My research in Medellín, Colombia was conducted over the course of six weeks and took place primarily in the form of library research, event observation, and site investigation. My research examined how the production of diverse narratives found in Medellín produce, reinforce, or disrupt a range of imaginaries of the city and the everyday lived experiences of its inhabitants in the transition from a period of violence and armed conflict. My investigation was particularly interested in the way different groups marshal the act of storytelling for various political, social, and/or economic ends, tracking both official narratives created by the local municipality and established institutions, as well as alternative narratives produced by historically marginalized groups, such as displaced women and youth. Many elements of my investigation went according to plan, but some aspects of my research were unexpected.

The first phase of my research was conducted in the collections of the Museo Casa de la Memoria and the Biblioteca Pública Piloto de Medellín para América Latina, where I sought personal narratives produced by distinct social groups in Medellín. The library at Casa de Memoria, in particular, is a unique collection that houses resources specifically related to memory of the armed conflict and displacement in Colombia, and is open to international scholars' independent research. I also was able to engage with the museum itself, which makes use of various media—photography, music, maps, oral narrative, murals, etc.—to commemorate unique citizens' stories. Within the library, I was made aware of several collections of testimonios published by the municipal government of Medellín—among them Jamás olvidaré tu nombre, El cielo no me abandona, and Donde pisé aún crece la hierba—which were indispensible to my research. A good number of these testimonios were written by women and
youth displaced by the conflict, or actively changed by it. The Biblioteca Pública Piloto introduced me to several studies of collective memory and displacement of women in Colombia, among them: Palabras de mujeres: proyecto de vida y memoria colectiva and Mujer, negra y desplazada: triple victimización de Colombia.

The second phase of my research consisted in attendance and participation at events that celebrated narrative and personal expression as they relate to peace and memory in the city. The first such event I attended within my first week in Medellín was the release event for the publication Reintegrados: La vida después del conflicto, a collection of testimonios narrated by demobilized youth and published as a collection with forward by the municipal government. Next, I attended the Parada Juvenil de la Lectura, a narrative festival targeted at teens and youth. The festival took place June 13 and 14 within Parque Biblioteca Manuel Mejía Vallejo, a public park that offered free entry to all attendees and participants. Tents surrounding the perimeter of the park were dedicated to acts of storytelling and memory via different media, for example No somos peligrosos (We're Not Dangerous), a workshop orchestrated by a local theater targeted at creative acts to empower youth and rewrite history, or Carpa Abrazacuentos (Tent Embrace-stories) or Carpa Memoria para la vida (Tent Memory for Life), in which youth were invited to use different media—drawing, speaking, writing, doll-making, to express identity within the context of the city. A few weeks later, I attended the Festival Internacional de Poesía de Medellín, which took place from July 11 through July 18 in sites throughout the city. The title of the 2015 festival was Cubre Mundial de la Poesía por la Paz y la Reconciliación de Colombia (National Summit of Poetry for Peace and Reconciliation in Colombia), and many of the events directly engaged with the relationship between poetry with personal narratives of conflict. Of particular interest to me were events sponsored by Proyecto Gulliver, an initiative that paired
readings of the work of international poets with that of students in low-income communities greatly affected by violence or displacement, such as those in Comuna 3 and Barrio Antioquia.

Finally, I attended the La Semana de la Juventud held at Parque Biblioteca San Javier in Comuna 13—one of the areas of the city historically most stigmatized by poverty and violence—which was a celebration of youth expression, mostly through music, dance, and visual art.

The final aspect of my research was visits to sites of violence and memory to track the way in which the physical city created a narrative of recent history through plaques, street art, or other insignia. A few of these sites included: the Iglesia Santa Ana and Parque Sabaneta (notorious site of casualties due to altercations following weekly masses attended by sicarios), Bello Oriente neighborhood (marginalized area in the hills above the city that has received many displaced families), and Parque San Antonio (where the explosion beside Fernando Botero "El Pájaro" sculpture killed 20 and wounded 99 persons in a public square).

My expectation was to perform research through a mixture of methods, both library research and observation of collaborative storytelling projects; I was pleasantly surprised by the wide range of unique narrative festivals, publications, and storytelling initiatives that coincided with my short stay. In planning the project prior to going to the field, I imagined there would be a stark contrast between "official" narratives put forth by the government and "alternative" narratives produced by marginalized groups, so I did not expect the municipal government of Medellín to be an active collaborator in a fair number of the publications and storytelling events that informed my research. Lastly, I expected my research to be more singularly focused around the narratives of displaced women; however, ultimately the storytelling I was exposed to over the course of the research period was equally focused on the memory and experiences of marginalized youth.