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**SSRC Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship abstract, 2011**

This research takes a look at U.S. foreign policy in Latin America. I will use a mixed method approach to examine the impact of U.S. drug policy on Colombian migration and the gendered process of displacement. Plan Colombia has been implemented in Colombia since 2000 but according to many scholars, activists and politicians this drug policy has had adverse affects on the rural and urban communities of Colombia. Violence from Colombia’s civil war, and the terror of guerillas and state-sponsored militias groups, has led to the death and internal displacement of rural communities to urban areas, in addition to external migration out of the country. My main research question is: What are the effects, direct or indirect, of U.S. policy on foreign migration, and what are the gendered effects of forced migration? I hope to use this research to evaluate foreign policy and to call attention to the human rights of people affected by displacement. The experience of gender in migration and policy scholarship is lacking and must be taken into serious consideration not only to advance the field of migration but for the creation of policy that takes into account its impact on human lives.

**Outline your plans for summer predissertation research, including a justification of your on-site empirical work, and a brief description of the sources and methods of your research plan. Explain how your summer research will help prepare for your dissertation. (up to 750 words)**

My plans for summer pre-dissertation research would be to travel to Colombia from the end of June to September 2011. I would be based in Bogota but also be traveling to Medellin and Santander de Quilichao. In Bogota I have made contact with professors at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia and Pontificia Universidad Javeriana de Bogota. I have also contacted researchers at the National Administrative Department of Statistics (Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadistica). Being able to talk with professors whose work focuses on gender, displacement, conflict, and policy would be beneficial for my research because these contacts are essential resources within the country that would help educate and guide me in building my literature review, and networking with other scholars and organizations in Bogota. As the capitol of Colombia, Bogota has been one of the main urban areas of settlement for those displaced from rural areas. It would be a great place to make connections with organizations that work with displaced persons, in addition to people who have been directly affected by forced migration and are seeking to rebuild their lives post-displacement.

I would like to use both quantitative and qualitative research methods to complete my dissertation research so being able to work with researchers at a national statistic center would be of great value for my work since they have the most current data on migration within the departments in Colombia. In addition, it would help me decipher if the data sets I need for my analysis are available or if I need to build my own data set for the information I need.

While in Colombia I would also want to travel to Medellin and to the Universidad de Antioquia in Medellin to be able to meet with professors and activists whose work is focused on Afro-
Colombian and indigenous communities who have been displaced. Also, I would be traveling to the Department of Cauca, Santander de Quilichao, to visit educators and community organizers who work on the ground in conflict zones helping those who are directly affected by the violence of the civil war. In both places I hope to be able to orient myself with what is currently happening in these areas, what the community sees as the root causes of the conflict, what they see as the “push” factors for displacement, what drives rural people to urban areas, and how they see gender affecting their experience. I may be able to read publications with academics’ opinion but being able to hear what is going on from the people who are experiencing it is what will make my work more informed and true to life.

Conducting on-site research this summer in Colombia would be a significant contribution to my dissertation. Pre-dissertation research would assist me in determining if this research is feasible and if I am asking the right questions. I need to orient myself with the work that is being done on Colombia from the Colombian perspective. Being able to begin conversations with people who work with my sample population would be helpful so that I can assure that the methods and approaches I am using can get a valid and reliable assessment of gender and migration.

Bio
Claudia Maria Lopez is a PhD Candidate in Sociology at UC Santa Cruz, competing designated emphases in Latin American and Latino Studies and Feminist Studies. Her dissertation research examines the urban resettlement and incorporation of rural persons who have been displaced due to the conflict in Colombia. Lopez’s work explores the institutional responses to the crisis of displacement, and how vulnerable populations claim “space” in the city. This research has been generously supported by the UCSC Sociology Department’s Research and Travel Graduate Fellowship (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014), the Social Science Research Council’s Dissertation Development Proposal Fellowship (2011), the STARS Re-Entry Scholarship (American Association of University Women, 2013; Soroptimist International, Santa Cruz Branch, 2013), and the Chicano Latino Research Center Graduate Student Mini-grant (2014). Lopez is also the 2014-2015 Chancellor’s Graduate Teaching Fellow, and the current Student Representative for the American Sociological Association’s Race, Gender and Class section and the Human Rights section.