filled the streets demanding that the state protect them, and they have formed organizations for peace and justice. A few have written their personal memories, and by doing so, they have made visible the pain and

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