

WELCOME BACK...A VICIOUS CIVIL WAR IN COLOMBIA OVER THE LAST FIFTY YEARS HAS LEFT AN ESTIMATED 600,000 DEAD, MANY MORE WOUNDED AND MILLIONS DISPLACED. TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, BOTH THE LEFTIST GUERRILLAS WHO DECLARED WAR ON THE STATE AND RIGHT-WING PARAMILITARIES FIGHTING THEM HAVE FUELED THEIR BATTLES WITH COCAINE SALES AND KIDNAPPING.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

WHILE THE GUERRILLAS APPEARED TO BE BASICALLY A PEASANT UPRISING AT THEIR CORE AND AT LEAST IN THE BEGINNING, BE BASICALLY A PEASANT UPRISING AT THEIR CORE AND AT LEAST IN THE BEGINNING, THEY WERE INFLUENCED, SUPPORTED AND SUPPLIED SOME BY COMMUNISTS. THE PARAMILITARIES WERE FINANCED BY BIG LAND OWNERS. THE GOVERNMENT'S MILITARY WAS THE OTHER FACTOR IN THIS 3-WAY CIVIL WAR... SOME IN THE MILITARY CONDONED, EVEN HELPED THE PARAMILITARIES.

PARTS OF ALL THREE, IN VARYING DEGREES, DID INCREASING BUSINESS WITH DRUG CARTELS. THE UNITED STATES HAS INVESTED BILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN TRYING TO END THE WAR AND COMBAT THE DRUG TRADE. FOR YEARS ALL SEEMED HOPELESS. BUT COLOMBIA NOW HAS A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO ENDING THE CONFLICT—ONE THAT RELIES AS MUCH ON OPEN ARMS AS HEAVY ARMS. AND IT JUST MIGHT BE A MODEL FOR OTHER COUNTRIES MIRED IN CIVIL WARS.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

COLOMBIA'S CAPITAL, BOGOTA...A CITY THAT SEEMS TO NEVER STOP SPRAWLING OUTWARD -- AND UPWARD, AS IT'S GROWTH IS FUELED BY MILLIONS FLEEING VIOLENCE IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. BUT EVEN HERE, THERE HAS BEEN NO ESCAPING THE BLOODSHED OF COLOMBIA'S COMPLICATED CIVIL WAR.

KIDNAPPINGS...CAR BOMBS...KILLINGS – DEADLY LEFTIST, MANY SAY COMMUNIST GUERRILLA GROUPS AIMING TO OVERTHROW COLOMBIA'S GOVERNMENT BROUGHT THEIR FIGHT INTO THE CAPITAL.

FOR YEARS, ATTACKS WERE FREQUENT...DEADLY...BRAZEN. NO ONE WAS SAFE...NOT EVEN IN THE HEAVILY-GUARDED PRESIDENTIAL PALACE...EXAMPLE: IT'S 2002: JUST MINUTES BEFORE A NEW PRESIDENT IS SWORN IN -- SUDDENLY, MORTAR SHELLS RAIN ON THE CITY'S MAIN PLAZA AND THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE ...14 ARE KILLED...AND THE COUNTRY'S PROSPECTS FOR PEACE SEEMINGLY DRENCHED IN BLOOD.

BUT NOW, TEN YEARS LATER, I CAN SEE HOPE ALIVE AGAIN. HERE, IN THE SAME PLAZA WHERE MORTARS FELL, A SALSA FESTIVAL. THOUSANDS SHAKE THEIR HIPS WITHOUT FEAR – THE RECENT CULMINATION OF YEARS OF RELATIVE CALM IN THE CAPITAL...A FEW YEARS BACK, I WOULD NEVER HAVE THOUGHT IT POSSIBLE. BUT TODAY, BOGOTA IS ONE OF SOUTH AMERICA'S ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND CREATIVE CENTERS...A BOOMTOWN, WITHOUT THE BOOMS.

## **JUAN MANUEL SANTOS, PRESIDENT OF COLOMBIA**

The progress that we have made, I think is-- and modesty apart, remarkable.

### **RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

JUAN MANUEL SANTOS IS THE LATEST OF 12 COLOMBIAN PRESIDENTS TO TRY TO FIND AN END TO THE COUNTRY'S CIVIL WAR...AND MANY SAY HE HAS THE BEST CHANCE.

### **RATHER**

Let's talk about Colombia today. I'm interested in-- having-- you say what you see is the difference between the perception of Colombia and the change that the new reality has brought. In some people's mind, it's a revolutionary, torn apart country with drug cartels, mafia-- agrarian revolutionaries-- rightwing-- hit squads. It's a murderous-- chaotic place.

### **SANTOS**

You're completely right. There's-- many people still have that-- vision that we are what-- what you just described because we were. We were a country where-- we had the highest kidnapping rate, highest murder rate, violations of all kinds of human rights. I mean that was a reality. Not anymore.

### **RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

IN THE JUNGLES OF COLOMBIA, BULLETS ARE STILL FLYING. BUT COLOMBIA'S GOVERNMENT SAYS THE RANKS OF LEFTIST REBELS KNOWN AS FARC. NOW NUMBER FEWER THAN 8 -THOUSAND, DOWN FROM A PEAK OF 18-THOUSAND FIGHTERS JUST A DECADE AGO. AND AS FOR THE RIVAL RIGHT-WING MILITIAS, THEY HAVE BEEN MOSTLY DISBANDED AND IT'S BEEN YEARS SINCE THEY ROAMED THE COUNTRYSIDE TERRORIZING CIVILIANS.

THE ROOTS OF THIS TURNAROUND TRACE BACK A DECADE AGO, WHEN COLOMBIAN PRESIDENT ALVARO URIBE TRIED A RADICAL NEW APPROACH TO PEACE -- A MIXTURE OF CARROT AND STICK. ON ONE HAND, HE DEPLOYED COLOMBIA'S MILITARY IN A MASSIVE U.S. BACKED OFFENSIVE AGAINST FARC, SEIZING WIDE SWATHES OF REBELHELD TERRITORY AND TAKING OUT TOP LEADERS.

BUT IT WAS THE OTHER HALF OF THE EQUATION THAT WAS TRULY RADICAL— AND UNTIL THEN, UNTHINKABLE. URIBE DECIDED TO OFFER FIGHTERS FROM BOTH SIDES A CHANCE TO SIMPLY OPT OUT OF THE WAR...TO LAY DOWN THEIR ARMS WITHOUT CONSEQUENCE.

AND NOW, MANY MEN AND WOMEN WHO SPENT DECADES HIDING AND FIGHTING IN THE JUNGLE ARE NOW AMONG THE CROWDS GOING ABOUT THEIR DAILY LIVES, TRYING TO RE-ENTER SOCIETY AS CIVILIANS.

### **EDWIN MUNERA, FORMER PARAMILITARY**

Well, what I regret most was when we had to burn down people's homes, peasant's homes, driving them from their land simply because a commander gave the order. So for me that was painful because I believe that a person's home is sacred.

### **RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

WE CAME TO THIS BOGOTA NEIGHBORHOOD TO HEAR THE STORY OF ONE OF

THESE EX-FIGHTERS. HIS NAME IS EDWIN MUNERA, AND HE SPENT YEARS PROWLING THE JUNGLE AS A DIE-HARD MEMBER OF A MERCILESS RIGHT-WING KILLING SQUAD.

**MUNERA**

So, when you saw that you were fighting the guerrillas, and you were also being chased by the army, and on top of that we were fighting each other. War is crazy, but that was even crazier.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

IN 2004, MUNERA AND TWO COMRADES MADE THE DARING DECISION TO DESERT THEIR TROOP.

**MUNERA**

So we had to walk at night and sleep during the day. Actually, not sleep, but rest. Because we were three, and between the three of us we took turns on watch so that they wouldn't catch up. Because they followed us for a while, so they could capture us and kill us, to show our bodies to the rest as an example.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

MUNERA FINALLY REACHED AN ARMY OUTPOST...LAID DOWN HIS RIFLE...AND BEGAN A SIX-YEAR PROCESS THAT WOULD EVENTUALLY LEAD TO A COMPLETELY NEW LIFE. TODAY, HE WORKS AS A FOREMAN FOR A CONSTRUCTION CREW... FEW AROUND HIM KNOW ABOUT HIS VIOLENT PAST.

**RATHER**

What was the hardest part of starting a new life?

**MUNERA**

The hardest part? Getting reacquainted with your family. You come from a life where you are not used to having responsibilities. You're a thug. Someone who only follows orders. You always have a gun, so nothing really matters to you. Not the rights of other people or even your own rights. So you come back as an animal to the city.

**SANTOS**

We have more than 50,000 people who have demobilized. Many of them only knew how to kill, only knew how to extort or kidnap. And-- many of them were recruited when they were kids-- children. So these types of people, you have to put them through a process of-- becoming a normal citizen and—a productive citizen. And a society that does not understand that you have to do this will be condemned to live in violence forever.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

PRESIDENT SANTOS KNEW THIS WAS NO EASY TASK...SO HE TAPPED THIS FORMER WALL STREET BANKER TO THE CABINET LEVEL POSITION OF REINTEGRATION MINISTER. HIS NAME IS ALEJANDRO EDER AND HIS JOB IS TO PREPARE EX-FIGHTERS FOR LIFE AFTER WAR.

**RATHER**

Let me-- as remote as it must seem, play the role now of a hard-working, average Colombian who's saying to himself, "Why should I give somebody who was part-- waging war in my country, on my country for 50 years, why should I give him any break at all?"

**ALEJANDRO EDER, DIRECTOR, COLOMBIA AGENCY FOR REINTEGRATION**

In Colombia, pretty much every Colombian has been touched by violence. I've been touched by violence. I've had family members killed and I've had family members kidnapped, not to mention friends and-- and- - and family of friends.

So Colombians have to realize, and slowly we are, that if we want there to be peace in Colombia, we actually have to make peace with those who have hurt us so much. There's still a lot of Colombians that ask me, "Why is the government investing so much money in the demobilized?" And to give you an idea--

**RATHER**

Good question.

**EDER**

--we-- we invest about \$2,000 per demobilized person per year. That's how much we invest in reeducating them, giving them psychological attention, and giving them a monthly stipend as long as they comply with everything.

There's two ways to end the violence. We can do this, which has a cost of about \$2,000 per person per year, or we can go for the outright military solution, fight them all until the last man is down or in jail. That is a significantly more expensive way of doing it, has more direct cost, more indirect cost. So in essence, the reintegration program can't be seen as a cost. The reintegration program is an investment in Colombia's future.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

THESE MEN AND WOMEN ARE ALL RECENT GUERRILLA DEFECTORS...JUST A FEW WEEKS AGO, THEY WERE SWORN ENEMIES OF THE STATE...BUT TODAY, THEY ARE STARTING THE JOURNEY INTO A NEW LIFE. THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF THE REINTEGRATION PROCESS - A LECTURE ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE CITY'S MAIN PUBLIC LIBRARY.

**REINTEGRATION WORKSHOP, VIRGILIO BARCO**

Even war has limits. When children are used, those limits are being broken.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

IF THERE WAS ANY QUESTION ABOUT HOW BLOODY THIS CIVIL WAR IS.. YOU ONLY NEED TO LISTEN TO THIS DISCUSSION.

**REINTEGRATION WORKSHOP, VIRGILIO BARCO**

When you take prisoners of war and sexually abuse them, when there is child recruitment...

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

THESE ARE MEN AND WOMEN WHO NOT ONLY SAW -- BUT IN SOME CASES, PARTICIPATED IN -- UNIMAGINABLE BRUTALITY... AND STARTING AT A VERY YOUNG AGE. NOW THEY NEED TO FIND A WAY TO MOVE ON.

**MICHAEL REED HURTADO, HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER AND COLUMNIST**

I think there is a lot of rhetoric. The Colombian government is very good at selling itself.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

MICHAEL REED HURTADO IS A BOGOTA-BASED HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER, A

WELLKNOWN COLUMNIST...AND ONE OF THE MOST OUTSPOKEN SKEPTICS OF THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT'S REINTEGRATION PROGRAM.

**REED**

It has sold a lot of lies and unfortunately, there hasn't been sufficient in-depth investigation into what happened.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

HE SAYS THE GOVERNMENT IS EXAGGERATING THE SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM, STARTING WITH INFLATING THE NUMBER OF DEFFECTED FIGHTERS.

**REED**

It's like Guerillas are coming from nowhere and demobilizing and demobilizing and demobilizing and demobilizing. This should at least send alerts out uh to say we are probably getting a lot of false positives in the demobilizations. We are probably having a lot of people that are not really combatants demobilized.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

REED SAYS THE GOVERNMENT ALSO FAILED IN THE EARLY YEARS TO ENSURE THOUSANDS OF EX-COMBATANTS DIDN'T FALL BACK INTO VIOLENCE. HE SAYS MANY FIGHTERS SIMPLY DISAPPEARED FROM THE PROGRAM AND JOINED DEADLY DRUG GANGS.

AND THEN THERE'S THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT IS SIMPLY OVER-STATING THE SUCCESS OF ITS REINTEGRATION PROGRAM FOR POLITICAL REASONS. THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY WAS EAGER FOR NEWS CREWS TO FILM THE DEFECTION OF THIS LARGE GROUP OF GUERILLAS...ONE BY ONE, LAYING DOWN THEIR ARMS AND TURNING THEMSELVES IN. BUT IT WAS SOON REVEALED THAT MANY OF THESE PEOPLE HAD NEVER ACTUALLY BEEN REAL REBEL FIGHTERS.

**RATHER**

You were talking about how the program had developed from its beginning. Any mistakes?

**EDER**

Plenty of mistakes. It's-- I'd say we're still making a lot of mistakes today. But I think that if you look at the sum of the program, if you look at the-- the challenge that we're facing and the way that we're carrying it forward, I'd say that the program is-- is doing quite well.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

AND IT TURNS OUT THAT'S WELL ENOUGH FOR THE UNITED STATES - COLOMBIA'S MOST IMPORTANT ALLY. TRADITIONALLY, AID FROM WASHINGTON HAS GONE TO COLOMBIA'S MILITARY. BUT SINCE 2006, THE UNITED STATES HAS ALSO PUMPED \$124 MILLION TO SUPPORT COLOMBIA'S REINTEGRATION PROGRAM.

WHEN WE RETURN, WHAT IS LIFE LIKE FOR FORMER CIVIL WAR FIGHTERS RETURNING TO SOCIETY - THAT'S COMING UP NEXT.

**DAN RATHER (ON CAMERA)**

OVER OUR TIME IN COLOMBIA, WE HEARD A LOT ABOUT HOW FORMER FIGHTERS ON BOTH SIDES OF AN UNIMAGINABLY BLOODY AND BRUTAL CIVIL WAR WERE BEING WELCOMED BACK INTO SOCIETY - THEIR PASTS WIPED CLEAN BY A COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT DETERMINED TO END THE CONFLICT UNDERSTAND THE PEOPLE YOU ARE ABOUT TO MEET WERE SEASONED FIGHTERS, WHO NOW MUST PROVE THEY CAN LIVE PEACEFULLY AS CIVILIANS.

WE MET FORMER MARXIST GUERRILLA ARGEMIRO ESTUPINAN BAUTISTA IN A SLUM BUILDING IN ONE OF BOGOTA'S MOST VIOLENT NEIGHBORHOODS WITH HIS FAMILY -- AND SEVERAL OTHER DEFECTED FIGHTERS...HE SAYS HE'S HAPPY, BUT LIVING ON THE MARGINS.

**ARGEMIRO ESTUPINAN BAUTISTA, FORMER PARAMILITARY**

Yes, a lot of families live here. Three families. My brother-in-law lives upstairs with his four kids and his wife. The other sister-in-law with my brother-in-law and a kid, and we live in those two spaces on that side, one where the kids sleep, and the other where we sleep. This is the list of which family has to clean the toilet. Everyone has a different day.

**RATHER (ON CAMERA)**

IT CAN TAKE ALMOST TWO HOURS FOR ESTUPINAN TO GET TO WORK. HE SELLS MOBILE PHONE AND DATA PLANS TO PASSERSBY ON THE STREET IN THIS BUSY DOWNTOWN PLAZA... IT'S A TOUGH LIVING: EVEN THE LONGEST DAYS SOMETIMES BRING HIM LESS THAN FIVE DOLLARS...STILL, ESTUPINAN SAYS HE WOULD RATHER STRUGGLE AS A CIVILIAN THAN RETURN TO A LIFE OF WAR -- AND HE SAYS HE IS VERY GRATEFUL COLOMBIA'S GOVERNMENT HAS GIVEN HIM A SECOND CHANCE.

**ESTUPINAN**

You have more freedom here than you do out there, living as a civilian. Now you abide by your own rules. You don't have to follow orders, no one's telling you what to do. You give yourself orders, and you give yourself value. You rely on yourself, and don't wait for others to provide for you.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

ESTUPINAN SAYS HIS GREATEST WORRY WAS BEING FEARED...AND REJECTED... BY ORDINARY COLOMBIANS. THE BLOODSHED IS STILL SO FRESH...THE WAR SO RAW.. BUT HE FOUND A HOME IN A MOST UNLIKELY SETTING...A PLACE WHERE TRUST IS PARAMOUNT... THIS FORMER GUERRILLA FIGHTER NOW VOLUNTEERS WITH CHILDREN AND ADULTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS. EVERY WEEK, ESTUPINAN TEACHES BICYCLE RACING... AND FINDS ACCEPTANCE.

**ESTUPINAN**

The parents trust us because they see what we do. They know we used to belong certain groups, and they'll ask me "you were part of a group, the way you were before, are you still that way?" And you tell them, "No, it's very different."

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

THE PROGRAM IS CALLED FIDES AND FOR 25 YEARS, ITS MISSION HAS BEEN TO PROVIDE AN OUTLET FOR A SPECIAL NEEDS COMMUNITY THAT WAS LONG IGNORED IN COLOMBIA. I CAME FOR SOFTBALL PRACTICE IN A BOGOTA PARK

ONE AFTERNOON.

AND IT WAS THERE THAT I MET UP WITH EDWIN MUNERA, WHOM WE INTRODUCED YOU TO EARLIER, THE EX-PARAMILITARY FIGHTER WHO ALSO VOLUNTEERS IN THE PROGRAM.

**RATHER (SPEAKING WITH FIDES PARTICIPANT)**

You have a nice glove. Mucho gusto. So let's see your red glove. May I? Gracias. Okay good.

**RATHER**

Well, you told us earlier, you describe the kids you work with here as "angels." And you said they help you to get rid of your fears. What were your fears?

**MUNERA**

You help the children, but they help you more. In a sense, you come with many weaknesses. A fear of facing society, a fear of speaking with others. To be able to touch their shoulders, to be able to hug them, that's what helps you overcome those fears. They give you the confidence to face society.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

ALEJANDRO ESCALLON FOUNDED THIS PROGRAM AND HE SAYS THE FORMER FIGHTERS AND THE PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS ACTUALLY HAVE SOMETHING IMPORTANT IN COMMON - THEY HAVE BOTH FACED REJECTION. AND NOW, HE SAYS MUNERA AND THE OTHERS ARE AMONG HIS BEST VOLUNTEERS.

**ALEJANDRO ESCALLON, PRESIDENT, FIDES**

They are more eager than the regular volunteers. So we are very happy with them.

**RATHER**

Well, what made you decide to try as an experiment-- it was at first an experiment. What made you decide to try to get the people who were being rehabilitated from the wars to work with these children?

**ESCALLON**

First when we began doing this program with the volunteers we saw that they change. They grew up better. Why not give the same experience to people that need love, that need to be hugged, that need to be-- that need to see life in a different way. So we said, "This an experiment." And the experiment worked out.

**RATHER**

Well, in the beginning did you have concerns among the caregivers and parents saying, "Wait a minute. You're bringing in these people who are killers and they've been at war." Must've been some concern?

**ESCALLON**

At the beginning we were concerned. After we met them we were not concerned. They have met all of our families. We are friend of them. They are-- they belong to FIDES. They take about us, FIDES, and they say these are my best family. So I think FIDES has done a great-- change in their lives. And I think and I'm sure they have done a great change in our lives too.

**RATHER (VOICE OVER)**

MUNERA HASN'T MISSED A SATURDAY MORNING SINCE HE STARTED VOLUNTEERING SEVEN YEARS AGO. HE SAYS CHILDREN -- PARTICULARLY THESE CHILDREN -- ARE NOT JUDGMENTAL...AND THAT, MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, HAS EASED HIS TRANSITION INTO SOCIETY.

**RATHER**

It may be a difficult question, but why do you and others who were fighting so long and bringing so much violence to the country. Why do you deserve a second chance?

**EDWIN**

We deserve it because we are humans. And as humans we fail. But we can also vindicate ourselves. And I think that falling and getting up is not the same as falling. If you stand up, you stand up with more strength and with more resolve to not repeat the mistakes you've made in the past.

**RATHER (ON CAMERA)**

THERE ARE FRESH SIGNS OF HOPE THAT COLOMBIA'S OWN CIVIL WAR MIGHT BE COMING TO AN END. FARC'S ONCE INTRACTABLE LEADERS ARE IN THE MIDST OF TALKS WITH COLOMBIA'S GOVERNMENT -- THE CLOSEST THE TWO SIDES HAVE BEEN TO REACHING PEACE IN DECADES.

AND OTHER COUNTRIES ARE TAKING NOTICE. THE PHILIPPINES, SRI LANKA AND CONGO ARE ALL USING COLOMBIA'S REINTEGRATION PROGRAM AS A KIND OF MODEL AS THEY TRY TO FIND AN END TO THEIR OWN INTERNAL CONFLICTS.