

APPROVALS

☐ Managing Editor: Bailey
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☐ Final Copyedit

Domestic Housewives to Social Activists:

The Role of Mothers in Soacha, Colombia in the Fight for Social Justice

Living to Existing:

The Role of Mothers in Soacha, Colombia in the Fight for Social Justice

The False Positive:

The Role of Mothers in Soacha, Colombia in the Fight for Social Justice

Paving a Future of Change:

The Role of Mothers in Soacha, Colombia in the Fight for Social Justice

Leading through Silence: The Role of Mothers in Soacha, Colombia in the Fight for Social Justice

(by order of preference)

By Cole Sterr

[Insert image & caption here when ready. Standard caption: Photo by _____, CLAgency's Head Photographer]

Write no fewer than 500 words and no more than 900.

On January 12, 2008, the 26-year-old autistic son of Luz Marina Bernal Porras, Fair Bernal Porras, was executed by the far-right Colombian government. Bernal Porras was told her son was killed while in a military officer's uniform, which she knew couldn't have been right. Realizing her son was murdered by a corrupt government and that she wasn't the only mother who experienced this loss, Bernal Porras couldn't be silent. Now, 10 years later, Bernal Porras, as well as many other mothers in Soacha, Colombia, is a social activist fighting for the justice that was never served for her son more than a decade ago.

As part of the Grand Challenges and CLA Freshman Research Grants, students Sydney Provinzino, Olivia Nortwen, and Kylie Sievers traveled to Soacha, Colombia with Spanish & Portuguese Studies Professor Luis Ramos-Garcia to interview these mothers and their experiences losing their sons and becoming social activists.

An Exhausting Fight

In 2016, Colombia had ended a 52-year civil war. Between 2001-2008, the far-right President Alvaro Uribe offered incentives to soldiers (such as increased pay, more time off, and better living conditions) to "turn in" more bodies from the opposing political party: the rebel guerillas. In an effort to inflate the body count (known as the "false positives" scandal), the soldiers would lure young, poor mentally ill men from impoverished communities to remote parts of the country and execute them. These

men were then disguised as rebel guerillas killed in battle and presented to the government, all to receive their promised incentives.

Pretty soon, inconsistencies arose. Some men would be turned in with bullet holes in their bodies, but not their uniforms. Others would have a weapon in their right hand when they were left-handed, and many were mentally ill and would not have been able to enlist in the army. Mothers in the small town of Soacha, Colombia, began to demand where their sons were - to no avail.

In the “False positives” scandal, more than 3,000 young men were executed. The mothers of these sons have yet to achieve justice.

Leading through Silence

These mothers have had enough. In a country that’s trying to silence them, these mothers are speaking out and leading a movement to foster social change, not just for their sons, but for the Colombian people.

That’s where Sydney Provinzino, Olivia Nortwen, and Kylie Sievers came in. As part of the CLA Freshmen Research Grant, freshmen (now sophomores) Nortwen and Sievers were matched with Professor Luis Ramos-Garcia. He gave the two girls a choice: to sift through papers in a library or to come to Colombia and participate in a movement. So, off to Colombia they went. Provinzino, on the other hand, had a great relationship with the professor and was an impeccable student in the Spanish & Portuguese Studies Department. Her academic achievements earned her the Grand Challenges Grant, and off to Colombia she went, too.

This story was written by an undergraduate student content creator in CLAgency. [Meet the team.](#)

TEASER TEXT

<p>WEBSITE TEASER</p> <p><i>This will appear in both the department newsletter and on the website.</i></p>	<p>Olivia Nortwen, Sydney Provinzino, and Kylie Sievers traveled to Soacha, Colombia to explore the role of mothers in the fight for social justice after the far-right government killed these mothers' sons. As part of the Grand Challenges and CLA Freshmen Research Grants, the trio interviewed these mothers to help showcase how they are transforming the Colombian social landscape. Nortwen, Provinzino, and Sievers garnered academic praise for their work, receiving the award for "Best Scholarly Presentation" at the 2018 Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Conference.</p>
<p>CLA FACEBOOK TEASER</p>	<p>"Without my son, I don't live, I just exist."</p> <p>Three undergraduate students from the [TAG] UMN Department of Spanish & Portuguese Studies traveled to Soacha, Colombia to conduct research on the role of mothers as social activists after the far-right government killed these mothers' sons. Together, Olivia Nortwen, Sydney Provinzino, and Kylie Sievers had the opportunity to interview these mothers to help expose such political oppression and showcase how mothers are transforming the Colombian social landscape.</p>
<p>CLA TWITTER TEASER</p> <p><i>280 characters or fewer--URL and @/# count as characters</i></p>	<p>Three undergraduate students from @UMN_SpanPort, Olivia Nortwen, Sydney Provinzino, and Kylie Sievers, traveled to Soacha, Colombia to conduct research on the role of mothers in the fight for social justice. Their work garnered academic praise.</p>