

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: MEMORY AND MEMORIALIZATION IN THE  
MIDST OF COLOMBIA'S ARMED CONFLICT

Felix Burgos PhD 2018

Directed By: Dr. Craig J. Saper, Professor Language, Literacy, and  
Culture Program

Repetitive cycles of violence and political confrontation have affected millions of people all along Colombia's history. In the last 25 years, due to the ongoing internal armed conflict, more than 290,000 civilians have lost their lives and over 5 million people have suffered the consequences of the internal war. Most of the fighting and deaths occur in rural areas or in zones where the State's presence and its institutions are absent. However, many Colombians perceive the conflict in a different manner as most of the confrontation occurs outside its borders, and the reports about war make the urban populations think of the conflict as a problem that belongs to a few.

Since 2011, the Colombian government has introduced laws of integral reparation, which include measures of symbolic redress. In this legalistic context, the construction of memory constitutes part of the general plan to assign responsibilities to the actors of the conflict, to dignify and symbolically repair the victims of violence, and to connect victims' narratives with the everyday activities of those who have not directly experienced the armed conflict. In this regard, discourses of transitional justice, reconciliation and reparation become the pillars of memorial activities that mix with the country's polarized political environment.

This dissertation investigates the complexities of memory as both a concept and a government mandated process. In particular, the chapters examine the country's politics of memory as they reflect on the construction of historical memory, the gathering of various victims' associations' memorial activities, and the construction of a museum for historical memory. The argument in this dissertation is that the current conceptualization of memory, its instrumentalization and construction through the State's politics of memorialization while the armed conflict continues must be closely questioned and theorized. Doing a close reading of how memory intervenes within the current cultural, social, and political landscape provides a general understanding of the promises, shortcomings, and potential problems of the construction of memory of a past that is still part of Colombia's present.