

Reflection on how a cutting-edge education system can guide our collective vision of a prosperous and peaceful nation







COLOMBIANITUD

Jaime Alberto Leal Afanador

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"To Colombia, a source of inspiration that represents the nation dreamed of by so many generations, so that the education of current and future compatriots may serve as a contribution to collective intelligence, supported by our own moral and ethical consciousness, to learn to walk from the warmth and solidarity of its people"

Jaime Alberto Leal Afanador

[Quote translated from its original in Spanish]

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PROLOGUE

Through my work, I have had multiple opportunities to confirm that, despite academic criticism, there is some truth to the concept of national character. Often understood as the set of traits, values, attitudes, and beliefs commonly shared by the members of a nation, national character is manifested in the customs, traditions, and ways of life of a people. This concept not only reflects a nation's collective identity but also plays a crucial role in shaping educational policies and pedagogical practices. Indeed, education is a reflection of the society in which it develops and, as such, is profoundly influenced by national character. Education systems not only transmit knowledge and technical skills, but are also instruments for conveying values, norms, and beliefs that are central to the national character. For example, a country that values independence and individualism may emphasize critical thinking and self-expression in its education system, while a society that values community and conformity may place a greater emphasis on cooperation and respect for authority. In fact, there is a long tradition of historical, sociological, and cultural studies that consider national character as a shaping element of national education systems, which emerges strongly when compared internationally. Moreover, in a certain way, the concept of national character can be taken as a residual factor, in the mathematical sense of the term, which, despite not fully knowing its contents, helps to understand the differences between education systems across different countries, both in Latin America and the rest of the world.

The vitality of this concept has been strongly affected, on the one hand, by criticisms, particularly from sociology, as well as by the undeniable risks of linking national character and exclusionary nationalism. While national character is a useful tool for understanding how education develops in different contexts, it is not without criticisms and challenges. One of the main issues is the risk of stereotyping and overgeneralization. The idea of a single national character may overlook the diversity and multiple identities present within a nation, especially in countries with a wide variety of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups. Moreover, the emphasis on a specific national character can lead to the exclusion or marginalization of minorities and the imposition of a "dominant identity". This is particularly problematic in contexts where the nation has been built upon the exclusion or suppression of certain groups. Another challenge is the tendency to resist change. National character, when understood as a set of immutable values and practices, can become an obstacle to innovation and adaptation to new realities, such as globalization or technological changes. Additionally, beyond academic discussions, real-world events have also questioned this concept. On the one hand, the globalization of certain cultural practices and, on the other, migratory movements, have caused the national character, if it ever truly existed, to increasingly blur and fade.

At first glance, it might seem that this essay by President Jaime Leal aims to restore the relevance of national character, specifically in the case of Colombia. The pages he dedicates to showing the genesis of *Colombianitud* (referring to Colombian identity or the essence of being Colombian) not only offer a masterful approach to the history and political and cultural configuration of the country as a nation, but also present an

analytical exercise that seeks to question not only the past and the present but also the future. This is, to me, the main value of this essay: questioning the future of the country and the role that education should play in it. It is in this sense that President Jaime Leal makes a contribution not only reflective but also based on his own experience as an educational leader of Colombia's largest university.

In the era of globalization, the concept of national character in education faces new challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, increasing global interconnectedness demands an education that prepares students to be citizens of the world, which may conflict with national traditions and values. On the other hand, globalization also offers opportunities to enrich national character by incorporating international perspectives and practices. What does Colombianitud mean today? What are its implications for addressing the challenges facing the country, starting with the consolidation of peace and democracy? What role should education play in shaping a future where no one is left behind? And, in particular, how can the university contribute to the necessary transformation of education and, therefore, of the country? These are some of the questions that President Leal attempts to address, modestly offering his knowledge and experience.

Rarely have I had the opportunity to hold in my hands an essay that is not only rich in content but also speaks from experience. President Leal belongs to that rare species of intellectuals committed to management, who exercise educational and social leadership that is more necessary than ever today, and do so with unquestionable success. For this reason, the pages that follow deserve to be read carefully, as

part of the living legacy of a prominent figure in the world of education, a teacher in the classic sense of the term, whom many of us admire professionally and personally.

Francesc Pedró

Director of the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Caracas, January 2024.

INTRODUCTION

Dear reader,

Thank you very much for your interest in this writing and, hopefully, for trusting that the ideas presented here may contribute to reflection and action.

In order to best express the "pride of being Colombian" and what that means and commits us, as Colombians, to the exercise of our idiosyncrasy and aspirations as natives of this country, I have taken the liberty of coining the term "Colombianitud" (Colombian identity or the essence of being Colombian), which does not appear in the Royal Spanish Academy's Dictionary nor in the Diccionario de Colombianismos, but which I believe best expresses the integration of the character, strength, expectations, virtues, and even weaknesses of those born in this land.

I have written this essay because, for the past three decades, I have been aware that we are facing a crucial moment in human history, where, rather than focusing solely on obstacles and threats, it is imperative to see opportunities to guarantee and build an assertive future. This will only be possible through an education accessible to all—education of quality and relevance—that fosters critical thinking, context, and character, allowing current and future generations to build their future based on their needs and expectations, free from prejudice, impositions, or external paradigms.

I write this work as an academic and as the president of the largest public university in Colombia, the Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD), which I have had the honor of leading for the last two decades. Thanks to its educational project, we have managed to reach almost all the municipalities in the country and have come to understand the dreams, historical wounds, and frustrations of our students across all education levels and socioeconomic conditions. These life projects, together with various research efforts and contributions from academics, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, and political analysts, confirm that Colombians today are children of a homeland that has been built amid improvisation, the clash of political interests, ignorance and abuse of the warmth, resilience, richness, and diversity of this land and its people, and the underutilization of education as the main social device through which leaders could, and still can, enhance inclusion, peace, harmony, and the extended well-being of the homeland.

This publication does not pretend to be a historical account, although it does address the distorted history that has been told about the indigenous peoples of these lands and the role of various tribes and races, as well as the rulers who have governed us from the pre-independence period to the Republic of Colombia, passing through La Gran Colombia, New Granada, the Granadine Confederation, and the United States of Colombia. Nor is it meant

UNAD is the first public university in Colombia with a quarter of a million students enrolled in more than 90% of the country's municipalities. It offers educational programs at all levels, from primary and secondary education to postgraduate training. Its quality has been recognized by the National Accreditation Council of Colombia, and its virtual and distance learning model has allowed it to reach compatriots across all continents.-

to be an anthropological and sociological analysis, although it draws from descriptions of the original customs, habits, cultures, and social relations inherited or imposed on our ancestors. To do this, I have relied on an extensive reading of various theories by sociologists, historians, economists, educators, statesmen, and other professionals from various fields of knowledge regarding our past and present.

Yes, this work reflects the view of an educator who, like myself, dares to imagine future scenarios in which the education system must be a generator of necessary and radical transformations, starting with its own evolution. As an academic and university director, I have sought to equip myself with arguments, facts, and figures to justify my judgments. For this reason, I pave a realistic path, which at times may seem hopeless, about what is happening in our Homeland.

The texts analyzed that support this essay, as part of the consulted bibliography, refer to the investigative, chronological, and sometimes anecdotal assessment of a national history that is often framed by endemic violence, whose negative impacts have hindered multiple initiatives for democratic consolidation.

As a Colombian and leader at the head of an organization that has had and continues to have a direct impact on more than half a million fellow citizens, I am called to be optimistic, to think big, to fill my heart, to seek best practices, to motivate those around me, and to demonstrate that education is the lever that will ultimately allow us to make a Copernican shift in our reality.

Throughout 12 chapters, I cover the genesis of our homeland, from a description of our ancestors and their evolution as a

society. I analyze the role played by education in shaping our current social composition and development, and from various perspectives, I insist on the urgency of revitalizing education—a structure, system, and public policy—to recover the essence of our nationality, our *Colombianitud*, and our potential to be a progressive and peaceful nation.

In Chapter 1, "Why Write about Colombianitud?" I develop this concept and explain how its "rescue," through education, can prevent violence, exclusion, inequality, and corruption from continuing to define the narrative of who we are.

Based on a description of our ancestors and a historical review, in Chapter 2, "Why Are We the Way We Are?", I explore the origins and background of the indigenous peoples who were subjugated by Spanish conquistadors and reflect on whether these circumstances have determined our current social and cultural evolution as a nation.

An enormously diverse nation, rich in rites, cultures, habits, and social expressions. In Chapter 3, "The Diversity of Being Colombian", I describe the ethnic, cultural, and social characteristics of the very diverse peoples who inhabit our geography and how most of them were "crushed" by the so-called "Spanish Conquest".

A review of the presidents who have governed us (more than 80 in office and about 30 in charge or as interim leaders, to date), their profiles, and their programmatic developments, confirm—as the title of Chapter 4 "The Warlike and Not Always Visionary or Supportive Legacy of Our Rulers" suggests—that governments and leaders have recurrently failed to align with

the expectations of the nation, and that the concept of "La Patria Boba" (The Foolish Fatherland) from the 19th century seems to have persisted through time.

In an unfortunate chicken-and-egg game, where it is unclear whether many of our problems have originated from erroneous or absent government and state policies or whether they existed beforehand, in Chapter 5, "Ignorance: A Key Ingredient for an Explosive Cocktail", I list the ten main and profound triggers of the social fractures in Colombia, summarized in corruption, crime, ineffective education, family crisis, machismo, plundering of natural resources, informal unproductive labor, prejudice, migration, and lack of credibility in an ineffective religiosity.

I then delve deeper in Chapter 6, "Rootless Education, Designed to Be Dependent and Begging", on how the visible absence of the state to guarantee quality education should invite us to reconsider, from a cost-benefit perspective, how useful it would be to measure the accumulated inefficiency of Colombia's public education system at all levels and the impacts it has had on the comprehensive formation of entire generations.

Then, in Chapter 7, "A New Opportunity for Cutting-Edge Hybrid Education: UNAD and Virtual Education", I present part of the successful and impactful experience of UNAD in delivering quality education through virtual and hybrid models, seen as an unavoidable path to ensure the social response to the current educational needs of the population.

Of course, as a condition of quality, independence, diversity, and recognition of what is inherently educational, I remark, in

Chapter 8, "Autonomy and Trust: Key Drivers for Continuous Improvement in Colombian Education", that educational institutions, in a shared responsibility, must focus on their commitment to social improvement from the genesis of populations.

This does not disregard the global context in which humanity finds itself, facing an undeniable reality: an opening beyond borders, along with new challenges arising from the massification of technology, the internet, and artificial intelligence. In Chapter 9, "Colombia's Role in Globalization, and Vice Versa", I analyze how this should become an opportunity to make the expected historical leap as a society.

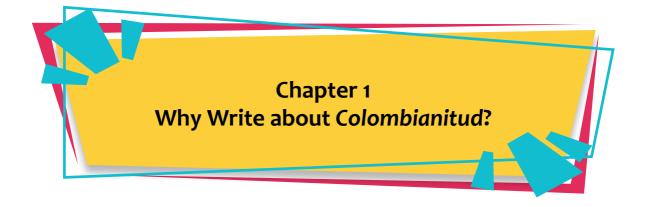
In a play on words, within Colombia's current political context but without engaging in politics, in Chapter 10, I discuss "The Passion for Well-Being and Vivir Sabroso (a concept referring to living in dignity, joy, and freedom)" to express how the desire to vivir sabroso should bring us together as a social collective, into a participatory nation that recognizes, in the flaws of its own history, the interest in building solidarity, equity, and peace, integrating the ethnic visions, cultural diversities of peoples, and races that today make up Colombian identity.

What has been analyzed so far should open the door, in Chapter 11, to what I call "The Collective Transition toward the Common Good", represented, among other actions, by the urgent need to respect and live out universal rights, grounded in ethics and in education that helps legitimize the state, a social construct for all, not just a few.

As I have done in my previous books, I conclude in Chapter 12 with "Final Thoughts while Enjoying a Delicious Colombian Coffee", where I recap the initiatives and commitments that we must undertake so that the Colombianitud described and longed for can regain its rightful place through education, and how a well-planned education system can guide our collective vision as a nation.

Finally, before moving on to the chapters, I would like to acknowledge the work of the team who assisted me throughout the long process of constructing this new text. The analytical and respectful group of leaders who supported my ideas and enriched the objective of this essay included: Francesc Pedro with his critical and futuristic prologue; Carlos Mario Lopera, María Paula Leal, Liliana Beltrán, and Katherine Cubides, who, with great cooperation and active commitment, helped me feel the satisfaction of having dedicated a necessary and productive time to the foundation that today gives life to this literary work. Likewise, I would like to acknowledge Luis Enrique Antolínez, who, under contract, created the caricatures of the Colombian presidents.

Once again, thank you for reading this essay, and I hope you read it all the way to the end, so we can later enjoy a delicious Colombian coffee together.



The text that I have worked on is based on the analysis of the ever-critical situation in our Colombia, which I summarize with the question that runs through this publication: Why are we jointly responsible for not making the minimum efforts to strengthen the development of this nation, which has not achieved social mobility to guarantee continuous progress, participatory democracy, and coexistence desired, and whose main structural root lies in insufficient and poor-quality education?

For the author of these lines, the structural weakness of our education system results from the historical deterioration of the socioeconomic and cultural structure, which was shaped by the state establishment and its limited vision of the country since its founding as a nation. The hope and expectation lie in the belief that only as policymakers and educators reclaim the national spirit, enhance its material and spiritual wealth, and empower the pride of being Colombian, will it be possible to build, through education, the country that present and future generations deserve.

I identify this *pride of being Colombian* with the term *Colombianitud*, a term not defined by the Royal Spanish Academy nor by the *Diccionario de Colombianismos*, but one which I would like the readers to share the meaning of, after reading this essay. *Colombianitud* is the inner strength, both personal and social, innate and common to those born in this country, that we carry imprinted in our spirit and that leads us to express, through our behavior, actions and thoughts, the harmony of the warmth of being Colombian. This has distinguished us by leaving a positive mark of our identity, but unfortunately, due to the criminal actions of a few over decades, it has deteriorated and has

fueled a widespread perception, across much of the world, that Colombians are synonymous with human slander.

I also argue that it will only be possible, through education, to "rescue" *Colombianitud* as a redemptive formula so that violence, the history of exclusion and inequality, and corruption—which have been endemic evils that accompanied thousands in previous generations and a large part of the current one—do not continue to define the imaginary of who we are. Only with right education, in keeping with our humanity and realities, will it be possible to redeem and restore our firm willingness to build a Colombia that aligns with who we are, not with the image imposed by "cartels" made up of a few who are part of a web of corruption and organized crime. The responsibility to walk the right path, with a rational and holistic view of our reality, leads me to recognize that today's Colombia has miserably succumbed to endemic violence and criminality.

This is a situation that, beyond some positive economic indicators², makes us question whether we are far from being the prosperous and equitable nation, with a thriving economy, which competes to be among the top five out of over 30 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as some politicians, writers, economists, or idealists have shown us. Due to the actions of a few, Colombians bear the burden of being labeled violent and

Despite governance conflicts at the national level, clashes between branches government, criminal violence, and infrastructure issues (roads, connectivity, and tourism, among others), Colombia remains a very attractive nation for foreign investment, with an active trade balance and key, dynamic sectors of the economy that generate employment (oil, coffee, flowers, textiles, manufacturing, and personal services...).

terrorist, when in reality, the vast majority of compatriots strive to strengthen a national identity based on ancestral values, on the sustenance earned through the sweat and intelligence of honest work, on respect for spiritual beliefs, on coexistence with others, and on valuing the life of others.

In 1992, the then-presidential candidate of the United States, Bill Clinton, defeated George Bush (the father) in the electoral contest. Part of his "success" was questioning the then-president's political actions with the phrase "It's the economy, stupid", referring to the fact that, for a nation like that, only its economic figures and achievements would matter. This is a good pill of the mentality of that nation; while financial indicators say a lot about a country's health, they do not reflect its spirit, its desires and, above all, the situation of those living in very basic conditions of survival and coexistence.

As a country, it does us no good to boast about being among the top 50 economies in the world (out of almost 200)³ when, for example, we rank at the bottom among OECD countries in reading, math, and science performance among our children and youth. This is simply a sign of the limited opportunities for our science and knowledge to give rise to the creation of a critical mass of scientists who, through rigorous work, will manage knowledge through applied research, innovation for appropriate technological development, and the promotion of an education system of the highest quality and relevance for all.

According to the International Monetary Fund, ranked 42nd in 2022; the World Bank, ranked 40th in 2020; and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, ranked 39th between 2000 and 2017.

To delve into the issue that I will develop, and to play with the words of former U.S. President Bill Clinton, instead of talking about the economy, I suggest changing the harsh statement "It's the economy, stupid," to "it's poverty, my friend, that speaks," which reflects the thirst for justice, knowledge, opportunities, food, and dignified work that the vast majority of Colombians are pleading for. Not even the ironic version according to which we are one of the happiest countries in the world serves to divert attention from the essence of a situation that directs its focus on the necessary appreciation of the fundamental principles of life and civic ethics.

This paradigmatic situation has led me to try to understand its causes. Thirty years ago, a foreign analyst structured a hypothesis that guides this writing. It is the masterful description of Harvard University professor (RIP), David Bushnell, in his work *The Making of Modern Colombia:* A Nation in Spite of Itself, in which, attempting to interpret the historical evolution of our homeland, with an objective, thorough, and rigorous treatise from pre-Columbian times to our recent present, he concluded that, while Colombians are resilient enough to be overwhelmed by our future, we have not yet found the keys that will lead to a radical and necessary transformation of our present.

Hence my interest in exploring why Colombia has not yet solved such unique structural issues compared to the rest of Latin American and Caribbean nations, which determine perceptions of what we are and some aspirations about what we should be.

We have suffered, and still suffer, from scourges such as drug trafficking and crime, unresolved peace processes, corruption in public administration, low international competitiveness, income inequality, cycles of economic growth and contraction without a clear direction, and low impact of policies and laws in each sector (such as, labor, pension, education and health), which generally limit the scarce progress and social impact needed for widespread well-being.

This complex scenario also includes the ineffective dynamics of a centralist power that has prevented greater and more competitive regional development. Traditionally, the national government, based in Bogotá, has not been assertive in its relations with the other regions and has not committed itself to the country's role on the global stage.

The Colombia that we must continue to build from now on should not be based on political agreements and *pupitrazos* gremiales (rubber-stamping) that, since the times before and after Simón Bolívar, have only sought to ensure the distribution of power among a few. It should emerge from the recognition of the country's solidarity-based identity, one that empowers all our children as tomorrow's transformative leaders.

Because the education system is the concretion of a history, of the roots of a nation, and of the vision of how citizens can be agents of change and social evolution. The strength or weakness of education is directly related to the strength of a nation. Beyond aspects such as infrastructure, content, teachers, students, grades, levels, titles, and budgets, the education system is the reflection of the spirit (dominant or dominated, conqueror conquered, innovative or repetitive, inspiring or apathetic), just as is the social system that welcomes it. To understand the heartbeat of a nation, it is enough to dissect its education system, and vice versa. To understand the quality of

that system, it is necessary to understand the historical-political and strategic choices of society and its vocation for progress as a social community.

Part of the anachronism of an education system that does not respond to what reality and modernity demand is rooted in the continued dominance of an ineffective education system that, in its orthodoxy (i.e., outdatedness), refuses to acknowledge its urgent need for change and adaptation to new times. This has led to an uncritical dependence on what scientifically and technologically advanced countries produce, where science and technology are supported by policies for their evolution and thus contribute significantly to their societies. An education system that adapts, reproduces, and repeats foreign models fosters the oblivion of native roots and values.

Unfortunately, today, the key actors in Colombia's education sector continue to repeat outdated models and even prophesize theories despite criticism and their inability to recognize their weaknesses in order to promote a genuine self-transformation of the institution. Although I lead a public higher education institution, I must acknowledge that many of these orthodox figures (or "blind" ones?) are part of public education, which should, in fact, be the institution that fosters well-being and provides an education that is a protagonist of order and social freedom, not—as is mostly the case now—an inciter of social disorder.

This is the heart of this book: On the one hand, it is a constructive criticism of the great irresponsibility of our education system, which has failed, despite over 200 years of existence in the history of the republic, to establish a frank dialogue among those of us who participate in it, both as representatives of state institutions

and as all other members of society. On the other hand, as the author, I hope that, once and for all, we learn and assume the role of leadership that is demanded of us so that education takes on the responsibility of forming children and young people as agents of a better society for the tomorrow that Colombia deserves.

This country needs educators who are committed to a vision based on transforming the present to project the future. If educators do not understand the need to change their practices to overcome the existing limited social dynamics, we will continue to be like static mimes in the face of the diverse decisive moments of a nation's history, one like Colombia, which needs to strengthen and consolidate its democracy. Yet, it has become numb when it comes to thinking, and especially acting, about our national future.

My view is more optimistic (although critical) than pessimistic, with a view to understanding why our society needs a forward-looking vision for Colombia, driven by the formation of its leaders in the academia, which will allow us to think of an inclusive project for all generations. This project would aim to seek equality and assume solidarity-based values and passion required to give value to science in all its forms, to strengthen diversity, to use applied technologies that serve as the basis for health, the economy, justice, the environment, art, culture, and ultimately, to create opportunities to transform and innovate in all sectors of society.

More than a critique of our history and our leaders, this text takes as its unit of analysis what some specialists call the "history of the future", that is, it starts from the traits of our human traceability from Prehistory, the Conquest, and the Spanish Colonial period,

and attempts to show from a self-critical (but not destructive) perspective who we are, and from there propose a simple idea of how, in the near future, we should strive to become much better human beings.

I do not seek to predict or guess the future. Throughout this text, I try to explain why the traits of the earliest communities and their social and political organization were affected by various governments—some poorly executed—and by an improperly conceived education system. To this end, I propose two premises, which as such must be falsified or verified by the reader at the end of this essay.

First premise: Due to its lack of concept and dynamism, the education sector has always been the one that has contributed the most to the reductionism that has hindered us from acting in a socially visionary and equitable manner.

Second premise: As a result of our failures as a society, particularly those of the education sector, new generations are increasingly losing pride in their Colombian nationality and largely despise having been born in this territory. This is because we have not been able to guide their moral riches, values, teachings, opportunities, and intelligence with pedagogies that strengthen the value of knowledge, the passion for knowledge, curiosity for research, and the love to defend and promote the other in solidarity.

Both hypotheses point to the need for a new education system or an education that is reformed or has a new vision of the country and its principles—that must do everything possible, and even the impossible, to ensure that Colombian nationality and spirit once again blossom in the minds and hearts of those who take pride in living *Colombianitud*.

For this reason, I analyze our diversity and regional specificities to illustrate how diverse idiosyncrasies form the basis for building and reconstituting ventures of significant impact in solving the historical problems of territories and micro-territories, as well as developing possibilities for the creation of associative businesses that add value to important community clusters.

This would require adopting a new stance in education—a commitment to bridging gaps in violence and understanding that the intellectual laziness in education, which for many has been almost invisible and imperceptible, is one of the main reasons why many generations of fellow countrymen have succumbed to an easy model, impregnated with mediocrity, which gives rise to widespread and multifaceted corruption.

We must rebel! We must look further, see the other edges of reality, and understand that peace, reflection, critical thinking, freedom of thought, dreams, and the possibility of self-actualization are possible—even in societies with a painful past like ours. That is why I speak of the "diversity of being Colombian" and how this should lead to an education that is not alienated.

Throughout each chapter of this essay, I make arguments that seek to explain how the majority's needs, still unmet despite more than 200 years of our history, present an opportunity to be overcome if we know how to take advantage of the great benefits that scientific knowledge and technologies offer in a world that invites us to decipher how to achieve efficient state

functioning in order to evolve Colombian society, as outlined in the 1991 Political Constitution.

I kindly warn, dear readers, that you will find broad sections of this text that depict the Colombian from the other side of the coin. This is the side of a friendly and humble people who express, in the best way of their ancestors, a great human warmth, inspired by kindness, respect, and service to others—qualities that many people from other countries recognize as typical of Colombians. Colombianitud, the title of this book, is given in honor of that attitude that differentiates us from other people in the world and that, in my opinion, should become an objective of formation of the educational institution.



Although Colombia chronologically achieved its original independence on July 20, 1810, and began its evolution as a nation on August 7, 1819, more than two centuries later, we still experience deep social inequalities that resist being resolved. What are the causes? The answers may be countless, but for the purposes of this writing, they could be found in a worrying accumulated deficit in the management of a state that has not been effective, coupled with negligent collective attitudes deeply rooted in the social fabric of Colombian people.

To understand this, it is essential to go even further back in time, to the Spanish conquest, to begin unraveling which positive and negative characteristics we inherited culturally—not genetically—from our indigenous ancestors, as well as which, beyond the language, were the imprints left by Spaniards, the impacts of the forced introduction of African slavery to our continent, and particularly to our country.

Since then, our social behaviors have been forged, the analysis of which constitutes the starting point for attempting to find an explanation that could serve to verify or falsify some hypotheses about why we are the way we are and why we act as we do, and why we suffer or carry, as an indelible mark, attitudes that generate more violence when facing problems, putting aggression before dialogue.

All these nuances, typical of an ethnographic study, have allowed me to approach one of such diverse interpretations of the feelings and events of our society and, based on this, to ask and seek structural answers that, hopefully, will come urgently.

Our diverse being and actions have been shaped by the symbols and customs inherited from our indigenous ancestors, from the Spanish conquistadors, vassals and clergy, as well as the enslaved Black populations who arrived on this territory with their myths and beliefs. This could also help us understand why and how we are the way we are.

Moreover, the past and present of our social behaviors have been marked by endogamous characteristics specific to each of our regions. Part of these endogamies have been shaped by a weak impact of the education system, which has not responded to its expectations of providing comprehensive education. We have a distorted educational profile in our teachers, and both they and the students lack a clear understanding of where we are headed as a society.

As an educator, with four decades of experience, I constantly reflect positively on the collective attitude of Colombians, not as a genetic derivative, but as the overcoming and resilience of the spirit in the face of the historical absence of good education with purpose and rooted in values. This attitude of overcoming difficulties, even without the ability to diagnose and understand them, but to harmonize with a proactive sense and spiritual peace, is what gives meaning to the concept of Colombianitud.

Specialists from various disciplines (historians, sociologists, psychologists and psychiatrists) can generate rigorous debate on the topics listed. As an educator, I propose ten hypotheses or premises for analyzing the identity of those of us born in this country, and why, even today, after more than 200 years of republican history, we still cannot find the answer to how to build a more just, inclusive, and equitable society.

Because inclusion, solidarity, and quality of life are concepts that, in principle, should accompany the origin of social nature, yet the selfishness or ignorance of a few—whether they are governors, leaders, or politicians—led many to perceive them as an existential loss. It is easy to deduce that the interests of the country's leadership, throughout history, have been framed by the desire of those who have reproduced the reductionist view of national events.

Like a chemical mixture, personal gains (as opposed to social benefits), handouts, clientelism, and corruption have formed an indissoluble alloy with the leaders who, for ages, have taken advantage of the lack of discernment and critical thinking of the majority of civil society through political discourse.

We are faced with many unanswered questions that serve as references for analysis, but they are not the objective of this work. Whether the history or DNA of our ancestors has had an impact on the myopia we suffer from is not decisive for the purpose of this writing. Instead, the aim is to find the starting point of this tangled ineffectiveness of a mediocre education sector, held hostage by a teaching profession, which is itself held hostage by endogamous interests and union struggles that distort their objectives and end up dominating thousands of teachers, turning them into alienated activists who spread hopelessness and uncertainty in young students, who see their futures shaped away from constructive criticism and passion for science and technology.

The Inherited Imprint

We are the result of a mixture of indigenous ancestors who, in turn, were the result of Asian nomadism. We proudly inherited Afro roots, Hispanic mestizages, and to a lesser extent, particularly on the Northern Coast of the country, the legacy of Arab migrants. This symbiosis shaped the idiosyncrasy of the Colombian people, as well as, regionally, the characteristics of the *Paisa* (a person from Antioquia), the Andean, the Costeño (a person from the Caribbean region), the *Llanero* (a person from Llanos Orientales)... It even helps explain not only the great regional and national diversity but also, surely centuries later, a planetary society, such as the one masterfully described by Edgar Morin.

Unfortunately, violence became a habit for us, almost as though it were a process of spontaneous generation. One thing we can agree on, however, is that those born in Colombia, and in general in the other countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, were never the result of a previously conceived and planned process of education—either due to a lack of conscious interest from past leaders or to a marked absence of visionary leaders. Meanwhile, those few who proposed an important vision of collective future and had the courage to question social immobility and the ruling status quo were paralyzed by the accumulation of individualistic and poorly aggregated power on the part of a few.

Later, in Chapter 4, titled "The Warlike and Not Always Visionary or Supportive Legacy of Our Rulers" I will explain, taking as a reference the in-depth analysis of David Bushnell (2021), how, in the process of nation-building, several of our leaders copied, without remorse or major adjustments, laws, norms, and

legislative, economic, and educational models designed for other contexts, cultures, and social realities of countries such as Spain and France, denying us the conception of creative, pertinent, and intelligent development to build a state aligned with our own realities, problems, and opportunities.

Perhaps this is one of the factors explaining why our state policies have had little lasting impact, as they failed to be coherent or continuous. Throughout different periods of our history, with each new government and each ruler in turn, with few exceptions, it was as if we started from scratch rather than building on the work of the predecessor, advancing on what had been achieved, and learning from past failures. How many times have we repeated the same mistakes (horrors!), encouraging the syndrome of "learned helplessness" in millions of our citizens?

The same old Colombia. The nascent Gran Colombia, the New Granada, then the United States of Colombia, and today the Republic of Colombia, have been characterized by a culture of inequality, exclusion, and inequity. Instead of being overcome and eliminated, these scourges have grown stronger every day. It is as if, instead of being marked as undesirable behaviors, the imposition, arrogance, cult of forms, and ranks once represented by the Spanish warlords, Creole thugs, generals, and even landowners in countless fratricidal wars—wars that only sought to acquire treasures and properties that were later passed down to the dominant families—these negative imprints would have been indelibly stamped into our culture. The impact has been so profound that, even today, many do not consider it a purpose of life or social commitment to do something for future generations. Instead, they continue to perpetuate spaces that

generate hopelessness, violence, and social conflict, creating an endless cycle that strengthens immobility and social apathy.

We have failed in our approach to education, failing to define the right formative paths that could lead us to take pride in being Colombian and in our way of seeing and acting in life, based on key individual and collective behavioral values. Creating a genuine Colombian nationality in a clear and compelling way has been a complex, difficult, and often incomprehensible task, and it is becoming an increasingly challenging one.

The glaring imbalances in regions with communities neglected by an incapable, bureaucratic centralism are now reckoning with the blood spilled in a violence rooted after the expulsion of communities from their own territories, in learned hopelessness, and in the uncertainty that fuels more daily conflicts of all kinds, all with the common denominator of ignorance of the other, violation of their rights, and disregard for their duties.

This phenomenon has given rise to intolerance, abuse, injustice, an absurd protection of the underworld, and even the paradoxical recognition and rewards for corruption routes that are ironically denounced by the very corrupt individuals involved, who hide behind the cloaks of highly voted politicians. Through the microphones of the media, they insult the dignity of those proposing structural transformations. Colombia has long lived in a dialectical lack of communication and in a dreadful educational crisis that, paradoxically, deepens social inequalities.

To dream of and design a viable nation, it is vital to structurally correct the role of a state that does not forget and segregate its regions, which yearn for peaceful coexistence.

Is it Our Ancestors' Fault?

Should we "blame" these situations solely on our diverse origins, and on what Colombia is today and the way its inhabitants behave?

To answer this question, I would like to propose two hypotheses for you, dear reader, to analyze and draw your own conclusions.

First hypothesis: Before the meeting of the two worlds, our reality was also one of hopelessness, and our indigenous social groups lived together in inequitable and exclusionary human conditions, with little to no welfare.

The meeting of two worlds—the term used to describe the encounter between cultures following Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas in 1492 and the interaction between the Old World (Europe) and the New World (America)—was characterized by very different realities and customs, which degenerated into a reality marked by violence in all its forms, over reason, sanity, and dignity.

To provide some context, I would like to reference a few insightful contributions:

Studies by professor and anthropologist Langebaek (2021), referenced in his book Antes de Colombia: Los primeros 14 mil años, show how the societies that inhabited what is now Colombia were particularly agricultural, with diverse ways of life, including a differential approach to the natural resources available to them. Clearly, their vision of society and its forms were not comparable to the Western perspective of the Conquest, so two

very different worldviews emerged in the objective assessment of political and socioeconomic structures.

Historian Arias (2023), in ¿Otra historia de Colombia?, referred to how this land was initially seen as a mere stopover for migrants who, once they arrived, chose to settle as nomads. These lands witnessed how, while the few early enlightened Spaniards acted as "armed conquerors", the residents here greeted them with warmth, pleasure, and extreme naivety.

For these and other reasons, it cannot be objectively concluded that the version presented in history books is the sole truth, as the scenario of the time was not generated under the same parameters that would have allowed for a different valuation of the great ancestral legacy left by those who inhabited these lands for at least four thousand years before Columbus's arrival. It is unfortunate that we lack the studies and archaeological remains that civilizations like the Incas, Mayans, and Aztecs did have as historical evidence of their existence, which today, Peruvians, Guatemalans, and Mexicans proudly showcase.

Despite this, a new generation of historians and archaeologists from Colombia and other regions, with effort and thorough research, invite us to review with greater discernment the Spanish version of the work of the Spanish explorer, soldier, chronicler, and priest Juan de Castellanos, *Elegías de varones ilustres de Indias*, written through the ideological lens of medieval European society. In this regard, studies such as those of the beloved former director of the Gold Museum, Clara Isabel Botero, who left an incredible text on *El redescubrimiento del Pasado Prehistórico de Colombia* before her death, have demonstrated through archaeological evidence the ways in which our

indigenous ancestors exploited all kinds of resources, especially plants and minerals, in a clear demonstration of their civilization within a world that deeply respected the environment.

Perhaps one of the first evidences of human migration through our pre-Columbian Colombia, as David Bushnell (2021) states, could have been a route through the current department of Chocó, which lacked the appropriate climatic conditions to house our first inhabitants, unlike the area around the Sabana de Bogotá, near what is today the Salto del Tequendama in the department of Cundinamarca, where the first human settlements are believed to have taken place around 10,000 B.C. Bushnell also mentions more evolved cultures in the southern and northern regions of the country, the first in the region of San Agustín, today bordering Huila and Cauca, and the second in the north, with the presence of indigenous groups in the current departments of La Guajira, Magdalena, and Atlántico.

Bushnell (2021) points out how these native peoples left evidence of their mastery of goldsmithing and trade, reflected, among other things, in their constant exchange with other peoples in Mesoamerica and the renowned Inca Empire to the south. Even today, new evidence continues to emerge, demonstrating their ability to leverage indigenous knowledge to add social value to infrastructures that show their control over the riverbeds. This mastery allowed them to design arable terraces with irrigation and drainage systems for crops and food production, as well as for health, with pharmacopoeia techniques to treat diseases, and the management of fodder to extensively feed domestic animals.

They were also artisans skilled in textile production for their own needs and for trade. They knew how to hunt and fish for domestic use, manage water for irrigation and collective consumption, and build homes, all accompanied by rules of coexistence, with corresponding discipline and respect for authority. The concept of collective and solidarity-based well-being, including scenarios for festivals and sports with other cultures, were fully integrated into their way of life.

They developed safe mining techniques and expanded their territories over the long term, making them fertile, accompanied by an increasing population. These developments spread and were assimilated with similar languages known as Chibcha languages, which gradually evolved into the Muisca and Tairona cultures.

They also had various forms of authority and leadership, despite not having education systems comparable to those we know today. However, they were strict in teaching by example and emphasizing merit for those who excelled. They showed respect and loyalty to their leaders and honored and worshipped their gods, through whom they explained their worldview of what was devised and idealized, to give meaning to things, to what happened to them, and the need to give meaning to their existence, which was directly linked to Mother Earth, who provided them with health, food and the basic necessities for their well-being.

What a radically different scenario from the generalized and basic characterization that we were taught in our history classes, which have been standardized for schools since the colonial period!

There are frequent stories that characterize the Muisca and Tairona indigenous people without much documentary support, since they did not know writing. However, an objective reading of their historical trajectory awaits new archaeological and anthropological techniques that will provide greater precision about their true cultural, organizational, and institutional dynamics. It is likely that their social developments evolved after the Spanish conquest. It is well known, for example, that the inhabitants of what is now known as the Altiplano Cundiboyacense were especially devoted to their water sources and that in ceremonies to their gods, they deposited gold and precious stones as tokens of gratitude or requests. It is also known that they were farmers and textile experts, and that, unlike the cultures that inhabited the valleys of the current Sinú River, they did not develop engineering skills or knowledge to improve their way of life and to control the water sources near them, as did the tribes in northern Colombia.

Since the arrival of the Spanish at the end of the 15th century, especially through the clergy, a narrative was built from the perspective and interpretation of the conquerors. It was their deeds that dominated the story about the control over the territory and its inhabitants, mistakenly called "Indians" (our indigenous ancestors), allowing them to extend their power throughout Central and South America. In the territory that is now Colombia, the first expedition reached the La Guajira Peninsula eight years after the Spanish first set foot in the Americas. By then, except for Brazil, the Spanish had begun exploring what they called the New World, overpowering tribes in the process.

1492 is perhaps the most referenced date in history classes due to the arrival of *Genoese* Christopher Columbus in the Americas,

accompanied by a large group of former convicts who won their freedom in exchange for serving in Queen Isabella's expedition. He also brought Catholic clerics and missionaries who efficiently promoted, for better or for worse, the dogma of faith, and the "educational" discourse on evangelization. Unlike the Spanish colonial message, it is worth highlighting the stories of Juan de Castellanos (2007), who emphasized the simplicity and merits of the indigenous peoples. Juan de Castellanos (2007) holds a special place in our history for his transparent actions and his contribution to indigenous education. It is not coincidence that he is honored today for his fierce defense and denunciation of the inhumane treatment that several of his compatriots subjected to the indigenous peoples of pre-Hispanic Colombia.

However, there are prevailing simplistic ideas among those who described our ancestors despotically as "little Indians," wearing gold and precious stones as adornments, and for that reason, they became objects of further conquest by the Spanish. These narratives also mention the simple nature of the social organization of the indigenous peoples, sarcastically described as close to utter ignorance, portraying them as animals—beings far removed from the knowledge with which Europe and Asia were developing certain sciences and knowledge during that time.

In the list of occupants of the ships known as La Niña, La Pinta, and La Santamaría, it seems that on his first voyage, Columbus sailed without any educated or noble Spaniards, or at least without anyone trained in any discipline, except for the priests. He was accompanied by some aspiring merchant lords and a few "hidalgos" (noblemen), as those with no particular profession or income were called, but who shared dreams of adventure and

excessive ambition, aspiring for quick and easy wealth without taxation and noble titles that would grant them property rights, treasures, mines, land, and even slaves. This profile of "conquerors" faced a mistake in their navigation roadmap, and instead of reaching India, they landed here, becoming part of the "new Spanish elite."

Their fortune changed radically. Instead of a new route for trade with India, in Asia, they discovered an entire continent, from which they expropriated all kinds of wealth and made its inhabitants their vassals, laying the foundations for our future as a nation.

In 1510, the first settlement was founded by Vasco Núñez de Balboa and Martín Fernández de Enciso. It was Santa María la Antigua del Darién, which 15 years later became the current Santa Marta. Other cities followed: Cartagena in 1533, Popayán in 1535, Cali in 1536, Bogotá in 1539. Later came Tunja, Vélez, Mariquita, Honda, Ibagué, Pamplona, and hundreds more municipalities in what is now Colombia.

It was Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, under orders of King Philip V, who carried out the conquest of the New Kingdom of Granada (later Santafé de Bogotá) as one of the foundations of an empire that was born on the other side of the Atlantic. This empire would bring new areas of cultural domination, and in the name of evangelization, it created historical breaks with pre-Columbian cultures under the justification of imposing the conversion of the natives to Christianity, expressing the need to "end" the existing polytheism by considering it a diabolical expression. All of this justified acts of cruelty against the inhabitants of the

Americas (the "new" continent), so named in honor of the Italian cosmographer Amerigo Vespucci.

The magnitude of what was found in the Americas led to the creation of the political-administrative figure of the viceroy (or vicar of the king). Seventeen Spanish nobles governed the Kingdom of New Granada until 1819, with a break between 1723 and 1739 for financial reasons. For nearly three centuries, the viceroys traveled with their entourages, bringing new noblemen and enlightened lords who also held authority in the conquered and later colonized land. Violence and religion were the means of subjugation to accumulate and exploit, in the name of the kings of Spain, a geography that was largely seen as a prize to balance Spain's other wars with France and the Ottoman Empire (modern-day Turkey). To be honest, from that fateful time, we also inherited great legacies such as the Spanish language and the beauty and goodness of a culture that honors several Ibero-American nations.

By the 16th century, the population began to grow with *criollos*—descendants of Spaniards born here—who aspired to be recognized with noble titles to enjoy the honors of the Spanish nobility. In general, the *criollos* showed a submissive attitude in hopes of gaining reciprocity and the coveted royal charters that would grant them the same privileges as the representatives of the crown who had come from Spain; mestizos who managed to climb the social ladder could marry Spanish women.

According to the Colombian historian Nicolás Pernett, the famous *Memorial de Agravios* (Memorial of Grievances), written by Camilo Torres in the noble Santafé de Bogotá in 1809, was presented as a brave call for equality from the Spanish Americans

(or *criollos*) to the Spanish authorities. It constituted an essential contribution to the independence movement of those years, yet it was a cruel paradox of contradictions. Rather than grievances, the document contains praises, reparations, and apologies in advance to the king, to whom the most devoted loyalty was sworn. Historians from earlier times may have exaggerated and distorted the true value of the document.

For the reader's better understanding, I would like to share some excerpts from the Memorial de Agravios:

"America and Spain are two integral and constituent parts of the Spanish monarchy, and under this principle, and that of their mutual and common interests, there can never be sincere and fraternal love, except based on reciprocity and equality of rights."

"The Americas, sir, are not made up of foreigners to the Spanish nation. We are children, we are descendants of those who shed their blood to acquire these new domains for the Spanish crown; of those who extended its borders and gave it, in the political balance of Europe, a representation that it could not have had on its own. The conquered natives, now under Spanish domination, are very few, or virtually nonexistent, compared to the descendants of Europeans who today populate these rich possessions [...]"

"... So we must not deceive ourselves in this regard: We are as Spanish as the descendants

of Don Pelayo, and we are as deserving, for this reason, of the distinctions, privileges, and prerogatives of the rest of the nation, as those who emerged from the mountains, expelled the Moors, and successively populated the Peninsula; with this difference, if there is any, that our ancestors, as has been said, through unspeakable efforts and hardships, discovered, conquered, and populated this New World for Spain."

"Do not fear that the Americas will separate from you. They love and desire your union; but this is the only way to preserve it" [...]

[The above quotes were translated from the original Spanish text.]

Pernett (2022) invites us to understand history in order to stop celebrating as national heroes those who were not truly deserving, because they sacrificed the dignity of a people for the excessive ambition of crumbs of power, greater wealth, bureaucratic positions, and recognition in a classist interaction, shamelessly abandoning the independence struggle. It was not as we had been told and recorded in several classic books of Colombian history. Hopefully, young historians will soon begin to tell us the true history of a nation called Colombia.

Let us return to our ancestors. It can be concluded, even though there are few studies on this period of our history, that the pre-Columbian inhabitants, while not enlightened in the Western logic of the 16th century, had a very clear understanding of life, the value of existence, balance, and respect for nature. Simple axiologies, yet foundational for individual and collective behavior.

They carried out key tasks such as hunting, fishing, farming, harvesting, and gathering, as well as celebrating ceremonies to ask, beg, thank, and venerate their gods. According to their reading of the sky, they knew the exact times of the planet's translation and rotation, which helped them with their planting and the management of resources such as water. They were also skilled artisans with great talent for goldsmithing, through which they told their daily lives. In trade, they handled barter.

Up to this point, the reader might think that, as the author, I consider the indigenous people of this America to be a group marked only by virtues, but the truth is that, like any human conglomerate, and according to renowned researchers such as Felipe Arias Escobar in his book ¿Otra historia de Colombia?, our indigenous ancestors were also prone to the fragility of human nature, with serious tendencies toward violence, which they probably exercised to settle rivalries among themselves, with their leaders, and with their neighbors. In the name of their gods, some exercised violence and privileged machismo, killing each other under the influence of fermented corn drinks, succumbing to the thirst for revenge with their own or with their enemies, and even attacking each other over mundane matters. These experiences led them to collectively learn and seek justice, instead of physical force, as a means of conciliation. As far as we know, they were never fratricidal.

The description that Christopher Columbus himself provided of his discoveries in the Indies confirms what has been pointed out here. In his first letter about his discovery, addressed to Luis de Santángel, an official of the Kingdom of Castile who convinced Queen Isabella the Catholic to finance Columbus' voyage, he describes the way of life of the inhabitants he encountered. I reproduce part of the letter in its original writing:

> "The people of this island and of all the others that I have found and heard about, are all naked, both men and women, just as their mothers give birth to them, although some women cover a small part with a leaf of grass or a cotton cloth that they make for themselves. They have no iron, nor steel, nor weapons, nor are they inclined to use them, not because they lack physical skills or good stature, but because they are extremely fearful. They have no other weapons except the weapons of the reeds when they are with the seed, to which they attach a sharp stick at the end, and they do not dare to use them. It often happens that I send two or three men ashore to some village to talk, and they are met by a number of people who, upon seeing them, flee, not waiting for father or son; and this is not because any harm has been done to them; on the contrary, wherever I have been and have had conversation with them, I have given them everything I had, such as cloth and many other things, without receiving anything in return; yet they are so fearful. The truth is that, once they feel secure and lose this fear, they are so sincere and so generous with what they have that no one would believe it unless they saw it. They never say no to anything they have when someone asks for it; on the contrary, they offer it to the

person, showing such love that they would give their hearts. If they are given something, whether it is valuable or of little worth, any small thing, they receive it happily in whatever form it may come. I insisted that they should not be given such trivial things as pieces of broken bowls, pieces of broken glass, and ends of laces, although, when they got these things, they considered them the greatest treasure in the world. There was a sailor who traded a piece of gold worth two and a half castellanos for a lace, and others traded much more for things that were worth much less. They would give everything they had, even if it was just two or three gold castellanos or one or two arrobas of spun cotton, in exchange for new items. They would even take pieces of broken bows and barrels and give everything they had, like beasts. It seemed wrong to me, so I discouraged it and gave them many good, useful things that I carried with me, to win their affection, and beyond that, to help them become Christians and incline them to love and serve Their Highnesses and all the Castilian nation, and encourage them to share with us the things they have in abundance, which we need. They knew no idolatry, except that they all believe that strength and goodness come from heaven, and they firmly believed that I came from heaven with these ships and people, and in such a belief, they received me everywhere, after having lost their fear. And this does not come from ignorance, for they are people of very subtle intelligence and sailors who navigate all those

seas, and it is marvelous how well they understand everything. It is only because they had never seen people dressed nor such ships.

In all these islands, I did not see much difference in the appearance of the people, nor in their customs or language, except that they all understand each other, which is a very unique thing, for what I hope that Their Highnesses will decide to convert them to our holy faith, to which they are very inclined.

In all these islands, it seems to me that all men are content with one woman, and their chief or king is given up to twenty. The women seem to work harder than the men. Nor have I been able to understand whether they have their own property; it seemed to me that whatever one had, everyone shared, especially food.

In these islands, I have not found any monstrous men so far, as many thought, but rather they are all people of very nice appearance..."

[This excerpt was translated from the original Spanish text.]

The Spaniards, "Victims" of the Indigenous People?

I know that much of what has been said so far can generate mixed reactions, especially from those who consider that the Spanish Conquest allowed the pre-Columbian world to "find the light" and be saved. We are faced with a diverse array of versions of vents from periods that are difficult to document, with the logical absence of the key protagonists. Likewise, for the sake of supposed objectivity and intellectual ethics, it is not valid to ignore positions different from the one presented here.

To contextualize the first hypothesis that I am developing, I must also present the approach of researchers such as the Sevilleborn Esteban Mira Caballos (2023), who has dedicated his work to studying the Conquest. In his latest book *El Descubrimiento de Europa*, he mentions that, of the indigenous people brought to Spain shortly after Columbus's arrival, 95% were from the elite. According to Mira Caballos, "the conquest was agreed between the indigenous people and the Spaniards," and he recognizes that "history is a long road of corpses. Human beings are horrible. The strongest prevailed over the weakest."

He further points out, for example, that "the virulent strain of syphilis arrived in Spain from America, changing lifestyles. But medicinal plants to fight it also arrived, which were administered in Seville starting in 152." He also says that indigenous words were culturally adopted into Spanish (such as: tiburón [shark], piña [pineapple], tomate [tomato]), as well as gastronomy, since several traditional Spanish dishes were created with ingredients from the Indians, such as tomatoes and potatoes.

According to this historian, "we have that idea of the naïve indigenous person, and that is not true. As soon as they arrived in Europe, they set up client networks to help each other."

Most of what is described above corresponds to Mira Caballos's studies and his particular research experience with the indigenous peoples of the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and Peru. However, I want to make it clear that the pre-Columbian indigenous peoples, such as those from present-day Colombia, were not ignorant, warriors *per se*, or, brutish or lazy, as some accounts of the Conquest and Colonial periods have portrayed them. In fact, for the most part, they were naïve, especially when they thought that the invaders were demigods and, innocently, allowed their own genocide to take place.

I do not intend to label the early Spanish settlers, the indigenous ancestors, or those from other ethnic groups that emerged in this territory as "good" or "bad." Rather, the aim is to understand what kind of conditions existed to highlight the effects of the Conquest and the Colony in American lands in order to form a perspective on the moral valuation of these behaviors. This would help us understand the interests of both sides, rather than placing them in contradictory places in history, in an attempt to describe why we are the way we are.

At the same time, the Spanish migrants of that time placed great importance on their religious beliefs and the accumulation of noble titles to make their material wealth grow proportionally, not only in coins and land titles, but also in natural resources, mines, and even vacant land. For both purposes, they sought proximity to the nobility, as kings and those close to them were seen as representatives of God on earth.

An unfortunate legacy of those Spanish migrants was their ability to resort to corrupt practices to enrich themselves. This environment of exploitation, abuse, disrespect, and theft did not

allow for the structuring of an ethical environment, especially when the majority of the population, poor and uneducated due to lack of schooling, was misled in their common sense of peace and well-being, driven by the urgency of ensuring sustenance and meeting the demands of the wealthy Spaniards. These abuses led entire populations, uprooted, to flee to other regions, and also caused harm to the environment.

These events, although similar to those caused by the Spanish conquerors who arrived in our territory—and likely by the Portuguese who came to Brazil— were not the exception and had a clear interest in accumulating not only wealth but also in becoming masters of slaves, owners of salt mines and water sources, lords of farmland and gold and emerald mines and mines of any other type of precious metals that could be extracted in the name of the crown. Today, this phenomenon is spreading and intensifying, no longer driven by the will of an invading king, but by the lack of awareness of the aggressor *mafioso* and the incapacity generated by a poor education system.

Additionally, it should not be forgotten that from then on, African slaves were brought to Colombia, forcibly taken from the African continent due to the need for labor following the death of thousands of indigenous people whose populations had been reduced by war, disease, and pandemics. Even today, this scourge persists, and the Afro-Colombian population remains marginalized in terms of educational and social welfare opportunities, resulting in ongoing tensions in regions where they are the majority, trapped in conditions of life that are little different from those during the Colonial and Independence periods.

Another determining factor in the Conquest, the Colony, and the Independence was how the Catholic religious doctrine, which was propagated by priests and missionaries through sustained evangelizing rhetoric, was imposed. This, in a disturbing complicity with political power, was strengthened to be constitutionally established from 1886 to 1991 as the only dogma of faith in what is now called Colombia. This would not be negative if religion and politics had not been mixed in defense of partisan interests developed by Simón Bolívar and Francisco de Paula Santander themselves. This "alliance" gave rise to the so-called oligarchy. From the classes who knew how to read and write, religion was used to erroneously merge political power with the power of God, becoming a tool of oppression for a people fearful of the punishing god.

I think it is important to note that, as the author, I consider myself a Catholic and a fervent admirer of the concept of that infinitely powerful God described masterfully by the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza.

In the midst of the complex scenario I am describing, during those times there were also ethnic mixtures of whites with indigenous people or with blacks, resulting in mestizos, pardos, and zambos, and other ethnic mixtures that ended up being seen as forms of exclusion and inequality. Almost all of them became Catholics, enlightened by Spain, without leaving aside their ancestral beliefs. This dogma of faith had special emphasis on values integrated with the core beliefs of the indigenous people who inhabited each micro-territory and the territories of ancestral communities and societies, who were accumulating Afro-descendant, Raizal and Palenquero beliefs and rituals—

another ingredient that helped mark the differences between the regional idiosyncrasies that we have today.

This religious mixture determined some feudalist traits that left traces, helping to understand why Colombia's people are so pluri-ethnic, pluri-cultural, and pluri-religious. This is beyond the fact that for nearly five centuries there was clear participation from the Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy in agreements, explicit or tacit, with the State.

Respectfully, I must insist, dear reader, that you have likely come across studies and analyses of our Colombian history that are rather superficial, characterized by the chronological description of a multiplicity of events and conflicts generally generated in the defense of minority interests. These have been decisive sources for explaining, among other things, the reasons behind the current political violence. It cannot be ignored that throughout our history there have been—and continue to be—clear violations of the racial rights of ethnic groups and peasants, and that these were not properly or sufficiently documented. Even today, centuries later, it is the same populations that suffer displacement, driven by irregular armed groups who mercilessly force peasants, black communities, Afro-descendants, and indigenous populations off their territory.

These conflicts have been exacerbated by other phenomena that appeared in the 20th century, such as the drug and arms trafficking, which emerged in the 1970s and has since been aggravated by kidnapping, human trafficking and crime, perpetrated mafia cartels. Sadly, all of this creates a cocktail of hopelessness, especially in certain regions where the authority is often represented by illegal armed groups that apply their own

rules and disciplines, to the point of recruiting children to carry rifles. This perverse spiral of continuous violence dehumanizes and prevents the social evolution of a Colombia that wastes the wealth of talents, intelligence, and warmth of its indigenous populations in every territory and community.

We must loudly denounce it: our territories have become mass graves of families who, in the course of a fratricidal war, learned to bury their children, young people, and adults, but especially their dreams and hopes for a dignified life.

This perverse, indifferent, and hopeless culture has been sown in a country that, I insist, wastes its talents and intelligence to strengthen the beauty of tradition and the heritage of regional idiosyncrasies, which, despite everything, continue to strive to survive. What should be our greatest pride (being Colombian) is, unfortunately, gradually fading with time, weakening our identity and marking historical distances between what we should be as Colombians, with a clear national and cultural identity and the dark reality that seems insurmountable. Today this fatal legacy marks, for worse, what we really are and do, since the population is still unclear about the path forward, in a contradiction that serves more to widen social and educational gaps than to close them.

Second hypothesis (derived from the first): The education system established since the colonial period, with its rigid structure resistant to change, continues to impact us by reflecting the lack of comprehensive education and failure to adequately respond in a dynamic way to Colombia's evolution as a nation.

Today's Colombia can be conceived as a unique explanation of the decline of many values that should have been instilled, first within the family nucleus and later through educational institutions, to ensure the homogeneous rise of values such as coexistence, respect, discipline, and solidarity.

Reality confirms that, throughout our history, it has been difficult for governments and leaders to guide Colombia as a civilized nation.

As a result, today, the various skin colors and regional idiosyncrasies—from the dominant white to the indigenous, from the martyred Black to the suspicious mestizo—all children of the Colombia born from Spanish America, do not share sufficient fraternal affection for our national identity. On the contrary, and we have seen this with greater intensity in recent decades, there is a clear polarization that urgently calls upon new governments to create state policies that address structural problems, which I will detail later.

In another of my books, titled *Trabajo Inteligente Productivo TIP*, I approach this situation from an organizational perspective, and there I ask: Is there hope? I reiterate it here and answer with a categorical "of course". This country lives with two paradoxical and almost antagonistic realities: On the one hand, it faces the latent threat of ignorance of millions of citizens and, on the other, their intelligence and warmth. It is with intelligence that we can begin to correct the course, since intelligence, well-directed through education, is directly proportional to responding to the country's shortcomings. However, due to the lack of will to create long-term education policies that respond to the social demands that urgently need to be addressed, the country has not found

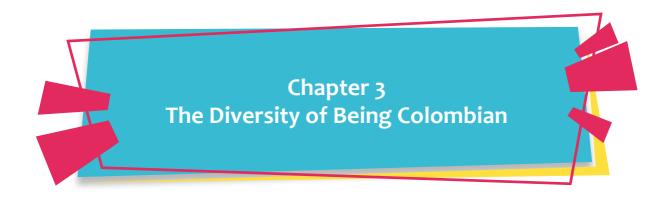
the political will, nor the laws and institutional mechanisms to make them a reality.

Unfortunately, and mostly due to inertia, our education system, which was shaped by the Spanish Colonialism, has contributed, more than any other sector, to strengthening chronic social imbalances, bolstering inconsistent positions in favor of the privileges of an elitist, classist, and racist minority in all kinds of regions and territorial communities.

For more than two centuries, political and social structures, including the education system, have been inert and subjected to particular interests, with populations in each region being mostly afflicted by the absence of a state that should provide and guide them. Even though the current Colombian socio-political system, shaped by the 1991 Political Constitution, promotes a participatory and active democracy, in practice it develops an orthodox and decadent vision, one that has never dared to be powerful in redesigning education.

For more than two centuries, there has been pseudo-education for humanity, widespread ignorance about the importance of existence, and wasted intelligence and talent from generations unable to access, relate to, or receive a quality education with proper coverage. Two centuries of productive waste and missed trade opportunities, aborted by the Manichean privilege of inequitable regional and international relations. Two centuries that, sadly, add up to the fact that we have not been able to establish a true democracy supported by decentralized networks of prosperous regions that enhance the common good, gradually gaining spaces of productive qualification to make the export of both our processed products and raw materials competitive,

which have always been economically depreciated and have limited our true competitiveness. Two centuries of little impact in providing products and services to other parts of the world, misguided by economic theories that have placed us in simplified historical contexts of underdevelopment. In short, two centuries of not overcoming economic thinking that distributes poverty, instead of one that would have allowed us to extend wealth and well-being to our fellow citizens.



So Many Beautiful Things, So Many Good People!

Colombia is a land of talents that sing, recite, and dance the beauty of life. Its name comes from the tribute that the Venezuelan precursor Francisco José Miranda always wanted to pay to the discoverer Christopher Columbus (Cristóbal Colón in Spanish), naming this land Colombia in honor of him—the country he dreamed of and even described with the yellow, blue, and red colors of our flag.

It has a northern arm in the Caribbean, along the Atlantic Ocean, where the skirts of its women are lifted and their hips lovingly invite us to dance cumbia, merengue, and vallenato; where arepas are filled with eggs and salty cheese soups are made; where fruits are sweeten with delicious flavors. Here, men and women both educated and self-taught, entrepreneurs, professionals, and leaders—live alongside thousands of others who know the sea and make the most of the sun on the paradisiacal beaches, where, with mischievous smiles, they enjoy selling handicrafts. These are people who know about agriculture and cattle farming in large savannahs, and who have been baptized with very special names, inherited from the indigenous Wayuu, Zenú, Kogi, Arhuacos, Tairona, and others who, through a variety of pre-Hispanic legacies and even Arab descendants, learned the value of honest and simple trade, as well as about cocadas (a coconutbased candy) that are exhibited on the heads of palenqueras, mulatto women with black hair, big smiles, and great grace.

Our country also has another great arm on the Pacific Ocean to the west, wild and deep, where people eat fish, manjar de azúcar y leche (caramelized milk), and energize themselves with

chontaduro. There, the kind-hearted people—white, mestizo, and dark-skinned—create, dance, and enjoy the rhythms of salsa, son, and currulao. Flowers walk through streets from a very young age to become tall women who, from generation to generation, transmit a phenotype of mischief, grace, and sweetness. It is also home to vast rivers, valleys, and mountains that extend across a territory with millenary ethnic groups such as the Tumaco and Calima.

In the center of our country, we enjoy Andean mountain ranges, where we can see dreamlike landscapes, birds, and wildlife, which are later described in social gatherings, and serenades are composed for them to the rhythm of pasillos, bambuco, and guabinas, while we eat bandeja paisa with beans, meat, and arepas and hot soups for the cold mountain weather, and delicious smells cook that, like potions for the palate, bring us closer to food as a source of flavors that strengthen our indigenous gastronomy. There, we also enjoy tamales with cheese and almojábanas, accompanied by the aroma of hot chocolate or agua de panela.

This Colombian territory, whose center, south, east, and west bear the legacy of tragic mining exploitation, also benefits from the wealth of its rivers, like the Orinoco, which join other tributaries in vast plains that lead to the Amazon, the lungs of the planet's living rainforest; a rainforest that, from Vichada, Putumayo, and Guaviare, rises to find the greatest biodiversity in the world.

This brief description tries to show our small piece of the Earth: Colombia, the land of green emeralds and beautiful women, is the second most populous country in South America, with over 50 million inhabitants.

This Colombia, which we have not yet fully learned to protect and defend collectively, is also remarkable for its cultural diversity. It is the second most ethnically diverse country in the world. Those of us who live here are not always aware that we are privileged to have been born in this beautiful land. Today, we are mostly mestizos, as a result of our ancestral indigenous and Afro heritage passed down from the time of the Spanish conquest, and we share an idiosyncratic identity with largely Basque colonial traits. All this history has rewarded us with a singular and wonderful human diversity, without forgetting the first Arab ancestry that settled along much of the Caribbean coast. For this reason, we come from a curious mixture that makes us a conglomerate of unique and overflowing human and cultural richness, a nation with an enormous diversity of population traits that are the result of the interconnection between native, European, and African indigenous people.

We are a country with diverse cultural and social characteristics, yet similar to others in Latin America. Mostly, and with pride, we are the pluri-ethnic Colombia that today represents this beautiful mixture of men and women who, spread across different territories, recreate cultural and idiosyncratic expressions that should fill us with pride and admiration.

The Troubled Inheritance of Conqueror, Colonial, and Liberator Generations

We also proudly inherited the Spanish language as part of our cultural traits, brought by several Spanish misfits who had no other option than prison, as well as by a European medieval Spanish lineage with multiple feudal tendencies that prevailed at that time. These people self-identified as "whites at the service of the monarchy" and called themselves señores hidalgos (noble gentlemen). Both prisoners and noblemen came to the Americas and found a unique opportunity to quickly satisfy their aspirations for freedom, wealth, and upward mobility into the reverent nobility of the time. A halo of superiority was created around them that prioritized their desires, and within the Americas particularly in the territory of present-day Colombia—these quasi-nobles interacted with the indigenous peoples first, later with their mestizo descendants, and also with other ethnic groups such as the Blacks. This mixture resulted in the creation of zambos and pardos. In short, spaces of organized coexistence such as villages, towns, and cities were built, always marked by a need for social climbing that still persists today due to the desire for power and governance, especially to consolidate material wealth.

I leave the following hypothesis to your consideration, dear reader, so that you falsify or verify it according to your criteria derived, among others, from the reading of this chapter.

Third hypothesis: As a nation, we have a negative balance due to insufficient ethical and moral formation. We succumbed to the cursed spiral of that desire for profit that has generated violence, hatred, anger, and deceit, all of which weaken our identity and

the opportunity for a basic level of social welfare for all, thus undermining the equity and equality that should represent our democracy.

From the days of the Conquest, it is easy to infer from the accounts of those who wrote them—especially priests and missionaries—that the Spanish presence was not really a discovery but rather a twist of fate. Later, during the colonial period, an immeasurable and still valid social division was created that we have not been able to overcome and, even less, to diminish in the face of ongoing political and economic resistance, arising from sociological and psychological tensions that create an unhealthy anxiety for the domination of material wealth at any cost.

The first expeditions of Spanish migrants to the Colombian Caribbean Coast date back to 1499, when they began to settle and establish populations, as happened in 1525, when the beautiful city of Santa Marta was founded, which, incidentally, became the oldest city in Colombia and the second oldest in South America⁴.

Before the Spanish arrival, as I previously mentioned, the Colombian territory was inhabited by indigenous peoples who, according to renowned scientists Gonzalo Correal and Thomas Van Der Hammen (1977), date back between 14,000 and 16,000 years B.C. They would have migrated from Asia and some regions of Oceania through the Bering Strait.

The first was Santa María de la Antigua del Darién, in what is now the Republic of Panama, in 1510.

Other studies indicate that, since then, indigenous groups were formed through a migratory process that initially colonized beaches, valleys, and plains, even exchanging agricultural species and animals among themselves. These were the ancestors of the Caribbean Indians, Zenú, Arawak, Tairona, Kogi, Wayuu, Motilon, Opon, Carare, Muisca, Chibcha, Pijao, Quimbaya, Embera-Katío, Pasto, Camentzá, Ticuna, Paeces, Sicuani, Panche, Coyaimas, Lilies, Sparrow, Andoque, Awa, Cuaiquer, Timíua, Chagwa, Charuro, Inga, Nasa, and many others.

It is estimated that there were more than 100 million inhabitants who, although not as famous as their neighbors in the Inca, Maya, and Aztec empires, would have reached an important level of culture and civilization, today recognized in their social organization as confederations of peoples. They had knowledge in many fields, such as goldsmithing, art, sports, and especially their agricultural techniques, water management, aqueducts, and drainage and irrigation systems, which connected towns through stone roads and wooden bridges.

The most powerful indigenous groups were formed by the union of different and geographically close tribes. At the time of the Spanish conquest, these tribes had markedly patriarchal customs. A study by the Presidencia de la República (Presidency of the Republic) (2008) highlights how some women without major physical attributes were despised because it was believed that "since they had no partner, they had little value as no one got involved with them." Men usually consumed a fermented corn alcohol (known as *chicha*), smoked tobacco, and slept in

cuencas⁵. It is known that they did not give greater material value to gold, although they did use it in offerings to their leaders and gods. It is worth remembering that "the legend of El Dorado" originated here, a myth based on the belief that, during the Muisca Indians' ceremonies, the cacique (chief), covered in gold dust and emeralds, would make offerings at the lagoon called Guatavita. The Spanish search for "El Dorado" led to the foundation of several settlements, which today are important cities in Colombia.

Stages of a Motherland with a Beautiful, Diverse, Intelligent, and Inequitable Daughter

Today, it is estimated that about three-quarters of Colombians have mestizo ancestry, and only 3% are direct descendants of indigenous peoples who strive to keep their traditions alive, particularly in the Caribbean region, Chocó, Cauca (with greater emphasis on the Andean part), and the territories of Vaupés, Vichada, and Amazonas. About 15% of the population is white, and the remaining 12% is Afro-Colombian. Although the current 1991 Political Constitution recognized *Raizal* communities to protect their rights, in practice, this has not had the social impact expected.

Colombia was left out of the great waves of immigrants from Europe, Asia, and the Americas in the late 19th and early 20th centuries who mainly settled in the United States, Canada,

⁵ Refers to hand-carved wood bowls used as pillows

Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, and Brazil. With few exceptions, most migrants who arrived in Colombia had Spanish origins, particularly from the south of Spain and a specific group in Antioquia.

Another factor to consider is the imbalance between men and women who arrived from Spain during the Conquest. Only about 10% of those who came to Colombia were women. In Antioquia, for example, 90% of paternal lineage originates from Spain, while 90% of maternal lineage comes from native women in that region of Colombia, according to a study published in the American Journal of Human Biology.

Another foundational group of Colombia's first settlers were African descendants. Enslaved Africans arrived in the country simultaneously with those who were brought to Europe. They worked in agriculture, mining, and domestic service, and were mistakenly regarded as a "luxury commodity". At least 250,000 slaves were brought to the Viceroyalty of New Granada, and Cartagena de Indias became one of the most important centers in Latin America and the Caribbean for this human trade⁶. It is also essential to remember the case of runaway slaves who founded the first free town in the Americas: San Basilio de Palenque (in present-day Bolívar Department) in 1713. There, the "criollo Palenquero" dialect, a mix of Spanish and African language elements and phonemes, is still spoken today.

For context, it is worth recalling the name San Pedro Claver S. J. (born Pere Claver Corberó), a Spanish Jesuit missionary and priest who worked for the dignified life of the slaves of the port of Cartagena in the 19th century.

The diversity of being Colombian implies recognizing what our country's first structure as a nation was. To understand the context, it is necessary to review the period between 1550 and 1810, a time defined by historical accounts as the Spanish Colonial era in the so-called New Granada. This was a social context marked by communities very different from one another, not only due to ethnic backgrounds but also due to the idiosyncratic and cultural traits of each.

However, all inhabitants depended on Spain, which created cultural clashes and economic development challenges between the descendants of the Spanish Conquest, new slaves, and the few indigenous people left after the Hispanic conquest. Part of this conflict was reflected in the struggle over gold, other minerals, and precious stones from Colombian lands and those of other Latin American and Caribbean countries, including Brazil, which economically supported the Spanish crown and its Eurasian wars. Prosperity favored only a few who had inherited the riches accumulated by the Spanish conquistadors, especially through property titles over large mines and tracts of land.

This situation persisted for nearly three centuries. The colonial economy was highly inequitable and revolved around the interaction between Spaniards, noble Creoles, peasants, indigenous people, and slaves working the land to provide food for villages and towns along the Magdalena River, then navigable and the main route for transporting goods to Spain.

For this territory, the highest political body created by the king was the *Real Audiencia de Santa Fe* (Royal Audience of Santa Fe), a body that organized commercial and financial transactions and sought to avoid conflicts in the conquered lands since 1492. From there, the *alcabala* tax (applicable to all commercial transactions)

was created, and the noble titles granted by the Crown also helped sustain the Catholic Church (through tithes), as its clergy acted as representatives of both the Crown and the Church.

In practice, the new rudimentary system was subject to acts of corruption. The geographical distance between the king and his newly conquered territories led royal officials to usurp their functions in such extensive territories, resulting in mismanagement of land, mines, and finances in general.

As ambition is both blind and deaf, the Spanish pseudo-colonial regime contemptuously increased taxes, creating social discontent and widening the gap between rulers and subjects. It also heightened political uncertainty following rebellions, which emerged with threats and constant forms of territorial uprisings. Had it not been for the intervention of the Church, these uprisings would have likely caused greater destabilization to Spanish political and economic power, probably before what is chronologically recorded. Let us remember that it was the king who appointed religious leaders, especially bishops, and it is worth noting that several viceroys had this double role, seeking to integrate communities in the face of the continuous threat of outright rebellion.

In this scenario, colonial society grew without much financial order. The new community was an aggregate of ethnic groups, never harmoniously articulated, while its most influential actors (the church and the king's *status quo*) took advantage to appropriate public offices and positions. Thus, colonial practices became poor imitations of the social practices that existed in Europe, which is why we can trace a significant part of the reason why we still behave this way today.

During these three centuries, conditions were woven that would eventually lead to the so-called First Cry of Independence in what is now Colombia. This movement was largely driven by the need to defend the economic and political interests of a minority of Creoles (the children of Spaniards born in this territory), and not only as we are taught in basic history books, influenced by the then vibrant ideology of Montesquieu, Rousseau, and other authors whose works were even banned by the Viceroyalty and the Catholic Church of the time.

We are the product of a diverse, beautiful, and colorful heritage, but also one that has been alienated by the ambition of those who seized control of the State. The result: a society that has not changed its attitude, merely observing the violence in all its forms with indifference, and which, adopting radical stances, develops an exacerbated interest in solving problems in a visceral way. We are the result of a society that, while capable of being equal, has fed on hatred, resentment, and revenge between leaders who served and continue to serve as a disastrous example for old and new generations.

The current Political Constitution recognizes autonomy and identity, but inherited practices that were never eradicated, along with institutional scenarios, have not been able to fully or duly exercise what this means and the benefits it entails.

We are a society that has never sufficiently valued education as a fundamental opportunity for social advancement for all. We are a society whose social, legal, and political construction failed to define its own course, frustrating to this day the dream of true independence as a prosperous, equitable, and sustainable nation.

We are a society whose leaders, for the most part, were never inspired to build an original state structure, because in that mental laziness that became a common place, the purpose of assuming with integrity, dedication, and intelligence the great challenges of a true democracy succumbed. In contrast, countries with fewer opportunities and resources, but with marked leadership, became scenarios of extended social prosperity.

Hundreds of generations of Colombians with frustrated talents have seen, with indifference, how our so-called leaders symbolized violence to teach people to silence their neighbors and brothers, to overwhelm families who were displaced from their lands by force, generating hunger, misery, and a collective contempt for authority, law, and justice.

We are a society in which wealth began to be distributed inequitably, and where the multiplication of land ownership, mining, and wealth from the subsoil was earned by force through war, as a trophy and reward after bloody battles—first against the Spaniards, and after their expulsion (following the liberation struggles) in the pointless wars of the so-called "Patria Boba", as well as through the comfortable distribution of land and mines, recovered and unexploited, by generals of the patriot armies.

⁷ The concept of "Patria Boba" (Foolish Fatherland) is attributed to the way Antonio Nariño ironically described the period between the Declaration of Independence (July 1810) and the beginning of the Spanish reconquest by Pablo Morillo (1815). By extension, the concept was inherited to refer to a country lacking clarity in its objectives and actions, with no vision for the future.

Chapter 4 The Warlike and Not Always Visionary or Supportive Legacy of Our Rulers

I must reiterate how what occurred in the Conquest and in the Colonial period significantly shaped much of our current social apathy. The voracity of the political parties and movements to which most leaders belonged translated into an obsession with seizing land and all types of resources from the national territory, for the benefit of their families, friends, and supporters of the centralist power.

This is still visible in a society that has failed to develop a rigorous policy for the equitable distribution of land and productive resources, and for this reason, it has not strengthened its agricultural vocation nor fostered the development of competitive and productive industries. This nation has succumbed to the interests of minorities aligned with each government; while they exponentially increase their wealth and ineffectiveness, the anguish over exclusion, poverty, and popular inequality continues to grow.

If there were better documented historical traceability of the pre-Columbian period, one could venture to conclude that before the Spanish Conquest, there was more social justice in the decisions made by the leaders of our indigenous ancestors, since they showed respect, awareness, and devotion to the value of land to which they worshipped, in the fury of a polytheism that created gods for protection and to thank those they believed would cover them and solve their daily needs and problems.

Now I intend to examine the characteristics of what I consider one of the roots of what we are today as a society, after the integration of the cultural ancestors of indigenous peoples and Africans, which gave rise to various cultural, idiosyncratic, and social forms, including a rule of law that faces the unconscious or conscious desire to violate or interpret the rules to one's convenience.

In the religious sphere, we must discuss the inherited Catholicism as a dogma of faith, which was mostly allied with those who led us since the Spanish arrival and who, in collusion, were part of the prevailing social hierarchy in each era. At that time, the minority enjoyed a kind of "divine absolution" while seizing lands and multiple material goods, creating a reality of feudalist lineage.

Disconnection of Leaders from the Nation's Expectations

From The Liberator, Simón Bolívar, and the presidents of the pre-independence era, to the current 21st century, and all those who have held this position have accumulated more despair and frustrations than lasting social benefits. As a negative balance, critical social awareness should make us feel a historical debt to current and future generations.

Economic policy and economics, to be successful, must be social. This implies a moral and ethical conception of wealth distribution that should reflect axiological values and greater commercial profits for the nation. However, it seems that those who should legislate to give meaning and inclusivity to the distribution of revenues and taxes have either forgotten or never considered the purpose of the laws they create and the destiny of public resources, which should have as their only goal the collective well-being of all members of the nation.

In addition to the above, we have also forgotten that for there to be social discipline, there must be rigor and objectivity in the application of rules and policies regarding the taxes that are paid.

Here, I propose a fourth hypothesis, which I suggest as a task for you, dear reader, to either falsify or verify:

Fourth hypothesis: The lack of vision of our leaders, especially a significant number of the more than one hundred presidents who have governed this nation, has contributed to shaping a hopeless reality. If we do not react now, we will continue to be trapped in the ideological, bureaucratic, and hereditary disdain for litigation and the distribution of goods and land, as a mockery of democracy—a theater where those in power intend to create and interpret laws and rules to suit their own interests, especially to defend the interests of their closest allies, party members, family, or friends.

Colombian Presidents (1810-2023)

The figure of "president" as the highest authority of the country has been officially recognized in Colombia since 1819, although the precursors to this highest office were already recorded in 1810. Since then, there have been heads of state elected by the Congress of the Republic or Supreme Board, presidents who arrived at the position through a coup d'état, by commission, designation, interim positions, triumvirates, or *juntas*, by self-designation, and since 1910, through popular election—except for the 1953 military coup. Several of them held the office for very short periods (some only lasted days, and others, even hours); others were rewarded for being friends and family members of

the omnipotent powerholders. There were even times when, due to geography and limitations in communications, two presidents served simultaneously.

According to the process of informative archaeology carried out for this book, to date, 81 leaders have formally been identified, whose official mandates, their time in office, and their administrations have historically earned them recognition. While nearly 30 others also acted as presidents at some point, the author of this book believes their roles as interim leaders or appointees, their short time in office, and their little influence on the country's political and historical development do not allow to define the cultural and social ideology of the nation, as outlined in the concept of *Colombianitud*. The pages that follow, with a color caricature design of the presidents, allow me to synthesize some of the achievements and characteristics of each government.

The list shows that many of the 19th-century presidents were military leaders of partisan conflict, while most of the 20th-century ones were political leaders from the liberal or conservative lineage. In the author's opinion, although it is likely that in all cases their initiatives were accompanied by good intentions, profound diagnoses, and interesting studies, with few exceptions, today we cannot boast of a great democratic legacy or claim that we have had a majority of statesman-like presidents.

Another common characteristic is that, for the most part, these presidents were obsessed with violence arising from partisan defense, personal vanity, the defense of property, and the tradition of oligarchies. But, with a few exceptions, few were

interested in extending social welfare to the majority of the population.

It should be noted that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the decisions of war and peace were protected in a particular ideological sense embodied in the figures of Francisco de Paula Santander, recognized by the liberals, and of El Libertador, Simón Bolívar, assumed as a reference of the conservatives, given his connotation of founding figures of Independence. Around his ideas and deeds, different traditions and dogmas were defended; fundamentally, what occurred was a division in the way of continuing to concentrate the exercise of political power in sectarianisms and family castes that, in the name of the bourgeoisie of each party, of the holy life and of those noble traditions inherited from feudalism rooted since colonial times, resulted in latent violence and periodic declarations of fratricidal wars.

As several historians demonstrate, the dissatisfaction of the peoples also led Colombia into a spiral of continuous violence, regardless of their motivations, whether to establish or reclaim new and old powers or to place and remove many presidents who, as idyllic saviors, ultimately became villains due to their limited capacity to exercise social and republican leadership. Today, we are the legacy of an anxious society, which overflowingly praises the incumbent ruler in the early months of their mandate and, paradoxically, soon after, he/she is condemned, sometimes unjustly, when the promises made during the campaign are not reflected in their decisions. This is because popular need and despair demand that genuine changes be made possible within limited and immediate times.

This story seeks to highlight those who contributed most to consolidating Colombia as a democratic nation; however, it does not overlook that, as occurred with the *Memorial de Agravios* (Memorial of Grievances) and the account of "el Grito de Independencia" (The Cry of Independence), which in the final analysis leaned more towards dependency. Aside from praises and submissive petitions to the king of Spain, it marked an ambivalent political style that was unfortunately rendered invisible in the majority of books that recount the history of our Republic, often tailored to various preferences. As a result, several of our presidents were called precursors of Independence, liberators, or outstanding men with an excess of praise and perks without always an objective assessment of their real achievements and merits.

Not all the so-called "Fathers of the Nation," both in the Executive and the Legislative, had the wisdom to cultivate the still unestablished and elusive social democracy. Almost all of them are usually recognized as great and illustrious figures of the past, eminences that were not always so, as various and new historians such as Felipe Arias Escobar, Nicolas Pernett, or Clara Isabel Botero, among others, propose today. Thanks to these analysts, we can become aware that our national history has not always been accurately told, and worse still, it has been wrongly spread to several generations. This leaves a sense of dissatisfaction due to the lack of sufficient and rigorous foundations regarding our historical development and the framework of our democratic genesis.

Retelling the History

Our true story is only now beginning to be told from a perspective that is more aligned with reality. The versions taught until now have generally been uncritical of the facts and circumstances, and worse still, they have rendered the errors of the past invisible, denying us the opportunity to learn from them. Our history has been told to us by authors of each era who generally inherited the bad habit of wanting to please everyone, lacking the rigor that defines true scientific knowledge and historical objectivity. For all these reasons, our history should be rewritten to free it from the fantastical and narrow perspective with which it has been presented to us. I take this opportunity to reiterate the valuable legacy left to us in his extensive bibliography on Colombia, David Bushnell (2021), as the best expression of a chronicle of history appropriated with rigor, which unfortunately remains incapable of being fully told by our national historians to this day.

Except for the fleeting interest of Francisco de Paula Santander in the genesis of the nation and those of some recent presidents of the republic, there is no explicit indication in the annual reports of each era that education was conceived as a structural unit for the creation, development, and consolidation of a national vision. The limited "good education" that existed and continues to exist was generally aimed at satisfying the needs of the power of a socially hegemonic class and reinforcing the religious traditions of the collusion, and only lightly and with little foresight was importance given to an extended education for all. From the nineteenth century and the first half of the 20th century, this was reflected in the interest of having an upper class, generally educated in Europe and the United States, a small middle class dedicated to meeting the requirements of

professions such as law and medicine, and an intermediate level of preparation with an emphasis on trades, for which public education was responsible. In other words, a quality education and relevant to everyone, according to their talents and merits, was unacceptable in the circles of power and social and political decisions.

To complete this educational deficiency, many of our presidents showed little interest in fostering a relevant educational system for the nation and its regions. Simón Bolívar is recognized for his selfeducation, as can be observed by examining his various trajectories, motivations, and academic inclinations; the same occurred with Francisco de Paula Santander, who, as The Liberator, had his own desire to satisfy academic, scientific, or literary motivations in accordance with the trends of the time. However, in contrast to these two great protagonists of Colombian Independence, there were also several dignitaries whose educational, moral, and ethical conditions were not noteworthy in history, either before or during their administrations. In reality, there are few presidents whose academic conditions marked their government's direction as true statesmen. The common denominator was a special interest in maintaining the advantages of a rigid classism, supported by a Manichean religious ethic, given the visible coexistence with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. This has allowed for the identification of a society that, in its beginnings, was more focused on the clerical than the civil and has weakened to such an extent that today neither is visible, a society in which few laws promoted

⁸ Its main expression has been the National Learning Service (SENA in Spanish), established in 1957.

the so-called democratic nation to be projected with a fundamental social emphasis, as was the constitutional will of 1991.

This has allowed for the identification of a society that is more clerical than civil, in which few laws promoted the projection of the so-called democratic nation with a fundamental social emphasis.

Costly and Risky Legacies

With most of the presidents, the world inherited from the Colony maintained a centralist continuity, defending minority interests and taking few actions in favor of the organization of productive and equitably distributed regional territories to guarantee the exploitation, transformation, and commercialization of all types of natural resources.

These legacies persist with internal struggles for the ownership of land and subsoil in each region. These continue to be a kind of feudal territory, given that the majority of the population has lacked, due to insufficient training and productive resources, the means to promote effective rural development, resulting in increased marginalization and despair in ethnic communities and among agricultural workers.

In those past times, we could not distance ourselves from the inherited submission and surrender to the representatives of external cultures considered superior, such as those of Europe and the United States. Unabashedly, our leaders copied norms and laws to shape the country; upon reading these regulations, it becomes clear that there was a predominant interest in

establishing a feudal and centralized country in Santa Fe de Bogota, from where the administrative, health, and judicial management for the entire nation was directed.

Another inherited disheartening factor was the recurrent violence as an expression of conflicts and wars that sought to impose the power of some over others. Today's Colombia is accompanied by social oppression against the large majorities, self-justified in the defense of supposed lineages and rights and goods attributed to large estates as the economic foundation. This dominance of vast tracts of land has allowed for the creation of social classes, as if they were castes, which, in a certain sense, maintain significant economic privileges inherited from birth rather than from merit.

Another unfortunate legacy is the bureaucracy instilled by the senior national and regional leaders. This gave way to an inefficient government apparatus, filled with officials from clientelism and cronyism, most of them inefficient and some of them corrupt. They arbitrarily assume their roles to defend their own stability, pay favors, and serve a few at the expense of the public interest. This resulted in accumulated inefficiencies in a state's work, originally created to ensure, with transparent and efficient management, the well-being that the State must provide in any of its sectors and manifestations.

La Patria Boba (The Foolish Fatherland) ... Even in the 20th Century

It was only in the early 1950s, following the great chaos and destruction caused by the so-called *Bogotazo* of 1948, triggered by the assassination of the liberal politician Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, that there began a rethinking of the vision of the nation, more due to political circumstances than through a planned exercise based on equitable democratic principles.

There, Colombia had a great opportunity to transform itself in all its dimensions, but as always, its leaders were mistaken in trying to merely put out fires in a global context where, at that time, the world was experiencing the Cold War, characterized by ideological, economic, political, military, and social tensions following the end of World War II in 1945 between the Western and Eastern blocs, led by the United States and the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, Colombia continued to experience the period known as *La Patria Boba*, initially between 1810 and 1819, but which has actually extended throughout much of our modern history. This period is characterized by a futile confrontation between clientelist proposals, enormous political disorganization, and anarchy among governments, citizens, and regions. Thus, instead of creating a relevant socio-economic model as many war-torn nations did, our leadership transitions spent their time arguing rather than debating which foreign ideological orientation would prevail: some turned to communism, others reinforced their conservative feudal capitalist role, while the liberals advocated for free market expression. These premises, accompanied by various practical interpretations, led to the creation of confused ideological expressions amidst which the guerrillas emerged,

self-justified as a popular response to the current government (referred to as "the establishment") and as a "defense" of the interests of the people. Thus, the public education sector was largely receptive to this phenomenon, and in the classrooms where normalists, professionals in various fields, and university teachers were trained, leaders for subversion and anarchy also began to emerge (particularly in the last decades of the twentieth century). This led some to take up arms and move to combat from the mountains, imbued with the ideas of Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Tse Tung's China. From there, various guerrilla movements originated, attempting to unite the humble workers and peasants around proposals that ultimately had more to do with rhetoric and the creation of social tension against the ruling classes than with a genuine desire for structural social transformation that would strengthen our democracy. This resulted in a social conflict and public order crisis that, over more than 50 years, has left an estimated balance of over 200,000 dead: compatriots from all sectors and social strata, remote regions, and diverse political orientations (both right and left), including leaders and social and union leaders, members of the security forces, guerrillas, paramilitaries, sectoral leaders, educators, presidential candidates or candidates for various state corporations, and civilians of all kinds.

In the 1960s, Colombia established a model of social stratification to determine the value of wealth based on the ownership of real estate. This antagonistic expression between the bourgeoisie and the people, as Marxism called it, once again captured attention and identified as enemies to defeat those who owned property titles and production goods. There were moments when a new industry emerged in a precarious manner, attempting to be

productive and increase surplus value in order to transcend the appropriated legacies of Colombia's Independence.

During those years, the urbanization of the country also occurred, a necessary phenomenon that, due to a lack of foresight, was implemented to the detriment of our essential condition as an agricultural country. With limited agrarian reform policies, the countryside rapidly deteriorated, leaving peasants filled with uncertainty about their future. Many of them were co-opted by the emerging guerrillas and by the hopeful discourse of equality. To this day, agrarian reform has never been implemented seriously or extensively, and the equitable distribution of land and the provision of means of production to transform the countryside into an agro-industry remain dreams that, although possible at some point, are currently in the hands of bureaucrats who, in my opinion, lack a clear understanding of the strategic pathways to restore these rights to the less favored social classes, including workers and peasants. In Colombia, we still have to build a publicprivate mission-action for equality and social inclusion to ensure the fundamental right to productive property for these rural inhabitants, many of whom are fleeing due to the expulsion from their territory or the lack of opportunities to live with dignity. Today's Colombia is the result of both colonial and modern traditions and betrayals, but above all, it reflects the appalling blindness of many of our leaders throughout the ages.

We've always thought small. Thus, our vision of the country, its economy, physical infrastructure, large-scale industrial and technological projects, and our immense possibilities to attract the world as a magnificent tourist destination have become obscured. We could transform ourselves into a special destination on the planet that draws foreigners seeking health, rest, joy, and

well-being and learning about respect for nature, as exemplified in the daily lives of the inhabitants of our beautiful Colombia.

If education is also conceived on a small scale, how can those who graduate from it think if they even manage to enter?

Indeed, we know how to overemphasize small achievements, our great battles in history, our revolutionary attempts such as those of "los Comuneros" and the thousands we see today in the streets, who have gained unusual prominence more for their acts of violence than for their intelligent proposals regarding the necessary authentic vision of a country that develops by taking advantage of the opportunities of human evolution expressed through knowledge, science, technology, research, and innovation.

Political movements hardly survive over time. Very few endure. Their existence is short-term; they are created to survive for a while. They are founded more on personal interests than on an ideological intention in favor of equality, inclusion, and equity. Political ties in Colombia emerge and disappear in proportion to their characteristics marked by individual opportunism, which, perhaps at some point, may have addressed specific situations in a social conglomerate but ultimately prove to be factors that, in the face of democratic weakness, represent superficial proposals against the real structural problems of communities and regions.

⁹ Revolt of the Comuneros consisted of the protest by inhabitants of the present-day municipality of El Socorro, in Santander, in 1781, against the tax measures of the Viceroyalty. The armed movement was quickly suppressed.

We optimistically observe how, throughout the twentieth century and into the current 21st century, many skilled and dedicated technicians, professional technologists, and specialists in various disciplines and fields of knowledge (doctors, lawyers, engineers, sociologists, administrators, historians, philosophers, architects, dentists, veterinarians, zootechnics, communicators, etc.) have been trained, although not as many as are needed, and even fewer are located in the regions where they are most required.

But we have also seen how pseudo-leaders of all kinds have emerged from various sectors of society, creating false illusions, many of which are the result of accumulated anger stemming from resentment. They have gradually transformed, with embellishments, the despotism, short-termism, and minimal options for progress that the so-called traditional parties, now anachronistic and devalued, created during their times of glory. These new movements and leaderships penetrate or create their own media and communication networks, which, supported by some informants who act as unethical journalists, take on the roles of Sanhedrin for social defense. They can also rightly be considered pseudo-enlightened despots of the present, as their conception of reality revolves around media scandal rather than what should be logical: their orientation to opinion where intelligence and citizen dignity are not addressed.

To this day, the ideal of a republic recognized for its serious and consolidated democratic trajectory has become worn out. Today's Colombia has become a defenseless nation, almost powerless, not due to a lack of intelligence but because of a lack of qualified, effective, and relevant holistic training for its leaders, officials, and citizens.

To conclude, today a new DNA of a majority despotic political generation is reproduced, with several leaders who, while seemingly enlightened, pretend to be sensitive to the needs of their fellow citizens and contemporaries, yet irresponsibly assume the functions that generate the legislative and executive powers, often obstructing or favoring, with their ironic and arrogant ignorance, the creation of new laws and their potential application as pseudo-policies of social order.

A New Ethical and Moral Vision of Leaders

We need more and more ethical leaders with a socially responsible and supportive spirit who understand that problems are solved by applying resources transparently and efficiently and that they are resolved where they originate: in the regions. Who understands that the country's wealth is to be distributed among all and not for the profit of a few and that being a citizen means, first and foremost, being a holistic person with values that should be shaped through a good education to help, in solidarity, overcome the condition of social stagnation. We must act in response to this condition before falling into social ruin, not only economic but, more seriously, moral, which does not contribute to social mobility.

With few exceptions, as can be seen in the reviews of the presidents, a good number of them acted on behalf of and in defense of their parties, which, with the programmatic failure of their ideas when put into practice, began to crumble amidst a crisis of ideological identity, hopefully to be rescued very soon. Since then, in recent decades, there has been a free rein given to the spontaneous creation of dozens of political movements and

factions that have defended the traditional accumulative scheme of power, misallocated resources, organizations, and goods for the benefit of a few, with limited impacts on public policies and inadequate services derived from programs and projects, always wrapped in polarizing activist language and discourses distant from effective actions; in other words, with few tangible results.

I insist that it will be unforgivable to deny this Colombia once again the opportunity to take a definitive step toward true social prosperity for all compatriots and to finally consolidate a state that fundamentally transforms the educational institutions where good citizens are formed, with all types of security, including financial, and that allows us to nurture transformative leadership in new leaders who prioritize collective well-being, equity, and social harmony.

In summary, today's Colombia has replaced the privileged classes with castes of leaders who thrive on deception and criminality, taking control of the nation and its regions, promoting lowimpact programs and projects, and minimal results of political and economic power represented by the growing, ineffective, and clientelist government bureaucracy, which contributes to the waste of public treasury funds and the management of privileges, even for recognized criminals. Few have ascended to Bolívar's throne due to the merits of their education and achievements, accompanied by a statesmanlike intelligence and supportive, enlightened, and pragmatic intelligence. Even in recent decades, power is held by individuals with great political acumen, who unfortunately keep us in periodic social uncertainties and have plunged us into a disjointed paralysis of effective democracy since the strategies and programs implemented still serve as expressions that continue to perpetuate chronic violence and latent social insecurity. Another aspect of this story must be acknowledged in capital letters: it has revealed extraordinary cases of hundreds of women and men who have devoted themselves to building a better country from their various sectors and regions, creating successful social impacts in science, politics, art, culture, education, sports, technology, literature, among others, which for history bring pride to the Colombianitud (Colombian identity) of our nation.

Our history should never have been whitewashed. But "there is no need to cry over spilt milk." What we need to focus on now is building new spaces for coexistence, fostering the growth of children and young people as integrated individuals, and laying the foundation for transformative leadership. They must understand the value of constructing a solid social and political evolution, leading a straightforward approach to education grounded in values such as respect, trust, discipline, and many others that contribute to being good human beings. It is about education influencing children as citizens of the future who must recognize the journey to make Colombia the nation of their dreams, which they will weave together with their minds and hands in solidarity. A homeland that can leave behind turbulent times, where wealth is shared, and justice always stands ready to guarantee security and social evolution.

Today's Colombia requires valuing its sociological condition and the guarantees of its psychological cohesion to understand that it is urgent to train new leaders who, once transformed, can be transformative. It must give way to the education of peasant and working populations to fill them with certainty and hope. If the children from these two population groups feel the deepest respect for their society, they will promote peaceful coexistence,

social action, and respect for authority, in contrast to the inaction and passivity reflected in the limited democratic participation throughout the existence of republican Colombia.

Today, Colombia needs to overcome historic duels of accumulated violence, the burden of despair, and the need for change in our economic and social structures. That, and I cannot emphasize it enough, starts with the restructuring of the educational sector, which is mired in nostalgia for a past that also failed to build. Hopefully, the necessary innovation in pedagogical and technological models will not fall behind, which will help us to get out of the limited educational social impact achieved so far.

What has been presented here about this history of dominance and manipulation by several of our politicians and leaders should serve to connect our history objectively with our present and with powerful dreams for the future that lead us to overcome inaction and bring out the best in ourselves, with the help of a good education. This will allow us to envision a country that enables our economy and society to be competitive in the global context, reducing the significant gaps identified, which we will address in the subsequent chapters of this book.

In short, it is about envisioning what true democracy will look like as projected in the Political Constitution of 1991, a path towards an ideal nation that should make every citizen proud. It is the tool for participation that collectively, as envisioned by its visionary builders, will allow us, with the help of education, to overcome structural problems marked by inequality with deeply supportive attitudes so that new generations can understand their true responsibility as creators of a visionary and prosperous path for the country.





Simón José Antonio de la Santísima Trinidad Bolívar Ponte y Palacios Blanco President

He will forever be known as the great liberator of Latin America. Simón Bolívar represents for humanity the symbol of a libertarian dream made reality, born from the necessary revolution in Hispanic America to reclaim its vital rights and human dignity. He set new limits in the challenge of transforming a man into a myth, transcending into the glory that only history grants to the greatest men and women of all time.

A decisive statesman in the independence of what are now Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador, Bolívar helped consolidate the Republic of Peru. He inspired Panama's final phase of independence, and his invaluable contributions led to his name being immortalized in the Republic of Bolivia.

His unfulfilled dream was Gran Colombia, the great nation that could have been but never was—perhaps due to the natural envy and human ambition of those who accompanied him as his main generals in the hundreds of battles he fought.

Born in Caracas, Bolívar was shaped by the experiences of his childhood. As an orphan, he was adopted by an enslaved Black woman, learning from her the values of equality and the necessity of freedom. His life and economic conditions allowed him to learn from valuable tutors who instilled in him the cause of his people's liberation. His experiences with European nobility and his admiration—mixed with frustration—for Napoleon Bonaparte helped solidify his ideals of independence.

He led the patriot armies and triumphed over the royalists in numerous battles. After several years of military conquests, he assumed the presidency of Gran Colombia. However, following the conflicts caused by his closest allies, his dream of integration among the nations of the nascent Latin American nations fractured. Bolívar endured humiliations to his dignity, as well as conspiracies against his life, leading him to withdraw in humility, leaving the presidency of Colombia to embark on a journey from which he would not return. He passed away on December 17, 1830, in Santa Marta.

Presidents in the History of Colombia

1



José Miguel Pey y Andrade President

The first president of Colombia and a criollo. he was appointed as acting president after serving as mayor of Santafé. He ordered the arrest of Viceroy Antonio Amar y Borbón and decreed the end of indigenous reserves in New Granada, allowing criollo landowners to acquire the best lands. He held the presidency on three occasions: between 1810 and 1811 (for 7 months), in 1815 (for 3 months), and in 1831 (for 3 days).



Jorge Tadeo Lozano de Peralta y González Manrique President

This military figure served as mayor of Santafé. He studied literature, philosophy, and medicine at the Colegio del Rosario, and trained in chemistry in Europe, which helped him play a key role in the Botanical Expedition. He helped finance the emancipation project but had to resign after Antonio Nariño's allegations regarding his financial management and some scandals of corruption and nepotism. He was executed by firing squad in 1816.



Antonio Amador José Nariño y Álvarez del Casal President

- From September 19, 1811, to September 23, 1811
 From December 24, 1811, to June 25, 1812

He is known as the Precursor of Independence, he spent many years imprisoned after translating the Declaration of the Rights of Man, promoting political culture by disseminating texts from his printing press and encouraging journalism. He also served as mayor of Santafé. He fought against the Spanish reconquest and led the defense of Pasto but was imprisoned again. He was also vice president under Simón Bolívar. He died of tuberculosis and bronchopneumonia at the age of 58.



Manuel Benito de Castro Arcava -President

A military officer, doctor, and novice of the Society of Jesus, where he studied theology, grammar, and philosophy. He served as the president of Cundinamarca during the temporary absence of President Antonio Nariño, of whom he was the chief advisor. He was also mayor of Santafé and faced significant criticism for his actions, which affected the quality of his administration.







Luis de Ayala y Vergara - President

From June 25, 1812, to August 8, 1812

He was a member of one of the wealthiest families in the new kingdom (divided between patriots and royalists) and a supporter of the independence efforts. He was the chief accountant of the Superior Court of Accounts. He shared the presidency for 42 days.



Camilo Torres y Tenorio President

• From October 27, 1812, to October 5, 1814

He was a lawyer from Popayán and the son of a Spaniard, he is known for his oratory as "The Word of the Revolution." He learned Latin, Greek, rhetoric, mathematics, philosophy, and theology. He was the most eminent lawyer of his time and immortalized himself with his "Memorial de Agravios." He led the federalists, who advocated for transforming the United Provinces into a federation, against the centralists led by Nariño, who wanted a unitary system from Santafé. He was captured and executed by Morillo's forces.



Manuel Bernardo Alvarez del Casal - President

From August 13, 1813, to December 12, 1814

He was a lawyer from the Colegio Mayor de San Bartolomé and a Neogranadine politician, he assumed the presidency of Cundinamarca in place of his nephew (Antonio Nariño) during the southern campaign. He developed highly controversial actions regarding the fate of the nation and was executed by firing squad under orders from Pablo Murillo



José Manuel Restrepo Vélez President

• From 1813 to 1814

Although he was not formally the president of Colombia, he served as president of the National Congress. This native of Antioquia held the position of Secretary of the Interior in the administrations of Bolívar and Santander, being the first to hold that office. From there, he was a pioneer in archiving, leading to the establishment of the General Archive of the country. He studied philosophy, botany, and law at the Colegio de San Bartolomé. In 1804, the Universidad Santo Tomás awarded him the title of bachelor in philosophy, and in 1809, he earned a doctorate in canon law.



Custodio Garcia Rovira Triunviro President

- From November 28, 1814, to March 28, 1815
 From June 22, 1816, to July 19, 1816
- He was a military leader from Bucaramanga, and a professor of mathematics, philosophy, metaphysics, and ethics. He served as the governor of Socorro. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in philosophy, a bachelor's in civil law, and a doctorate in theology from the Colegio Mayor de San Bartolomé. He studied music and painting as a bachelor in arts at the Colegio de Santo Tomás. He earned a doctorate in law, and the Royal Audience of Santafé de Bogotá admitted him as a lawyer. He led the patriot army after the defeat in Chitagá but was defeated in the Battle of Cachirí. He was accused of treason. sentenced to death by the Royalist War Council, and executed by firing squad.



Crisanto Valenzuela y Conde President

• From July 25, 1815, to August 17, 1815

A native of Santander, he studied at the Colegio Mayor de San Bartolomé, where he taught philosophy. He later graduated as a lawyer from the Universidad Santo Tomás. He served as a fiscal agent, secretary of the Senate, and secretary of State and Foreign Affairs for the General Government. The royalist forces executed him by firing squad for his involvement in the revolutionary process against Spain.



Manuel Rodríguez Torices -President

• From July 28, 1815, to August 17, 1819

A lawyer and journalist from Cartagena. He served as vice president to Camilo Torres. He played an active role in the independence of Cartagena, where he had been elected president of that state in 1812. In 1814, the Congress of the United Provinces of New Granada formed a triumvirate in the executive branch, consisting of Rodríguez Torices, Custodio García Rovira (replaced by Antonio Villavicencio), and José Miguel Pey. The Spanish reconquest condemned him to capital punishment and the confiscation of his property.



Antonio de Villavicencio y Verástegui President

• From August 17, 1815, to November 15, 1815

He was born in Quito. He studied at the Colegio Mayor de Nuestra Señora del Rosario in Santafé. He undertook military studies in Spain. He arrived in the New Kingdom of Granada sent by the Council of Regency of Spain to maintain royal authority in the American territories. Events surrounding his arrival contributed to the incident known as "El Florero de Llorente." Villavicencio then decided to embrace the patriot cause. When Custodio García Rovira resigned from his position in the triumvirate, Villavicencio was appointed in his place. In 1816, he was executed by firing squad by royalist troops.







Liborio Mejía Gutiérrez de Lara President

• From October 27, 1812, to October 5, 1814

At 24 years old and born in Rionegro, he became the youngest president to hold office. He studied at the Colegio Mayor de San Bartolomé in Bogotá from 1808 to 1812. He later moved to Medellín, where he taught philosophy at the then-called Colegio Provincial, now the Universidad de Antioquia. He was executed three months later during the Reconquest led by Pablo Murillo.



Simón José Antonio de la Santísima Trinidad Bolívar Ponte y Palacios Blanco President

• From September 21, 1819, to May 4, 1830

He is known as Simón Bolívar or the Liberator of America, he was a military leader and strategist crucial to the independence of present-day Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador. He helped consolidate the independence of Peru, inspired the final independence movement in Panama, and had Bolivia named in his honor. He is regarded as the architect of Gran Colombia. Born in Caracas, he was self-taught, and his European experiences shaped his independence ideals. He led the patriotic armies and achieved victory over royalists in glorious battles. After years of political and military triumphs and defeats, he chose to retire from the presidency and embarked on his last journey, passing away in Santa Marta.



Manuel Fernando Serrano Uribe President

From July 16, 1816, to September 16, 1816

A native of Santander, he was a military officer and a lawyer from the Universidad del Rosario. He served as governor of the province of Pamplona, wrote his constitution in 1815, and was president of the United Provinces of New Granada in 1816. He was overthrown by José Antonio Páez



Domingo de Caycedo y Sanz de Santamaría President

- From July 25, 1810, to April 1, 1811
- From July 28, 1815, to August 17, 18

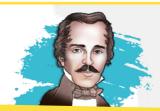
This native of Bogotá was a military officer, governor, and commander of Neiva. He served in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. He sanctioned the 1830 Constitution, which never took effect due to the dissolution of Gran Colombia. He was a lawyer from the Universidad del Rosario, where he eventually became Vice-President. He served as president and vice president 11 times between 1830 and 1841, making him the person to have held the office the most times. As President of the Council of Ministers, he assumed the presidency of the Republic in place of Bolívar after his resignation. He also served as Minister of Finance.



Joaquín Mariano de Mosquera-Figueroa y Arboleda-Salazar President

From June 13, 1830, to September 4, 1830

A jurist born in Popayán, he was a minister plenipotentiary in Peru, Chile, and Argentina, appointed by Simón Bolívar himself. He held the presidency twice: in 1830 and later, symbolically, in 1831. He was also vice president of New Granada during José Ignacio de Márquez's administration. He was a victim of a coup in 1830 led by Rafael Urdaneta. He attempted to stabilize the country's finances by lowering public officials' salaries and tried to prevent Ecuador's separation from Colombia, but his efforts ultimately failed. He was the brother of Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera and one of the signers of the act establishing the Universidad del Cauca.



Francisco José de Paula Santander Omaña - President

• From March 10, 1832, to April 1, 1837

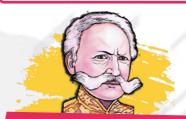
Born in Villa del Rosario. He is known as the Man of Laws. He studied at the Colegio Mayor de San Bartolomé and earned a law degree from the Universidad Santo Tomás. Alongside Bolívar, he is one of the key figures of Independence. He joined the patriotic ranks as a volunteer and rose to the rank of general. He served as vice president from 1819 to 1827 and president of the Republic of New Granada. He established the first public education system and promoted schools and universities with a liberal and secular spirit. This provoked a reaction from more moderate sectors, identified with Bolívar, that would become known as the Colombian Conservative Party. Santander is also considered a founder of the Liberal Party.



Rafael José Urdaneta Farías President

• From September 4, 1830, to April 30, 1831

A Venezuelan military leader considered one of the heroes of Venezuela's independence, he was nicknamed "the most loyal of all to Simón Bolívar." He assumed the presidency of Gran Colombia on Bolívar's behalf after the crisis that led to its dissolution into present-day Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela. Surrounded by supporters of Joaquín Mosquera (whom Urdaneta had overthrown), and with Bolívar deceased, Urdaneta was forced to resign.



José María Ramón Obando del Campo President

From November 23, 1831, to March 10, 1833 From April 1, 1853, to April 17, 1854

A native of Cauca, he was considered a founding member of the Liberal Party. He studied at the seminary in Popayán and the Universidad del Cauca. He served as vice president of the Republic of New Granada in 1831, during Santander's absence. In 1832, he sanctioned the Constitution that shaped the Republic of New Granada following the separation of Ecuador and Venezuela. During his second presidency, he sanctioned the 1853 Constitution, promoted federalism, abolished slavery, allowed religious freedom, and removed the legal status of the Church. He abandoned power due to a conspiracy. He was assassinated during the civil war of 1861 while attempting to overthrow the conservative government of Mariano Ospina Rodríguez.

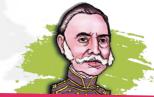






José Ignacio de Márquez Barreto President

A native of Boyacá and doctor of law, he is regarded as the first civilian president (elected by popular vote). He served as President of Congress, President of the Universidad de Boyacá, governor of Cundinamarca, and Minister of Finance. He was vice president under Santander. He launched his candidacy and surpassed José María Obando and Vicente Azuero. Congress elected him, and during his presidency, the War of the Supremos broke out after an order to suspend Catholic convents with fewer than eight members, which led to a revolt by the clergy. Márquez withdrew from politics and worked as a lawyer and university professor at the Universidad Nacional, as well as a Justice of the Supreme Court.



Martínez de Zaldúa Pedro Alcántara Herrán President

A native of Bogotá. He studied until the age of 13 before joining the army. Due to his connections with the Church and his involvement in the ministerial party, he is considered the first conservative politician in Colombian history. After the War of the Supremos, he was proposed as a candidate and, although he lost to the progressive candidate Vicente Azuero, Azuero did not achieve an absolute majority in the electoral colleges. Therefore, the Congress, dominated by the ministerialists, elected him as president. He promoted public primary education and established a confessional education model.



Tomás Cipriano Ignacio María de Mosquera-Figueroa y Arboleda-Salazar de Mosquera President

- From July 18, 1861, to February 4, 1863
 From February 10, 1863, to May 14, 1863
 From May 14, 1863, to January 29, 1864

- From February 29, 1864, to April 1, 1864From May 20, 1866, to May 12, 1867

A native of Cauca, who, despite not having a university degree, was self-taught in several languages. He was also a mathematician, geographer, physicist, and historian. He served as president of New Granada, the Granadine Confederation, and the United States of Colombia. He remains the only military president to serve four times. He broke

with the Conservative Party and aligned himself with the Liberal Party. He overthrew the conservative Mariano Ospina Rodríguez and governed as a dictator. With the Convention of Rionegro, he reduced the power of the Church and promoted federalism. He conducted the first census, established the metric system, promoted steam navigation on the Magdalena River, and constructed the National Capitol.





José Hilario López Valdez President

• From April 1, 1849, to April 1, 1853

A native of Cauca, he was a founding member of the Liberal Party and the first liberal president. With an extensive military career, he became president due to the division among conservatives and pressure from artisans and their democratic societies. He became famous for abolishing slavery, promoting agrarian reform, freedom of the press, federalization, the dissolution of indigenous reserves, and the separation of Church and State.



José Arsenio Vicente del Carmen de Obaldía y Orejuela President

• From December 4, 1854, to April 1, 1855

A lawyer born in Panama, he studied in Spain and later trained as a lawyer at the Universidad Central de Bogotá (now Universidad Nacional de Colombia). Before becoming president of New Granada, he supported an attempt to separate Panama from New Granada. He served as interim president seven times, replacing José Hilario López. After the overthrow of President Obando, he declared himself the interim president of the republic but was later removed by Congress. He subsequently served as president of the Sovereign State of Panama.



José María Dionisio Melo Ortiz President

• From April 17, 1854, to December 4, 1854

A Tolima-born military officer of indigenous origin and a member of the Colombian Liberal Party (currently identified with the left), he accompanied Simon Bolívar in many battles but later participated in the September Conspiracy against the Liberator, which led to his expulsion from Colombia. He sought asylum in Venezuela and was active in military conflicts in various countries. He overthrew President Obando and is considered by some to be the first popular president of Colombia. He was executed by firing squad in 1860. His remains are currently interred in Mexico.



Manuel María Ramón Mallarino Ibargüen President

• From April 17, 1854, to December 4, 185

A lawyer from the Universidad del Cauca, bom in Cali, he was one of the founders of the Conservative Party and its first president. He was appointed president by Congress after the dismissal of Obaldía to complete Obando's term. He served as a congressman, provincial governor, Foreign Minister, and national education secretary. He was also one of the founders of the Academia Colombiana de la Lengua, of which he was director. He reformed the education system and promoted libraries and museums. He unsuccessfully tried to return to the presidency in 1872.







Mariano Ospina Rodríguez President

From October 27, 1812, to October 5, 1814

Born in Guasca, Cundinamarca. He recognized as a founder of the Conservative Party. He served as a congressman for Antioquia, prefect of the Province of Antioquia, governor of Santa Fe de Bogotá, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of New Granada, Secretary of Education, and President of the Universidad de Antioquia. He was the first president elected by direct vote. Seeing a New Granada that, although centralized, allowed for federated states (Panama and Antioquia), he called for a constitutional reform, which created the Granadine Confederation, leading to a civil war. Ospina confronted Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera and was defeated. He abandoned the presidency and went into exile in Central America.



Juan José Nieto Gil President

• From October 27, 1812, to October 5, 1814

Bom in the province of Cartagena, he was the first and, to date, only Afro-descendant president of Colombia. A self-taught man, he was, in his youth, a sacristan and later became a Freemason. His presidency, aligned with the liberal party, was marked by a civil war and the fact that he was not democratically elected. He served as a member of the House of Representatives, governor, and the first constitutional president of the Sovereign State of Bolívar

Plural Executive Government: The Constituent Assembly of Rionegro, convened by President Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, appointed a plural executive to govern the country while the Constitution of 1863 was being drafted.





Froilán Largacha Hurtado President

• From February 1, 1863, to May 14, 1863

A native of Cauca, he served as Minister of Treasury and a Justice of the Supreme Court. He was a lawyer from the Universidad del Cauca, where he also served as Secretary General. He was also a parish judge in Popayán, civil and military chief of Cauca, and Attorney General of the Nation





Eustorgio Salgar President - Plural Executive

From February 1, 1863, to May 14, 1863 From April 1, 1870, to April 1, 1872

A lawyer from the Universidad Central de Bogotá (now Universidad Nacional de Colombia) and a general from Bogotá, he was a member of the Liberal Party. He governed the State of Santander. He is known as the "Gentleman President" due to his leadership during a period of flourishing of national culture and the consolidation of education, including the creation of normal schools for training Colombian teachers. He later served as Secretary of Finance and as Ambassador to the United States, from where he returned to serve as president again in 1870. He also promoted the Academia Colombiana de la Lengua



José María Rojas Garrido President

• From April 1, 1866, to May 20, 1866

A lawyer, he served as governor of Neiva, member of the House of Representatives, and plenipotentiary minister He became president for 50 days after Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera went into exile. He was the first designated president and is considered one of the best speakers in Colombian history. He stood out as a radical journalist, particularly in religious matters (he was a fierce opponent of Catholic dominance in Colombia), and as an eloquent speaker and active member of the Colombian Freemasonry.



José de los Santos Gutiérrez Prieto Plural Executive

- From February 1, 1863, to May 14, 1863
- From April 1, 1868, to December 20, 1868
- From January 2, 1869, to April 1, 1870

A lawyer from the Universidad Central de Bogotá, and a radical liberal military leader born in El Cocuy, Boyacá, he participated in the War of the Supremos and in the downfall of President Melo, eventually becoming commander of the army. He also served as president of the states of Boyacá and Cundinamarca. His presidency emphasized public education and the restoration of the San Bartolomé and El Rosario schools

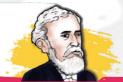


Manuel Murillo Toro President

- From April 1, 1864, to April 1, 1866
- From April 1, 1872, to April 1, 1874

From Chaparral (Tolima), this radical liberal served as a member of the House of Representatives, senator, Secretary of Finance, president of Santander, congressman for Cundinamarca, and twice as president of the United States of Colombia (after the Rionegro Convention). He also served as Foreign Minister and Secretary of Finance. He founded the Diario Oficial and brought the telegraph to the country. During his second presidency, he reduced both external and internal debt, promoted navigation on the Magdalena River, initiated the Buenaventura railroad, and introduced gas-powered street lighting in Bogotá.





Joaquin Riascos García President

From May 12, 1867, to June 28, 1867

A general born in Panama, he served as president for 47 days in the absence of Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera after he rejected Mosquera's decision to fully control the country by dissolving Congress. He served as deputy and president of the Sovereign State of Magdalena and as a senator and representative on several occasions. He died in combat at San Juan del Cesar.



Manuel María de los Santos Acosta Castillo President

• From June 28, 1867, to April 1, 1868

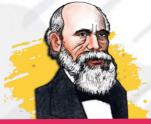
A military officer, doctor, and lawyer from Boyacá, he was a radical liberal. He graduated from the Colegio Mayor de Nuestra Señora del Rosario and the School of Medicine at the Colegio Nacional de Bogotá. He is considered a patron of culture. He served as president of the Colegio-Universidad de Boyacá, was a representative from Tunja in the National Congress of New Granada and was governor of Boyacá. During his administration, the Universidad Nacional de Colombia was founded, and he organized both the National Archive and the Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia.



Santiago Pérez Manosalva President

• From April 1, 1874, to April 1, 1876

He was born in Zipaquirá (Cundinamarca). A liberal, he was appointed to the presidency and later became president. He studied at the Colegio del Espíritu Santo, where he earned a law degree. In his inaugural speech, |he stated: "Instruction, morality, and wealth are the factors of the Republic." He initiated the construction of the Ferrocarril del Norte (Northern Railway) and promoted education. He also served as President of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia and Universidad Externado de Colombia.



José Bonifacio Aquileo Elías Parra Gómez President

• From April 1, 1876, to April 1, 1878

A liberal from Santander (Barichara). Selftaught man with basic schooling. He started as a merchant, accumulating a fortune.
During the civil war of 1854, he joined the troops of General Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera. He served as a deputy to the Bolívar Assembly and a member of the House of Representatives for Santander. He became the first president of Santander. His presidency focused on developing communications, specifically through the Ferrocarril del Norte (Northern Railway), and strengthening public and secular education.



Julián Trujillo Largacha President

A liberal from Popayán. He graduated as a lawyer from the Universidad del Cauca but was more involved in the military. He served as a state minister, member of the House of Representatives, governor of Cauca, civil chief, Secretary of Finance, senator, plenipotentiary minister in Ecuador, and military officer of the Sovereign State of Antioquia. He rose to the rank of general and was appointed Chief Inspector General of the Grand Army. He was elected president without any opposition, although he had to contend with the interests and conflicts between the political parties.



Francisco Javier Martínez de Zaldúa v Racines - President

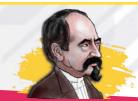
A lawyer and theologian, he was appointed vice president of the Colegio de San Bartolomé before completing his degree. This native of Bogotá served as president for only eight months, becoming the first Colombian president to die in office at the age of 70. He was a senator for Cundinamarca, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, a Justice of the Supreme Court, and a dedicated educator, which led him to serve as President of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia.



Rafael Wenceslao Núñez Moledo -President

- From May 14, 1863, to January 29, 1864From February 29, 1864, to April 1, 1864

A four-time president, he was from Cartagena, a diplomat, and a congressman. He led the Regeneration movement (or the return of conservatives to power), although he was originally a liberal. Due to his health issues, he repeatedly stepped down from office and governed through appointees. Under his leadership, the federal system of the United States of Colombia ended, as did the dominance of the radical liberal party. He promulgated the Constitution of 1886 (which remained in effect for over a century). He also wrote the lyrics to Colombia's national anthem and initiated the construction of the Panama Canal.



José Eusebio Otálora Martínez President

A liberal from Cundinamarca (Fómegue), he was appointed to complete the term of the late President Zaldúa. He was a lawyer from the Colegio Mayor de Nuestra Señora del Rosario. He served as a deputy in the Boyacá Assembly and as a member of the House of Representatives. He was also consul in Italy and Great Britain, Secretary of Finance, and president of the State of Boyacá





Ezequiel Hurtado Hurtado President

From April 1, 1884, to August 10, 1884

A liberal and lawyer from Cauca (Silvia), he was a distinguished military officer who participated in several Colombian civil wars. He served as a deputy in the Assembly of the State of Cauca and was its president. Subsequently, he was elected as a representative and senator to the Congress of the Republic. He assumed the position of First Designated President due to Rafael Núñez's delay in taking office. Despite acting as president in place of Núñez, he actively opposed his government and was exiled from Colombia.



Eliseo Payán Hurtado President

• From January 7, 1887, to June 4, 1887

A lawyer and military officer (general), this native of Cali assumed the presidency as the designated successor due to President Núñez's illness. He left office when Núñez returned to power but was elected again when Núñez resigned once more. However, Núñez reclaimed the presidency, accusing Payán of ties to radical liberals and exiling him. The critical stance against President Núñez became known as "Payanización," which led to the elimination of the vice-presidency, as it was deemed contrary to the president's authority



José María Campo Serrano President

- From April 1, 1886, to August 5, 1886
- From August 5, 1886, to January 7, 1887

Bom in Santa Marta, this general was the last president of the United States of Colombia and the first president of the Republic of Colombia. He served as a congressman and governor on several occasions of the Sovereign State of Magdalena, Attorney General, Secretary of Finance, and civil and military chief of Antioquia. He was appointed president by the Consejo Nacional Constituyente (National Constituent Council) to replace Núñez following his voluntary resignation. Campo promulgated the Constitution of 1886.



Carlos Holguín Mallarino President

- From August 7, 1888, to August 7, 1892
- From November 12, 1921, to August 7, 192

Born in Nóvita (Chocó), he was a Rosaristatrained lawyer who initiated the Conservative Hegemony. He was a journalist, writer, and newspaper editor. He was from an aristocratic family in Valle del Cauca. He served as Justice of the Supreme Court, congressman, senator, and plenipotentiary minister in England and Spain. As president, he also served as Minister of War and Foreign Minister. His brother, Jorge, also served as president, and his uncle, Manuel María Mallarino, had previously served as vice president and presidential candidate. Carlos Holguín introduced telephone and public lighting services in Bogotá and established the Policía Nacional (National Police). He also controversially handed over the Quimbaya treasure to the Queen of Spain without Congressional approval.



Miguel Antonio Caro President

- From April 1, 1886, to August 5, 1886
 From August 5, 1886, to January 7, 1885
- Miguel Antonio José Zolio Cayetano Andrés Avelino de las Mercedes Caro Tobar, a conservative from Bogotá, was the son of the writer José Eusebio Caro. Although he did not study formally, he was later awarded an honorary degree in Jurisprudence from universities in Mexico and Chile. He served as a congressman, president of the Council of State, vice president, and president. He also led the Academia de la Lengua. He had a significant influence on the 1886 Constitution, granting great power to the state and promoting Catholic values. In 1892, with the reelection of Núñez as president, Caro became his vice president. Due to Núñez's health complications, Caro assumed the presidency, and after Núñez's death, he extended his own



power.

José Manuel Marroquín Ricaurte President

From July 31, 1900, to August 7, 1904

A humanist and conservative journalist from Bogotá (although not a university graduate), he was recognized as a great writer of costumbrismo (a literary genre depicting everyday life and customs). He co-founded the Academia Colombiana de la Lengua. As vice president, he led a civic coup against his own presidential ticket and assumed power after a plot with political parties. During his administration, the Department of Panama separated from Colombia, the education system was organized into a school and university system, and the Academia Colombiana de Historia was founded. He also requested Pope Leo XIII to consecrate the country to the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus



Manuel Antonio Sanclemente President

• From August 7, 1898, to July 31, 1900

Born in Buga (Valle), he was a conservative lawyer (Universidad del Cauca), representative, senator, Secretary of Government and War, Justice of the Supreme Court, and governor of Cauca. He holds the record as the oldest president of Colombia, serving at 84 years of age. During his presidency, the Guerra de los Mil Días (Thousand Days' War) broke out, leading to his peaceful overthrow, the weakening of Colombia, and the loss of Panama.



José Gregorio Rafael Reyes Prieto President

• From August 7, 1904, to June 9, 1909

A conservative general from Santa Rosa de Viterbo (Boyacá), he fought in the Guerra de los Mil Días. He created Banco de la República (the Central Bank of Colombia) and the Ministry of Public Works and promoted the Girardot railway. As Congress failed to pass measures to resolve the country's financial crisis, he ordered the exile of political opponents, closed Congress, and created a National Constituent Assembly that defined a new territorial organization for the country. The separation of Panama and the agreements with the United States caused widespread public outrage, leading to several revolts that forced Reyes to hand over the presidency.







Jorge Holguín Mallarino President

- From April 1, 1886, to August 5, 1886
- From August 5, 1886, to January 7, 1887

From an aristocratic conservative family from Valle del Cauca, he was the nephew of Manuel María Mallarino and the brother of Carlos Holguín, both of whom were presidents during the period known as La Regeneración. In addition to being an industrialist, merchant, and self-taught, Holguín was a general who fought in several wars. He served as Minister of the Treasury, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Minister of War. When Reyes resigned, Holguín assumed the presidency as his designated successor, as he did again in 1921 after President Suárez's resignation. He handled the border dispute with Peru and took an interest in the construction of the Northern and Pacific railroads



Carlos Eugenio Restrepo Restrepo President

From August 4, 1910, to August 7, 1914

A lawyer from Antioquia, he was a moderate conservative, an opponent of Rafael Reyes, and a leader of the *Unión Republicana* (Republican Union), a movement created by liberals and conservatives. He served as Inspector of Public Instruction, Secretary of the Court, Superior Judge, Councilor of Medellín, Secretary of Government, Minister of the Interior, and Ambassador to the Holy See. He worked for the separation of the branches of government, the autonomy of the State from the Church, individual liberties, electoral transparency, and freedom of the press.



José Rafael Ramón Eufrasio de Jesús González Valencia - President

• From August 4, 1909, to August 7, 1910

Born in Chitagá (Norte de Santander), José Rafael Ramón, known as "El Bayardo," was a conservative who participated in the *Guerra de los Mil Días*. He served as Minister of War and Vice President. He introduced a reform to the Constitution of 1886, which abolished the death penalty, established direct voting for the presidential election every four years, and created the departments of Valle del Cauca, Atlántico, and Norte de Santander.



José Vicente Concha Ferreira President

• From August 7, 1914, to August 7, 1918

José Vicente Concha was a conservative lawyer, journalist, and speaker from Bogotá. He served as a senator, Minister of War, and ambassador to the United States. During his presidency, Colombia faced a devastating winter and a locust plague. He rejected international loans to preserve the country's sovereignty, maintaining Colombia's neutral stance during World War I. He resumed several infrastructure projects, including railroads, the Capitol building, and the telegraph line with Caquetá, as well as the one connecting Bogotá with Arauca. He also negotiated the border line with Ecuador.



Marco Fidel Suárez President

• From August 7, 1918, to November 11, 1921

Born in Bello (Antioquia) into a very humble family, this conservative studied various subjects, including Latin, philosophy, sacred scripture, canon law, and theology. He was a teacher by profession. Although he initially aspired to become a priest, he ultimately joined the military. He served as Colombia's Minister of Foreign Affairs in three different administrations. During his presidency, he promoted aviation by founding the company SCADTA (today Avianca) and laid the foundation for the creation of the Colombian Air Force. He was forced to resign after sending a letter to the U.S. government requesting the removal of Alfonso López Pumarejo and Luis Samper Sordo from their positions at American Mercantile Bank. After his resignation, General Carlos Holguín took over the presidency for the remaining nine months of his term.



Pedro Nel Ignacio Tomás de VillanuevaOspina Vásquez President

From August 7, 1922, to August 7, 1926

The first engineer president of Colombia, he was born in Bogotá. A conservative and coffee businessman, he also had interests in mining and livestock. He was the son of Mariano Ospina Rodríguez. In addition to his entrepreneurial activities, he was a military officer and Minister of Defense. He co-founded the Escuela Nacional de Minas (National School of Mines) with his brother Tulio, which is now the Faculty of Mines at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, where he also served as president. During his presidency, the Office of the Comptroller General of Colombia was created, as well as the Banco Agrario Hipotecario (Agrarian and Mortgage Bank), the Ferrocarril del Pacífico (Pacific Railway), and the Port of Buenaventura.



Miguel Abadía Méndez President

• From August 7, 1926, to August 7, 1930

Born in Tolima, he was a doctor of Law and Political Sciences from the Universidad del Rosario. He served in various political roles, including Minister of Public Instruction, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Government, War, and Postal and Telegraph Services, as well as a member of the State Council, Justice of the Supreme Court, ambassador, and member of the Academia de Jurisprudencia and Academia de la Lengua. During his presidency, he confronted the economic crisis caused by the global recession of 1929. He also handled border issues, founded the Federación de Cafeteros (Coffee Growers Federation), and inaugurated radio in the country. The Masacre de las Bananeras (Banana Massacre) occurred during his administration. He was the last president of the Hegemonía Conservadora (Conservative Hegemony).



Enrique Olaya Herrera President

• From August 7, 1930, to August 7, 1934

Born in Guateque (Boyacá), he studied law at the Universidad Libre and sociology in Belgium. He participated in the Guerra de los Mil Días. Olaya served as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Agriculture, Chancellor, and ambassador to the United States. During his presidency, he faced a severe economic crisis and a conflict with Peru. He promoted industrial development, constructed roads, ports, and railways, and supported education and teaching. He founded the Banco Central Hipotecario (Central Mortgage Bank) and initiated the Hegemonía Liberal (Liberal Hegemony), which focused on social reforms to improve workers' conditions and public welfare.





Alfonso López Pumarejo - President

• From October 27, 1812, to October 5, 1814

Born in Honda (Tolima), he studied finance and economics abroad. He served as a member of the House of Representatives. In 1936, he implemented a reform that reshaped labor relations, taxation, and agrarian reform. He supported labor unions and guaranteed the right to strike. He also strengthened the Universidad Nacional de Colombia campus. His second term was marked by an economic crisis due to World War II. Faced with political opposition, divisions within the Liberal Party, and the ill health of his wife, López resigned. However, a workers' strike forced him to return to office. In 1945, he introduced another reform granting citizenship to women (without voting rights) and prohibiting military voting, among other changes.



Dario Echandia Olaya - President

From October 19, 1942, to May 16, 1945

Bom in Chaparral (Tolima), he was a lawyer from the Universidad del Rosario and a recognized humanist. He served as a deputy in the Tolima Assembly, a member of the Dirección Nacional Liberal (National Liberal Directorate), a senator, and a member of the House of Representatives. He was also Minister of the Interior three times and Minister of Education, as well as Designated President and Minister of Foreign Affairs. After the military coup against President López in Pasto, Echandía intervened at the presidential palace, and once authorized by the Council of State, he assumed the presidency and was recognized by the troops.



Eduardo Santos Montejo President

• From August 7, 1938, to August 7, 1942

He was a journalist and politician from Bogotá, a descendant of the independence heroine Antonia Santos. He earned his degree in Law and Political Science from the Universidad Nacional and specialized in Literature and Sociology in Paris. Santos purchased the El Tiempo newspaper, where he pursued journalism. He served as the Republic's Foreign Minister, a delegate to the League of Nations Assembly, a plenipotentiary minister, and an extraordinary ambassador to all European governments. He was also a municipal councilor in Bogotá, governor of Santander, a deputy to the Cundinamarca Assembly, a member of the House of Representatives, and twice president of the Senate.



Alberto Lleras Camargo President

Born in Bogotá, he studied political science at

From August 7, 1945, to August 7, 1946 From August 7, 1958, to August 7, 1967

the Universidad del Rosario and Universidad Externado but did not graduate. He received honorary doctorates from Harvard, Princeton, Columbia, Johns Hopkins, Georgetown, California, Universidad del Cauca, and Universidad de Antioquia. Lleras served as a congressman, Minister of Education, Interior, and Foreign Affairs, ambassador to the United States, Secretary-General of the OAS, and Designated President. He was also the President of the Universidad de los Andes. He worked as a journalist in various mass media outlets. Following a decade of liberal-conservative violence, he became the first president of the Frente Nacional (National Front).



Luis Mariano Ospina Pérez President

• From October 19, 1946, to May 16, 1950

Born in Honda (Tolima), he studied finance and economics abroad. He served as a member of the House of Representatives. In 1936, he implemented a reform that reshaped labor relations, taxation, and agrarian reform. He supported labor unions and guaranteed the right to strike. He also strengthened the campus of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. His second term was marked by an economic crisis due to World War II. Faced with political opposition, divisions within the Liberal Party, and the ill health of his wife, Ospina resigned. However, a workers' strike forced him to return to office. In 1945, he introduced another reform granting citizenship to women (without voting rights) and prohibiting military voting, among other changes.



Laureano Eleuterio Gómez Castro - President

• From October 27, 1812, to October 5, 1814

Laureano Gómez was a journalist and diplomat from Bogotá, known for his strong defense of conservatism. He was known as "the Tempestuous Man," "the Monster," and "the Basilisk." An active member of religious associations, he studied civil engineering at Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Gómez served as a deputy in the Assemblies of Cundinamarca, Santander, and Antioquia, a member of the House of Representatives, and a senator. He also held the positions of Minister of Public Works and Minister of Foreign Affairs. He convened a National Constituent Assembly and initiated various civil works. However, after suffering a heart attack, he was forced to retire from the presidency.



Roberto Urdaneta Arbeláez President

From November 5, 1951, to June 13, 1953

A conservative from Bogotá, the son of General Urdaneta. He studied Law and Social Sciences at the Universidad de Deusto and graduated from Universidad Nacional. He presided over the Bogotá City Council and the Cundinamarca Assembly. Urdaneta was a member of the House of Representatives, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of the Interior, Minister of War, and ambassador to Peru. He also directed several newspapers. He became president following Laureano Gómez's retirement. His main challenge was seeking peace amid political violence and guerrilla movements. He promoted public works, housing construction, and supporting small and medium-sized industries.

Military Government Junta

A collective body that governed Colombia after Rojas Pinilla's departure. It was composed of five generals, and the Junta allowed the Liberal and Conservative parties to form a Frente Nacional (National Front), alternating the presidency, thus facilitating the transition from a military government to a democratic one. The generals in the Junta were: Gabriel París Gordillo, from Ibagué, and Minister of War; Deogracias Fonseca Espinosa, Director of the National Police; Rubén Piedrahíta Arango, Minister of Public Works; Rafael Navas Pardo, Commander

of the National Army; and Luis Ernesto Ordóñez Castillo, Director of the Colombian Intelligence Service.





Gustavo Rojas Pinilla - President

• From June 13, 1953, to May 10, 1957

Born in Tunja, he had a distinguished military career, eventually rising to the rank of general and commander of the Armed Forces. He studied civil engineering in the United States. He served as Minister of Post and Telegraph. Rojas Pinilla led a military coup against President Laureano Gómez.During his presidency, he strengthened popular and rural education, encouraging the establishment of the Escuelas Radiofónicas de Sutatenza (Sutatenza Radio Schools) and educational television. He created the Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA), a vocational training service, and promoted the construction of airports, including El Dorado and 18 others, as well as aqueducts, sewage systems, roads, and highways. He introduced television to the country and automated the telephone system. He also helped strengthen the Universidad Pedagógica de Colombia and granted political rights to women. However, a 10-day nationwide strike and the political crisis pressured him to step down from power and hand over the presidency to a Military Junta.



Carlos Lleras Restrepo President

From August 7, 1966, to August 7, 1970

A liberal from Bogotá, he was a lawyer from Universidad Nacional. He served as a deputy for Cundinamarca, secretary of government for Bogotá and Cundinamarca, senator, Speaker of the House of Representatives, as well as Comptroller General, Minister of Finance, director of El Tiempo newspaper, and presidential designate. During his presidency, he traveled across the country 96 times, promoted agrarian reform, abolished the free foreign exchange market, regulated foreign investment, introduced withholding taxes, and initiated the electrical interconnection project. He created the departments of Risaralda and Quindío and enacted a constitutional reform that allowed for the creation of the Fondo Nacional del Ahorro, the Instituto de Bienestar Familiar, Colciencias, Colcultura, Icfes, and Coldeportes.



Guillermo León Valencia Muñoz - President

From August 7, 1962, to August 7, 1966

He was born in Popayán, The son of the poet and politician Guillermo Valencia. He was a lawyer, senator, and ambassador to the United Nations and Spain. He received an honorary doctorate from Universidad del Cauca. Amidst political polarization, he meticulously balanced public offices between conservatives and liberals. During his presidency, he faced the student movement of 1965, which led to the declaration of a state of emergency and the president himself requesting the resignation of the President of the Universidad de Antioquia. He created the Monetary Board, devalued the Colombian peso, and introduced new taxes. Valencia also increased the education budget and promoted various public works projects.



Misael Eduardo Pastrana Borrero President

From August 7, 1970, to August 7, 1974

A conservative from Huila, Misael Pastrana was a lawyer from Universidad Javeriana (where he would later become the first dean of Economics). He was the last president of the Frente Nacional. He founded a newspaper in Neiva, served as a circuit judge and private secretary to President Mariano Ospina, and held various ministerial positions, including Minister of Development, Minister of Public Works, Minister of Finance, and Minister of the Interior. He also held several diplomatic positions. He specialized in Criminal Law in Rome. During his presidency, he initiated a system for partnerships in oil exploration, regulated foreign investment in banking, introduced the UPAC system (a system for housing credit), created the Banco de los Trabajadores (Bank of Workers), promoted various public works projects, and boosted the export of manufactured goods.



Alfonso López Michelsen President

• From August 7, 1974, to August 7, 1978

Son of former president López Pumarejo, he was born in Bogotá. A lawyer from Universidad del Rosario, he also studied in Santiago de Chile and Washington, D.C. He served as a counselor of Engativá, member of the House of Representatives, governor of César, and minister of Foreign Affairs. He founded the Revolutionary Liberal Movement. As president, he sought to "close the gap" between the countryside and the cities.

López Michelsen declared an economic emergency and implemented tax and fiscal reforms, created new administrative institutes, raised the minimum wage by 200%, recognized 1,100 labor unions, and built gas pipelines and oil pipelines. He also improved the country's energy capacity during a time when Colombia experienced a coffee boom.



Julio César Turbay Ayala - President

From August 7, 1978, to August 7, 1982

He was self-taught and born in Bogotá, the son of a Lebanese immigrant. He earned honorary doctorates from the Universidad Libre, Universidad del Rosario, Universidad del Cauca, and Universidad Tadeo Lozano. Turbay was the president of the Assembly of Cundinamarca and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. He was a five-time senator, ambassador to London, Minister of Mines and Petroleum, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and designated president. During his presidency, he focused on the energy sector, exploration of oil fields, and public works. He created the department of Caquetá, introduced color television, and broke diplomatic ties with Cuba. He introduced the controversial "Statute of Security" to combat subversion and drug trafficking and witnessed the emergence of the M-19 guerrilla group, including its takeover of the Dominican Republic Embassy.



Belisario Betancur Cuartas - President

• From October 27, 1812, to October 5, 1814

Born to a humble family from Amagá, Antioquia, this conservative figure was a lawyer at the Pontificia Universidad Bolivariana and earned an honorary degree in humanities from the University of Colorado and Georgetown University. He was a humanist, poet, and writer and served as a deputy to the Antioquia Assembly, a member of the House of Representatives, Minister of Labor, and ambassador to Spain. He founded the National Association of Financial Institutes, promoted the Contadora Group for peace in Central America, which earned him the Prince of Asturias Peace Prize, supported "no down payment" housing, supported the establishment of the Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD), and lad the Camina Campaign to promote mass literacy, and implemented tax amnesty.





Virgilio Barco Vargas - President

• From August 7, 1986, to August 7, 1990

A civil engineer from Cúcuta and a doctor in economics, he studied at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Boston University, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He was a counselor in Durania, Norte de Santander, and Cúcuta, a member of the House of Representatives, a multipleterm senator, a Minister of Public Works and Agriculture, and mayor of Bogotá. He served as Colombia's ambassador to the United Kingdom and the United States. He implemented a "government-opposition" model to overcome the bipartisanship system as president. He faced a wave of criminal activities, including guerrilla warfare, paramilitarism, and drug trafficking. He continued the Plan Nacional de Rehabilitación (National Rehabilitation Plan) and launched the Plan de Lucha contra la Pobreza (Poverty Alleviation Plan). He successfully negotiated a peace agreement with the M-19 group



César Augusto Gaviria -President

• From October 27, 1812, to October 5, 1814

An economist from the Universidad de los Andes and native of Pereira, Gaviria held positions as a counselor, member of the House of Representatives, vice minister of development, and Minister of Finance and Interior. When he was the campaign manager for the assassinated presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán, he was nominated as the Liberal Party's candidate and became president. He promoted the 1991 Constitution, which strengthened participatory democracy, created the Constitutional Court, the Attorney General's Office, the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman of Colombia, and the Superior Council for the Judiciary, and introduced the "acción de tutela" (writ for the protection of constitutional rights). He supported economic liberalization, established the Ministry of Foreign Trade, and led a strong state offensive against the drug cartels.



Ernesto Samper Pizano - President

From August 7, 1994, to August 7, 1998

Born to a wealthy family in Bogotá, he studied Law and Economics at the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, where he later became a professor. He served as president of ANIF (Colombia's National Association of Financial Institutions), extraordinary ambassador to the United Nations and Spain, a deputy to the Cundinamarca Assembly, a Bogotá councilor, senator, Minister of Economic Development, and a leader of the Liberal Party. His presidency was heavily affected by accusations of accepting illicit financial contributions from drug trafficking, most notably in the infamous "Proceso 8000" scandal. To counter this, he focused on combating drug trafficking cartels during his administration.



Andrés Pastrana Arango -President

• From August 7, 1998, to August 7, 2002

A native of Bogotá, he was the son of former President Misael Pastrana Borrero. He was a conservative lawyer from the Universidad del Rosario and completed postgraduate studies in Public Law and specialized studies at Harvard University. He was a TV presenter, Bogotá councilor, news and news magazine director, and a senator. He survived a kidnapping by the Medellín Cartel and became the first popularly elected mayor of Bogotá. Pastrana sought peace talks with guerrilla groups, although they were unsuccessful. He worked on security campaigns and anti-drug initiatives, privatized garbage collection, and faced terrorist violence from drug cartels. He also promoted Colombia's international presence.



Álvaro Uribe Vélez President

- From August 7, 2002, to August 6, 2006
- A lawyer from the Universidad de Antioquia, with studies at Harvard, born in Medellín. He began as a liberal and later became the leader of the right-wing after participating in various political movements. He served as mayor of Medellín, senator, and governor of Antioquia. His ideas on security and defense made him one of the most popular presidents, having significantly reduced insecurity indicators (kidnappings and homicides) and improved economic indicators. He was re-elected for a second term due to his approach to public order and his actions against guerrilla groups, drug trafficking, and paramilitary movements. The country's history will define his successes and achievements, as well as his political mistakes before and after his presidential



Juan Manuel Santos President

- From August 7, 2010, to August 6, 2014
- From August 7, 2014, to August 6, 2018

This economist is originally from a liberal background. He came from a traditional family that owned Colombia's most widely-read newspaper. After serving as Minister of Trade under César Gaviria, Minister of Finance under Andrés Pastrana, and Minister of Defense under Álvaro Uribe, Santos became president with Uribe's support; however, the two later distanced themselves, and Santos was reelected, defeating Uribe's candidate. For his negotiations with the FARC guerrilla (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) a signing of a controversial peace agreement, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2016, becoming the first Colombian president to receive the honor.



Iván Duque Márquez President

• From August 7, 2018, to August 7, 2022

A lawyer from the Universidad Sergio Arboleda, he is from Bogotá and the son of former Minister of Mines and former Governor of Antioquia, Iván Duque Escobar. Duque Márquez became president after serving as a senator and representative of former President Álvaro Uribe Vélez's political party, Centro Democrático Alternativo. He also represented Colombia at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Duque became the youngest president in Colombia's recent history. His presidency was marked by managing peace agreements with the guerrilla groups inherited from the previous government, the COVID-19 pandemic, and a violent national strike led by left-wing opposition groups against the government's announcement of a proposed tax reform. He also broke diplomatic ties with Venezuela.



Gustavo Francisco Petro Urrego President

• From August 7, 2022, to the present

Born in Ciénaga de Oro, Córdoba, Petro Urrego is Colombia's first president officially aligned with the political left, representing the Pacto Histórico movement after four attempts to reach the presidency. This economist from the Universidad Externado de Colombia was a former guerrilla member of the Movimiento 19 de abril, or simply M-19 (April 19 Movement), which demobilized and later transformed into the Alianza Democrática M-19 (M-19 Democratic Alliance). He served as a member of the House of Representatives and senator for the Polo Democrático Alternativo (PDA). He was also the mayor of Bogotá. His presidency has been marked by continuous controversy with Congress, the media, and business leaders, driven by his ideas to democratize the economy, increase subsidies, and nationalize public institutions and services.



Presidents in the History of Colombia

Presidents who have reached that position through a coup d'état, by appointment, by designation, by acting in an interim capacity, through triumvirates or juntas, by self-designation, and through popular election. However, as I previously mentioned, their roles as interim or acting presidents, their brief time in office, and their limited impact on the political and historical development of the country do not allow for the formation of a cultural and social thought and ideology of the country.



José Maria Arrubla Provisiona Governing Board from Nov. 26, 1812 Dec. 13, 1812



José fernandez Madrid Triumvir from Oct. 05, 1814 Jan. 21, 1815



Felipe de Vergara Provisional Governing Board from Nov. 26, 1812-Dec. 14, 1812



Joaquin Camacho Acting Triumvir from Oct. 05, 1814 Jan. 21, 1815



José Manuel Restrepo Elected Triumvir from 1813-1814



Estanislao Vergara Government Advisor from Dec. 28, 1828-Jan. 15, 1830



Juan García del Río Plural Executive from April 30, 1831 May 02, 1831



Juan de Dios Aranzazu President from July 05, 1841 - May 19, 1842



Rufino Cuervo Vice President from Aug. 14, 1847 - Dec. 14, 1847



Francisco Antonio Obregón President from May 20, 1854 -June 02, 1854



Tomás de Herrera-President from April 21, 1854 Aug. 05, 1854



Bartolomé Calvo -President from April 01, 1861 Junr. 10, 1864



Ignacio Guitierrez Vergara President from July 1861 – Aug. 1861



Leonardo Canal President from July 18, 1862 – Nov. 06, 1862



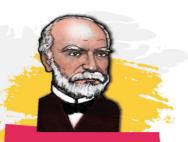
Manuel del Río y de Narvaez President from Nov. 06, 1862 - Jan. 16, 1863



Juan Agustín de Uricoechea President from Jan. 29, 1864 - Feb. 29, 1864



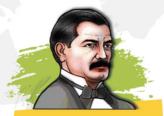
Santos Gutierrez President from April 01, 1868 -April 01, 1870



President April 01, 1870 - Jan. 02, 1869



Santiago Peréz President from April 01, 1874 -April 01, 1876



Sergio Camargo Pinzón President from May 19, 1877 - Aug. 13, 1877



Manuel María Ramírez President from Dec. 22, 1877 - Dec. 24, 1877



Climaco Calderón Reyes Attorney General from Dec. 21, 1882 -Dec. 22, 1882



from Jan. 16, 1893 Jan. 17, 1893



Guillermo Quintero Calderón Designated president from March 12, 1896 - March 17, 1896



Diego Euclides de Angulo Designated president from March 09, 1908 -April 14, 1908



Carlos Lozano y Lozano Designated president from Dec. 21, 1882 -Dec. 22, 1882



José Antonio Montalvo Berbeo Designated president from Aug. 06, 1963 - Aug. 08, 1963



Rafael Azuero Manchola President from July 21, 1973 - July 24, 1973



Indalecio Lievano Aguire President from Oct.1976 - late 1976



Victor Mosquera Chaux President from Feb. 03, 1981 - Feb. 11, 1981

Chapter 5 Ignorance: A Key Ingredient of an Explosive Cocktail

These are, among many others, in my opinion, the ten main and profound triggers of the ruptures of the Colombian social fabric, arising from the absence of real education and the improper presence of the State, promoters of a critical ignorance about the value of democracy, the collective construction of a vision for the country, and the lack of ambition to understand the geostrategic value of Colombia, one of the most privileged territories on the planet:

1. Corruption, which permeates the institutional framework of the State in all its powers.

Figures that make you think

- In the Transparency Perception Indexes in the world, Colombia is ranked around 100th in terms of corruption practices and perceptions in the country. Finland is the country rated as the most transparent in the world (ranked 1st).
- Various analyses by State agencies indicate that corruption in Colombia consumes around 10% of the nation's annual general budget, not including hidden costs (such as reprocessing, loss of opportunities, impunity and violence).
- The drug trafficking business in Colombia moves around 5% of the national economy per year.

The ongoing sociopolitical crisis that Colombia has experienced has resulted in constant instability for the State. This has limited the holistic development of the country, as corruption has been ingrained under the desire for democracy.

Although there is talk of a stable institutional system in Colombia, everyday practices of corruption are experienced in all sectors, actions that resort to increasingly sophisticated strategies in their ability to undermine the rights of the majority, taking away the resources meant for social investments initially projected for well-being and improved quality of life.

The sense of Colombianitud is greatly affected by this situation. As I mentioned from the beginning, I have used this term to highlight the warm, transparent, and dream-filled attitude of a people who have blindly trusted in the hope of having a serious, rigorous, and transparent institution. Colombianitud can be "felt" in the everyday Colombians, proudly born in this country, who still trust in the application of laws, with hope for a better and more dignified nation for our future generations. As Orlando Villanueva Martínez (2019) well defined in his work about the Colombian doctor Tulio Bayer, one of the components of Colombianitud is the fact that "being Colombian is an act of faith... which implies accepting historical and political decisions that are foreign to logic and close to improvisation and imposition."

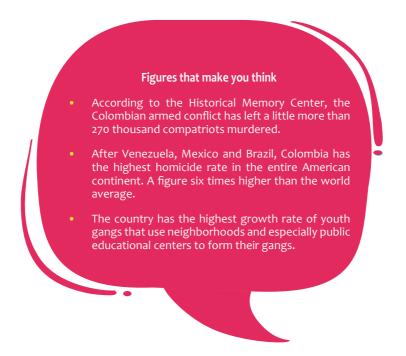
It is clear that corruption is not exclusive to Colombia nor to Latin America and the Caribbean. There is also corruption in the rest of the world, but many countries have managed to marginalize it, combating it as a scourge for the development of states that rely on the legality and legitimacy of their justice systems, as well as on deep respect for them from other institutions in all areas.

Many of us who ask why Colombia has been so vulnerable to corruption seek explanations regarding where, how, and why it has infiltrated national and regional spaces and elites. In some cases, there are leaders who, while deprived of liberty, continue to act as criminals without losing their roles as "caciques" (local boss), pursuing and flaunting their obsession with power based on illegal practices, all under the indifferent and unyielding gaze of society.

Several of these "heroes of populism" (illusionists promising better conditions without any technical foundation) are driven by their insatiable desire for profit and excessive power. Their preferred niche consists of communities lacking holistic education and community leaders who are easily corruptible due to their own basic survival needs for themselves and their families. Colombia today seems like an unviable nation: a fragmented nation with widespread violence, incapable of resolving social, economic, and political conflicts; a nation lacking a holistic and participatory vision for its future as a society. No one has asked this society what the collective dream should be to ensure that, in the medium and long term, leaders promote effective state policies to address the structural problems of the communities that make up diverse and dispersed territories and micro-territories throughout the national geography.

I cannot overlook the emerging and sadly global trend of the impact of mafias, both from drug trafficking and arms trafficking, which have established themselves in multiple countries. Unfortunately, the geostrategic position of our country serves as a disvalue for illegality, connecting transnational mafias that shamelessly exploit our maritime coasts and the limited aerial and terrestrial security control to strengthen human trafficking, drug trafficking, and arms trafficking, among others. Moreover, when the marketing chain is disrupted in a boomerang effect, the lives of thousands of children and young people are jeopardized, leading them to succumb to drug addiction and compromising their personal dignity. This scourge also poses a latent risk to the survival of habitats, flora, and fauna, whose wealth is among the greatest in global biodiversity.

2. Crime marks the unfortunate social and economic evolution of populations and regions abandoned to the whims of local and international criminal activities.



This phenomenon is also the result of the country's historical and accumulated inequality and its limited social mobility.

Over the years, this created a breeding ground for anxiety and social unrest among a high percentage of its inhabitants, who find themselves torn between rejecting and criticizing the scenes of crime and the dangerous allure that evil can have on those who have not been raised with principles or lack a minimum income and any form of sustenance.

Crime has spread as a result of multiple factors, including, for example, the illicit cultivation and commercialization of marijuana in the 1960s, which overwhelmed the local economy and subsequently, alongside cocaine, led to global, multisectoral, and multistate economic activities. These are decades of business during which the results of law enforcement have been limited when considering definitive eradication.

National and international laws have been surpassed in their effects by the profitability of these illicit businesses, which, in their operations, generally buy, with some exceptions, the consciences of leaders, journalists, judges, and anyone who stands in the way of the so-called drug cartels. Colombia experienced a false illusion regarding the apparent dismantling of the most recognized drug cartels (those from Medellín, Cali, and Norte del Valle, among others) at the end of the 1990s and the early years of this century. However, with the deaths and extraditions of their leaders, the business adapted, diversified, and continued with dangerous innovations: armies of vandals, money laundering, and related crimes.

Those environments strengthened illegality, which spread to all areas of social mobility, formal employment, public health, branches of public power, and the undervaluation of education

among large groups of young people. Ironically, education is generally being displaced by easy routes to money and quick wealth in all types of territories and communities.

Today, in a scenario with minimal or weak state guarantees for security and social well-being, these illicit industries have become multinational crime organizations that not only increase their profits but also possess a tremendous capacity for destabilization, as their growth has allowed them to delegitimize the actions of a weak state.

The harm that these businesses cause to the population originates from the production itself. Women, youth, and children in all types of territories are exploited to work in the underground world of coca and marijuana cultivation, as well as in the trafficking of supplies and illegal substances for the production of products and by-products that distort the mind. There are also other more experienced actors who are responsible for strengthening micro-consumption and national consumption of grams and kilograms of alkaloids, as well as the sale and export of tons of these through maritime, aerial, and terrestrial means. At the same time, criminal structures are growing for arms trafficking, contract killing, human trafficking, and illegal mining, among others.

This business is so attractively profitable and dangerous that in our country, new sub-levels of the operations of major crime empires and emerging cartels named with very suggestive titles related to "micro-trafficking" are daily appearing in municipalities, neighborhoods, streets, and rural areas. These include the sadly notorious criminal gangs, with children involved, such as "Tren de Aragua," "Los Paisas," "La

Cordillera," "Los Pachely," "La Oficina de Envigado," "El Clan del Golfo," and "Los Pitufos" and their boss "chiquito malo," among many others.

In the face of this senseless phenomenon, the State itself acts indifferently, unable to limit its expansion and lacking the strong hand needed to prevent the increase in domestic consumption by children and young people who fall early not only into vice but also into a spiral of violence that extends to extortion, kidnapping, abductions, sexual violence, domestic violence, femicides, and theft at all levels. This undermines authority and confirms the ongoing insecurity of citizens and collective paranoia.

In this context, unfortunately, the distrust of citizens in their public and private institutions begins to solidify.

This is experienced, for example, in Colombia's peace process. In this context, phrases such as "no hay mal que por bien no venga" (Every cloud has a silver lining in English) and "no hay bien que con el mal no llegue" (You can't have the rainbow without the rain in English) can be invoked. In the eyes of the world, this process (the signing of the peace agreement with the FARC-EP guerrilla group in 2017 by then-President Juan Manuel Santos) was seen as a great hope for transformation. However, just a few years later, and despite the announced disintegration of guerrillas and paramilitaries that plagued us for decades, these have re-emerged under different names, returning to despicable practices that undermine human indignity as previously mentioned.

For all these reasons, policies, programs, and strategies must be structured to collectively build, in an intelligent and planned manner, a viable path to progress and widespread well-being. This involves leaving behind the temptations of the flirtation with neighboring narco-democracies and the false narratives of change and improvement for all, which destroyed their own social and productive structures and gave way to forms of hidden authoritarianism with privileges for a few, while good citizens flee in terror to protect their lives and families.

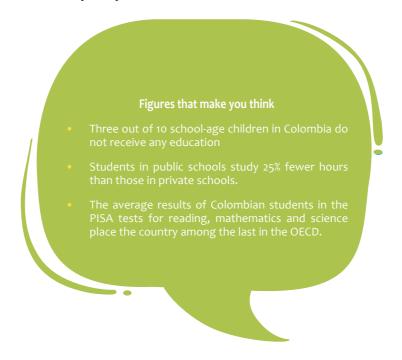
There are multiple forms of violence that today oppress our fellow citizens and dramatically affect inhabitants engulfed in the tragedy of losing their loved ones due to weapons and moral violence stemming from the inaction of the State, reflected in the recurring scenes of hunger, sadness, and desolation. These are victims, erroneously clinging to a political mirage that sells them illusions and trades them for easy money; they end up widening the belts of misery in large and medium-sized cities.

Criminality weakens the sense of Colombianitud. When the sacred value of one's own life and that of others loses meaning, the fundamental values of human existence for children and young people are distorted as the essence of respect, dignity, solidarity, and trust dissolves. As a consequence, traits typical of a good Colombian, such as warmth, humility, respect, and solidarity, begin to be missed.

The time has come to overcome the culture of death that seeks to settle in the hearts of our children and young people. It is urgent to reconstruct state policies for education, health, employment, sovereignty, food security, and the ecosystem

that must preserve our great biodiversity and environmental balance.

3. The limited impact of an exclusive educational system, with restricted quality and relevance



Although within the inefficiency of our educational system, there are institutions that stand out for the quality of their training, a high percentage of the so-called "system" (due to the implications of the term, which suggests a proper articulation around clearly identified collective purposes) is slowed down, as it relies on a public basic and secondary education that, while available to large majorities of population, does not demonstrate effective impacts in terms of relevance and quality. Such impacts must be reflected in the daily demonstration of what children and young people

have learned after thousands of hours in the classroom, as well as in national and international assessments based on standards that share a minimum average level of agreed-upon variables.

In the **mission statement** of various educational projects of public institutions, it is easy to find a common denominator, which could be expressed as: "... the education provided will contribute to the <u>holistic formation</u> of students..."; that is, an explicit commitment to training good individuals, good citizens, and, for tertiary education, good professionals in each discipline.

This scenario is also largely related to a private education system that, on average, serves population groups with the greatest purchasing power, but is not significantly influencing the structuring of a holistic educational framework. Beyond the very visible differences between public and private institutions in terms of the relevance and quality of their teachers, as well as their physical and technological facilities and infrastructure, both types of access operate under educational models that, for today and the future, quickly become stagnant as they cyclically refuse to accept the necessary pedagogical and technological transformation of the sector through orthodox positions.

This is exacerbated by a dangerous resistance to change, based on the status quo of false comfort promoted by unions that rigidly maintain an ideologically backward mentality in the face of changing times, preventing a clear understanding of the challenges posed by the new era and today's society. They are longstanding unions that act as a brake on the

sector, preventing the proper qualification of teachers and the enhancement of their leadership in the face of both their own transformation and that of the new generational shifts among the country's educators.

Politicized public education, as an expression of mobilization, has distorted the social purpose of education as a sector, favoring hidden interests, particularly in meeting the legitimate rights related to the salary, health care, and pension needs of teachers; these rights are sacred and must be met efficiently by the State. Since the creation and current existence of the so-called *Federación Colombiana de Educadores* - FECODE, which, in my view, is responsible for the continued low salaries and poor working conditions of teachers due to the union tyranny that opposes accepting quality pathways and the recognition of teachers' merit. This has largely led to the emergence of private educational provision at the primary, secondary, and even university levels.

This fact also demonstrates how, in Colombia, the rights of children and young people from lower-income households have been systematically violated and how their competencies begin to show a negative differential in terms of attitudes, skills, and knowledge from a very early age. These circumstances impact their lack of verbal and literacy skills, as well as their unfamiliarity with basic concepts in science and the axiological framework that should accompany the performance of students across different levels and educational cycles.

It is worth reiterating my invitation to the Asociación Sindical de Profesores Universitarios - ASPU, the Federación Colombiana de Educadores - FECODE, and other unions defending

teachers' rights, as well as to various student movements, to thoroughly analyze this inefficient situation and to avoid falling into the trap that is generally used to restrict any possibility of transformation. Deep and lasting collective actions are required, driven by policies that make Colombian education a continuous improvement process with a higher level of investment. This should ensure that resources are not only allocated to meet basic operational needs but, especially with the commitment of the governments, that resources are also directed towards investment and the well-being of key stakeholders, teachers, and students.

I would like to respectfully invite these union leaders to promote consensus and viable, long-term strategies that will remove the obstacles currently holding back the sector. I invite them to take advantage of opportunities to enhance the teaching profession with new competencies to promote continuous improvement among its members in such a way that this, in turn, will be rewarded with better social recognition, higher remuneration, stability, and labor well-being promoted by the State.

In higher education institutions and public universities, union leaders mix various purposes to co-manage academic affairs, prioritizing union interests in university administration. A union interest that is contrary to collective well-being when the benefits of a few are prioritized over those of the entire educational community.

We must conceive a new education policy that hopefully leads to the enactment of a new law in which its components and objectives are unified and updated to the new realities of the twenty-first century. It is a responsibility and historical debt owed to the country, particularly by those responsible for supporting programs and strategies aimed at directing the holistic transformation of the educational system.

4) The crisis of the family, due to the abandonment of its nuclear structures and the pernicious influence of new actors across a large population and geographical coverage through social media.



Since the Spanish Conquest, Colombia inherited the nuclear structures of the patriarchal family, which, until the second half of the twentieth century, was characterized by having many children. In this structure, the male and female roles of parents were clearly defined, to the point that the dignity of women was sometimes overlooked.

The passage of various historical events, the 1991 Constitution, fratricidal violence, the mental representations and positive and negative examples presented by the media, erroneous assumptions about the roles of men and women, the reprehensible practice of femicide, the increase in violence by women against men, and the constitutional recognition of the free development of personality, among other misguided practices, have disrupted the traditional family structure and legitimized the emergence and dispersion of the concept of family (single-family, nuclear, extended, single-parent, multi-nuclear, one-person, reconstituted, same-sex parents, divorced parents¹⁰.), without adequate legal and social guarantees for its protection.

If the educational system today aimed for a solid foundation in values, it would facilitate and promote recognition, harmony, and respect for these new relationships arising from gender equality and the legal recognition of diverse expressions of sexual identity, prioritizing the integrity of the human being.

The educational institution is key to this purpose; however, over time it has lost its social prominence to such an extent

According to the Observatorio de Políticas de Familia del Departamento Nacional de Planeación de Colombia, based on kinship, the typology of families is divided into non-family households (single-person households and without a family nucleus) and family households (nuclear—a couple with or without children—, extended—nuclear and other relatives—, composite—nuclear with other non-relatives—, and those without a primary relationship nucleus but with kinship). Monoparental and biparental (one or both spouses) are also identified, with male or female heads of households, including both homosexual and heterosexual families, with or without children.

that today it has little credibility and has ceded much ground to other actors, now referred to as "influencers" or protagonists on social media, to whom most children and young people trust more than their own teachers. This virtual activity on social media (established as a pseudo-profession that an increasing number of young people want to "study") allows for risky communication towards young individuals from "dark areas," whose dynamic and poorly regulated parameters set trends that they follow without clear social control and with little awareness from families. This context ultimately transforms them into new asocial subjects influenced by the interests of third parties, who are only seeking profit, fame, and popularity.

These problems are not alien to a large part of the Colombian population, in its various expressions, regions, ages, and cultural conditions. For example, the case of the famous NEETs (a term used for young people who are neither in education, employment, or training) is concerning. Most of these individuals seem to care little about their social role, their birth, and their development in vulnerable and highly sensitive environments. Some more "advanced" influencers, even those with education, have found ways to supposedly stand out and excel in their environments by resorting to political maneuvering or exploiting the superficial forms, lacking substance, of social media, through which they generally spread falsehoods, bad taste, and contempt for the dignity of those they consider rivals or enemies.

In Colombia, although there are valuable influencers who take on a constructive and sometimes entertaining critical reflection on our national events, there are also others

who have distorted the phenomenon by using it to publicly boast about their bold, aggressive, and especially irreverent discourse. The more offensive and defiant they are towards the norms, the absence of these empowers them to become more aggressive and more popular in the media. These deceptive communicators receive rewards for defaming before an audience that humbles itself before them with likes on their social media accounts or rating points. They consider themselves a kind of "new heroes," "masters of opinion programs" who, with a widely disseminated digital platform but lacking rigorous evidence or solid arguments, see themselves as the new judges of the republic. They pose as gladiators against corruption, defenders of decency they do not possess, claiming to respect a justice they seek to manipulate with dubious and embellished accusations. Their rhetoric promotes new moralisms that infringe upon a compulsive need to create myths to destroy serious proposals or programs for social transformation. Ultimately, they see themselves as media idols, with a profound superficiality that triumphs over the demand for serious and rigorous analysis, evading without embarrassment their responsibility to render judgments objectively.

The profile of these individuals is very diverse, from those who are almost illiterate with minimal education to those with degrees from prestigious universities. However, that does not seem to matter when the pursuit of profit and fame takes precedence, unfortunately. Sadly, this narrow perspective on their "professional" actions leads them to misinform, increase their egotism, and pay with the dishonor of others to receive adulation. Today, more than ever, the adage that "ignorance is bold" is reaffirmed for those, like these misguided influencers,

who seek to ascend socially at the expense of the dignity of others and the ignorance of many.

The problem is not only the "social ascent" of these "creators or manipulators" of new truths but also the failure of the educational system due to its minimal impact, if not its inability, to provide axiological training and to leave a mark on the essential aspects of critical analysis of those who pervert the media and social networks, as well as the lack of judgment on the part of the millions who follow them and believe in them blindly.

A significant part of political power in Colombia is also a negative consequence of the minimal educational impact, as this sacred exercise of democracy is shamelessly degraded by those who, without taking seriously their responsibility to generate and develop state policies that provide effective social responses to break the inherited vicious cycle, are incompetent leaders without new expressions in the face of the issues that have always accompanied us.

Genuine Colombianitud cannot allow its values of coexistence to be disrupted by practices that seek to question everything that exists without recognizing the essential values of the Colombian family as a cradle of peace, a social example, and a source of personal and professional motivation.

The evolution of Colombian society urgently requires the determination of new conceptions, identities, and values of everyday life within the framework of the so-called "globalization of consumption." A society in which personal and collective needs have varied in their order of priority

compared to what was established decades ago by Abraham Maslow (1943) as a scale of needs and where technology has taken on an unusual value to recognize it as a tool rather than as a means to create meaningless dependencies—is required to move toward the educational demands and needs of the new "planetary society," visionary defined by Edgar Morin.

5) The hegemonic and covert *machismo*, compared to the slow evolution of gender equality opportunities

Figures that make you think In 2022, Colombia reported an average of 10

- femicides each weekWhile the State is seeking parity in senior public
- positions between men and women, in the private sector they only reach 20%
- On average, women receive between 5 and 10% less salary than men

Directly related to the breakdown of family unity is the persistence of *machismo*, as one of the most explicit forms of disrespect and disregard for the dignity of women. *Machismo* is expressed through verbal and physical abuse, indifference, mandatory submission, abuse, sexual violence, and an inability to engage in dialogue.

Despite social advances to guarantee women their equal rights, these remain more in discourse than in practice, as a result of the covert, hegemonic *machismo* in Colombia that denies real opportunities to them. It is also true that this issue expands with the recognition of their rightful spaces for participation in public and private life to achieve the same conditions given to men.

It is clear that today's family is not the same as in the past and that the fundamental changes in its composition have significantly affected women, who must multiply themselves to attend to family responsibilities, productive work, and their own educational advancement.

At its core, *machismo* is an expression of the historical ignorance of personal dignity, of domination as a way to justify the absence of respect, dialogue, and the inability to recognize women's valuable status as human beings, individuals, and subjects of equal rights and duties.

As I described in the previous section, the new family composition and the new family structures have modified traditional patterns. The size of families has decreased, cultural values surrounding women have also changed, religion as the central unifying force of the family has given way to other beliefs, group expressions of diverse complexity are increasingly referred to as family (not including single-person households), and the dynamics of roles, responsibilities, and contributions to expenses, parenting, care, and maintenance of the household do not follow a defined pattern.

6) The depletion of natural resources as a result of the exponential growth of illegal businesses in agriculture, livestock, and subsoil extraction due to illegal mining

Figures that make you think

- In the course of the 20th century, Colombia has suffered the deforestation of nearly 4 million hectares, of which it has only been able to recover half a million.
- 70% of the 200,000 miners who work in Colombia do so in illegal mining.
- The Magdalena and Amazon rivers are considered two of the most polluted tributaries in the world due to illegal practices that affect the environment and health.

Colombia has yet to take a firm step in the establishment and management of state policies that would decisively protect our natural resources, as well as the biodiversity and wealth of the subsoil, which have become targets for exploitation by criminal organizations and large capital interests.

This has been happening for decades and occurs under the watch of various national and local public administrations that remain inexplicably indifferent to the existence of legal and regulatory frameworks to prevent the depletion of our extensive and diverse natural wealth and simply fail to act. Although there is a Ministry of Environment, departmental

secretariats, and Regional Autonomous Corporation (CAR in Spanish) created and regulated for these purposes, Colombia continues to suffer from ongoing degradation of its environmental sustainability amid the exponential growth of illegal businesses in sectors such as agriculture, livestock, subsoil extraction, illegal mining, and unrestricted deforestation of protected areas and national parks.

What could be an essential action for territorial integration, aimed at creating benefits and conditions for improved and greater economic growth in unprotected regions and territories, has instead resulted in detrimental and misguided outcomes for the existence and sustainability of microsystems with rich biodiversity, which are sadly being devastated by an ambition that promotes artisanal techniques such as logging and unskilled, illegal, and reckless mining that disrupt the ecological development of micro territories abandoned to their fate by the State.

7) Unproductive informal work, a generator of inequalities, whose legacy disheartens future generations

Figures that make you think

- Colombia is one of the OECD countries where people work the most hours and have the lowest productivity
- 60% of Colombian workers receive a minimum wage or less for their work
- Colombian employees miss work for various reasons, between one and two weeks a year

If the present analysis focuses on Colombianitud, it is important to discuss one of the main characteristics of this expression that defines being Colombian as a "person of integrity": Its great ability to work with warmth and quality in any field, profession, discipline, or trade. Nevertheless, the context of unstable and poorly paid formal jobs or informal, with no security whatsoever, creates an unprecedented social static that disrupts individual and collective well-being as a basic requirement for the aforementioned expression.

Work should be one of the sources of greater well-being and personal fulfillment. After all, we dedicate nearly a third of our daily lives to it. Work must be a source of personal satisfaction, not the opposite. Its poor conditions, excessive demands, or minimum remuneration disrupt the peace of anyone who feels their dignity violated.

When young people prepare themselves and want to do their best work, they generally encounter three crossroads:
a) working and feeling happy and fulfilled by it; b) feeling frustrated at work after time passes without their expectations being realized, which instead turn into disappointments; and c) the worst crossroads of not finding work that allows for both subsistence and personal fulfillment.

Part of this responsibility does not only lie with the social and economic system of the country and the absence of suitable incentive policies for work (legal security for companies, protection of their assets, hiring incentives) but also with the companies or hierarchical organizations that are ineffective in their governance and stubbornly refuse to change the orthodoxy of their founders, which was effective in its time but

no longer aligns with current management paradigms. The well-known phrase "here it has always been done like this" is the gateway to demotivation, routine, and low productivity.

We rarely reflect on the work we do, especially when we believe that work is done merely to fulfill obligations rather than for survival. This leads to incomplete and irrelevant results, especially in organizations that do not dare to make essential decisions regarding changes and reengineering. Postponing decisions is the path to disappearance.

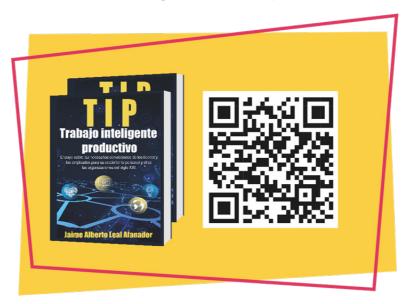
On the other hand, unproductivity is exacerbated when processes increase due to a lack of rigor and attention to detail, turning them into rework, or—also—when many managers believe that taking on new tasks requires unjustifiably expanding the payroll, resulting in more people doing fewer activities with greater impact for the company and fewer professional challenges for the employees themselves. This also affects the frustration of many managers, who do not make an effort to learn and develop new skills.

True social and educational mobility, as a pathway to equal opportunities, occurs when economies create opportunities for dignified work and societies allocate their taxes to meet the basic needs of all their inhabitants.

These should be the guiding principles for those who wish to seriously take on the leadership and direction of the Colombian State, proposing social and economic policies under the principle of equality as a first example of a government vision based on morality and civic ethics. In this way, social order would, for the first time in our history, become an inalienable

and irreplaceable ethical element that fosters community order and social discipline, leaving behind the reprehensible corrupt practices in the management of public funds and the national budget.

Changes are required in many companies, not only in the motivation processes for their managers but also in the boldness to change paradigms (overcoming orthodox pathways). If today's organizations could create new directions with a clear vision for the future, and if they allowed themselves to critically evaluate what does not work or does not concern them, they would find that there are multiple alternative paths for improvement. To expand on this topic, I invite you to read my book TIP (Trabajo Inteligente Productivo).



8) Prejudices as actions based on distrust, fear, resentment, and envy.

Figures that make you think Reports from the National Police show that, in the country, the death of two out of every 10 people murdered is caused by intolerance Opinion polls from recent years show how Colombians' distrust of all their social institutions (Church, Police, Government, Congress, media...) has been increasing in percentage terms According to the 2023 report from the Edelman consultancy, after Argentina, Colombia is the most polarized country in the world

The absence of an education based on values, respect for differences, recognition of others' potential, and the importance and need of social integration as a foundation for community progress has led, as a way of distinguishing themselves from others, a significant portion of the Colombian population assume that disqualification, judgment without evidence, erroneous beliefs, and being mindlessly influenced by sectarian, disqualifying, mocking opinions based on false premises constitute a practical way to feel good, to feel part of a "better family," as we often say, and to believe that by disqualifying others, we are positively evaluating ourselves.

This prejudiced behavior, that is, without rational foundation, without evidence, and without even allowing the opportunity to understand, study, and analyze the actions, opinions, and preferences of others, fuels the dangerous polarization of society that everyday distances us from spaces of agreement and dialogue. Assuming that things are either good or bad, per se (by itself in English); that if someone is not with me, they are against me; that if they do not share my opinions, preferences, or votes, others are wrong, are going down the wrong path, or are simply bad people, constitutes a troubling expression of a society where education has been used to fill minds with texts but not to provide context; to work on disaggregated subjects rather than non-integrated ones; to promote imposed opinions rather than unreasoned ones; and to make an erroneous valuation of doing and having over being and belonging.

Any society that bases the valuation of its individuals on what they have (money, education, property, land, relationships, friends, etc.) is doomed to a fierce and subjective social competition based on comparison, humiliation, and a sense of demeaning criticism. Social climbing is an expression of materialism, antagonistic to the spirit of recognizing the dignity of any member of society.

This thinking based on prejudices limits the ability to learn from others, break the boundaries of ignorance, see beyond, be humble, recognize mistakes, and be generous in valuing the thoughts and contributions of others. Many of these prejudices are a legacy of the educational system itself, which poorly taught that, beyond differences in skin color, economic context, or political affiliation, white people can hardly coexist with black people, the rich with the poor, those from the north with those

from the south, Colombians with Venezuelans, liberals (who in the 19th century attended Mass at five in the morning) with conservatives (who attended Mass at noon), believers with atheists, fans of one football team with those of another, or homosexuals with heterosexuals, among many other situations.

All of this leads to distrust, which eliminates the possibility of growing together, working as a team, and learning from others.

And it also leads to accepting unfounded stereotypes and generalizations as truths, created by tradition, the media, or unverified facts, which negatively impact public opinion and reputation. That Colombia is an unsafe country, that "everyone," police officers, priests, politicians, and taxi drivers are bad people, and that malicia indígena (cunning in English) (the ability to cleverly circumvent the rules while pretending to be skillful rather than incorrect or illegal) is a "gift" of Colombians...

Prejudice is the foundation of discrimination and arises from a logically contradictory premise: those who prejudge often overlook that they are also subjects of prejudice and discrimination. Only by eliminating distrust and false senses of superiority, whether ethnic, social, moral, economic, academic, political, or imaginary, are the means to achieve consensus, coexistence, dialogue, tolerance, and ultimately, peace.

Leaders, the media, parents, and the educational system must take responsibility for this because the warmth of Colombianitud cannot be tainted by the so-called malicia indígena, by prejudgment, senseless opportunism, or the belief that personal, professional, and familial growth can only occur at the expense of others.

9) The migrations and the territorial uprooting of those who are neither heard nor recognized



Phenomena such as the migration from rural areas to cities and the increasing urbanization accelerated the demographic transition, particularly since the mid-twentieth century, as a consequence of the onset of radicalization of partisan and guerrilla violence and the early signs of industrialization in the country. This, indirectly, influenced the reduction in the average number of children, also due to demographic restriction policies (birth control planning, contrary to the Catholic paradigm), job instability resulting from the lack of extended contractual security for employees, and

fundamentally, the recognition of the role of women as key protagonists in the social and productive landscape. This led women to spend less time at home, to reconsider how they managed childrearing, and to seek educational qualification opportunities.

Thus, families are becoming increasingly smaller, and individuals are becoming lonelier. Proletarianization, which involves the transition from a self-sustaining agrarian economy to wage labor, generally poorly paid and lacking adequate protections, occurred in precarious conditions in the cities, leading to the fragmentation of households. Mothers, unaccustomed to working outside the home, had to leave their households to find employment. Similarly, men and children gradually distanced themselves from their homes, either in search of alternative opportunities, as men were called to military service, or even to escape the mandatory recruitment by illegal armed groups.

Meanwhile, the lands were gaining strategic power for both politicians and criminals. As cities became increasingly populated, the countryside became increasingly vacant. The internal conflict between the State and its armed forces and crime, particularly represented by guerrillas (which, paradoxically, had in their ideological proclamation an alleged agrarian reform), was accompanied by acts of corruption (illegal land titles, fictitious processes of purchase and sale) and government inaction. As a result, criminals ended up owning thousands of hectares that had previously served as habitats for hundreds of thousands of Colombian farming families.

Thus, migration in Colombia has not been the result of intentional caravans of compatriots convinced of seeking promised better lands but of the unplanned abandonment, under threats of death, by compatriots who, to save their lives, chose to stop looking back and attempt new paths in other lands. Meanwhile, guerrillas, landowners, corrupt politicians, large monopolies, drug growers and processors, illegal miners, cattle rustlers, usurers, and lenders, among others, seized what they had never worked for.

Among that group of the unheard and unrecognized, sadly, one must include Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations who, beyond their small social enclaves, have not had the opportunity to fully experience their status as inhabitants of this homeland, with all the rights and duties that are constitutionally their own. Even though they do not represent a migrant population, sadly, they have been displaced from social settings and viewed as a kind of ghetto. This includes those individuals with physical disabilities who have dysfunctions in their vital organs, and until very recently, those who have expressed their sexuality in ways different from traditional norms. All of these individuals have had to "migrate" within the same social space as the majority to avoid being beaten, humiliated, and ignored in their identities.

Forced, violent, and unplanned migration has led to overpopulation in large cities, an increase in labor demand, and consequently, a decrease in income, as well as the concentration of thousands of people on the outskirts of cities under poor living conditions and inadequate public services, dignified housing infrastructure, scarce social subsidies, and minimal educational conditions for students. The phenomenon

of forced displacement due to various circumstances causes new generations to grow up far from their lands of origin, living under a range of conditions (sheltered, subsidized, and often in extreme poverty) because they have been displaced by legal machinations, violence, armed conflict, and even by the State's neglect in the face of harsh natural conditions (seismic movements, floods, etc.).

Without stable residency or stability in any aspect, education loses its sense of context, relevance, and utility for families. If education does not foster optimism or a vision for the future, is not connected to real-world experiences, then mere degrees or certifications end up being a meaningless requirement in the educational system.

Regardless of the condition of migrants, whether moving from one country to another, from one department to another, or even within the same region, it generates family dissatisfaction, personal frustration, existential anxiety, and a sense of hopelessness about their homeland. The migrant loses confidence in themselves, in what they have learned in life, and in government promises of better living conditions.

Promises and promises from the numerous presidential candidates over the past decades have centered around "escaping poverty," while the governments, led by those same candidates, have failed to find effective and sufficient solutions to overcome this phenomenon. They have also been unable to channel resources (instead of diverting them toward corruption) that could be allocated to improve the quality of life for these compatriots, who are at high risk of experiencing

material deterioration in their dire living conditions and health due to extreme unsanitary conditions and hunger.

Meanwhile, the State has acted with indifference toward this phenomenon. It is not only the drama of Colombians outside their lands, but also that of Venezuelans who have arrived in an indeterminate number in all regions of the country and from other countries due to the complex political and social situation in Venezuela. Paradoxically, instead of seeing all these thousands of compatriots and foreigners as families in need of integration and a life project, many of whom possess significant labor skills and, in many cases, already have high levels of qualification that could be effectively placed in the productive sector to boost national productivity, large segments of the population exhibit dangerous xenophobia (toward Venezuelans) and repulsion toward their own compatriots. This confirms the presence of unfounded prejudices, further contributing to the dangerous social polarization.

Since education reflects the thinking of "adults" and those who create public policy, these prejudices, absences, and social insensitivity have been transmitted through the educational standards of schools and colleges. Since most parents do not engage in this either, children and young people are unaware of the most basic practices of solidarity and widespread well-being. Extending a hand, sharing food, teaching and learning from those in need, and, in traditional colloquial terms, exemplifying that "where two can eat, three can eat" are fundamental practices of a dignified life that we have a shared social responsibility to transmit to new generations. When this happens, future generations of politicians, statesmen,

technicians, businesspeople, and leaders will recognize, through example and proper education, that there is no successful public policy that ignores the rights and humanity of any inhabitant of the territory.

10) The scarce credibility in the various dogmas of an ineffective religiosity

Figures that make you think

- Religions in Colombia are distributed between Catholics (59%), Protestants (10%), other Christians (4%), no religion (18%) and other religions (9%).
- Every day there are more representatives of various churches in Colombia who enter politics or are denounced for irregular financial dealings.
- A large part of the economic income of churches and religious cults in Colombia comes from bookstores, cafes, vacation centers, hotels, shops, parking lots, radio stations and television channels, which are activities unrelated to the cult.

Colombia has transitioned from being a fervently and devoutly Catholic nation to a religiously diverse nation. The monopoly of the Catholic Church has given way to hundreds of movements and churches derived mainly from Protestantism

and Christianity, as well as from agnostics, leaving Catholicism with a significant reduction in its influence in just a few years¹¹.

This phenomenon confirms the symptoms of a society that seeks various paths to try to find itself. From the offering of various institutions to the "Almighty God" to sociologically complex phenomena such as, for example, many young people in vulnerable conditions who pray to the Virgin for their "mission to go well" as hitmen. It is a tumultuous world of ideals and religious beliefs, many of which attempt to explain the social crisis from a dogmatic perspective, even though many religious practices challenge and do not allow space for reflection on the behavior of a youth who seeks to claim rights.

It is also unfortunate to see how many of these "shepherds of souls" use the religious sector to pursue their political aspirations with resources and the naivety of their followers. They exhibit hegemonic positions on the fate of souls and spirits arising from a human condition that is, even perversely ignorant, inclined in millions of cases to intertwine with these non-evolved theologies.

The Political Constitution of 1886 established that (Art. 38) "the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Religion shall be that of the Nation; the public authorities shall protect it and cause it to be respected as an essential element of the social order. It is understood that the Catholic Church is neither official nor will it be, and it will maintain its independence." This was radically changed in the Constitution of 1991 (currently in effect), which defined that (Art. 19)"freedom of religion is guaranteed. Every individual has the right to profess his/her religion freely and disseminate it individually or collectively. All religious confessions and churches are equally free before the law."

Socially, there is still no visible religious action in Colombia that identifies itself as an ally in decisively overcoming the significant social and economic gaps faced by those who survive amid spiritual misery, multiple forms of violence, and material deprivation.

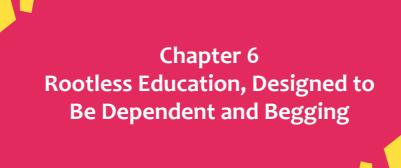
Both during the Colonial period and in the Republic, the Catholic Church served as a support for the social and political system described and questioned here. The pulpit, confession, and norms, intertwined in customs, served to inherit limitations and an uncritical mentality within the educational institution.

The rejection of these behaviors occurred as a reaction, but with minimal foundations. The ideological frameworks of the Liberal and Conservative political parties marked differences more in form than in substance. Both granted privileges to the Catholic Church to serve as the leader of primary and secondary education for hundreds of generations.

The apparent positions and logic of the two mentioned parties had a common denominator regarding the ideological: respect for the elites that held civil power, including the Church, which shaped the social classes. Sadly, the relationship between the church and the state over so many decades dramatically hindered the prospects for a genuine democratic social consolidation.

I conclude this chapter by pointing out how educational inequity leads to social inequity, that is, to a lesser guarantee of quality and relevance for peasant young people and children, as well as for workers trapped in a vicious cycle that early on segregates the hope for a better future.

"Ignorance" is the common factor present in the ten afflictions listed. This has resulted in an increase in mortality and crime rates that have accompanied Colombia for generations, deteriorating the well-being and peace of entire regions, which suffer from insecurity and inadequate education.



The visible absence of the State in ensuring quality education invites us to reconsider, from a social cost-benefit perspective, how useful it would be to measure the accumulated inefficiency of Colombia's public educational institutions across all its cycles and levels, as well as their impacts on the holistic formation of entire generations. I propose a fifth hypothesis for you, dear reader, to either falsify or verify based on this indicator.

Fifth hypothesis: The limited historical attention to the education sector allows us to understand why education is a co-author and structural contributor to multiple circumstances that are adverse to social awareness and the contribution to the scientific and technological development of the country. Its level of development is directly proportional to its lag in implementing various models of appropriate and relevant education.

Despite more than two centuries of experiences and conflicts, the merit achieved through personal effort and supported by the educational system remains a largely unrecognized factor of positive social differentiation. This "institutional normality" has yielded to the complacent mediocrity of the power granted to it in its autonomy to shape the analytical and critical thinking of our society. This has contributed, with few exceptions, thanks to educators and institutions with valuable social stances, inclusive and innovative visions, and significant evolution to transform the passivity and inertia of education, especially public education, that confronts a beggarly and mediocre reality.

The lack of desired and necessary education has been postponed in its responsibility to strengthen the development of our national identity. This education has been particularly absent in those territories and communities that demand representation to exercise the value of their cultural and ethnic richness. Due to the "example" received and the resulting behaviors, a significant portion of our governments across all ages and territorial orders have denied the privileges that arise from a quality education for all. Its interest has been focused on maintaining the privilege of quality education for a select few, almost always, if not always, centered around the national governments of a centralist order. Populations and regions distant from the political, physical, administrative, and power centers have been infected by a virus of despair and combative individualism, frustrating the dreams and potential of thousands of wasted intellects and talents across all generations of Colombians.

The majority of leaders, due to gross ignorance or a lack of solidarity, alienated much of the wealth of our territory through manipulated policies and laws that, being ineffective, are corrupt. This has led to absurd contracts with shell companies or multinationals that have compromised the well-being of fellow citizens and their opportunities for progress for decades. In contrast, for example, various leaders from Central and Northern Europe, Asia, and North America have prioritized merit in their educational systems, research aimed at solving collective problems, and innovation that leverages opportunities based on social premises such as authority, common discipline, and collective rights over individual ones.

Various technical studies highlight how improved opportunities and quality of education facilitate economic progress and guarantee freedom for all. On the contrary, in a country like Colombia, millions have been left behind, spending their lives in learned despair, which makes us feel subjugated before an intolerant state that is almost always ineffective and seems to

oppose the fundamental rights enshrined in our truly grand Political Constitution.

I am aware that what I am saying, as an author and educator, may sound grandiloquent to the educational *status quo*; this is a call to exercise critical awareness and an ethic that promotes co-evaluation to seek substantive improvements in the educational system. This essay is an invitation to not view educational management as a dead letter, but rather to transform it into a permanent source of concrete results in favor of social mobility that can only be granted by quality education and social well-being.

In the third decade of the 21st century, Colombia still faces, with anguish, a perverse educational social cycle inherited from the inertia of conquerors and, until now, due to a lack of policies from a state that could have effectively charted a course for the sector if our presidents had systematically addressed the core issue that is eroding it. This should motivate us to manage ourselves proactively as a nation, in contrast to the ineffective homeland that was established during the conquest, from Cristóbal Colón to Alonso de Ojeda, Pedro de Heredia, Sebastián de Belalcázar, and Jiménez de Quesada.

While there is today an unprecedented global evolution of knowledge and significant advancements in pedagogies and technologies, these latter only benefit a portion of humanity. It is also important to acknowledge that, with proper guidance, these advancements can help close the gaps that persist in global society, which generate educational exclusion and, consequently, social exclusion.

It is also essential to recognize that many things have changed in various sectors concerning what has been inherited since the Conquest and the Colony. However, in the social system and Colombian education, there remain outstanding debts because the educational institutions, as a whole, have been unable to positively impact our holistic education, and those responsible for its development are not always exemplars of social harmony.

We have not yet been able to fully decipher how to educate the new generations of teachers in a holistic and relevant manner so that we can honorably welcome the formation of new students who, it is hoped, will be the leaders and officials of a better future for the country.

It is in this context that the new children of South America, and in our case, Colombians who are born and grow up as new generations, need a powerful motivational impact in their educational process to develop a strong conviction for changing the social trajectory through a solid, relevant, innovative, and qualified education.

It is now or never that we must initiate radical transformations to consider ourselves as a unified nation, proud of our national identity that respects diversity in support of widespread well-being.

Self-criticism is healthy when it leads to lessons such as the one I propose here: We have developed unevenly as a society grounded in a centralist State, and we have transferred imbalances to regional communities to which we fail to assign value when distributing the State's resources and potentialities.

The absence of a committed State is increasingly felt. Until today, in summary, quality education for the most remote and impoverished regions and communities has been elusive in delivering its benefits. Abandoned to their fate, it deprives children and young people born outside the epicenters of large or medium-sized cities of opportunities, while the media periodically reports on the results of failure in international tests of academic performance. We also see how idiosyncratic goods and unique cultures fade away due to the lack of educational interest in the new generations. Meanwhile, corruption steals the resources allocated for establishing networks of public services, school feeding programs, health care, dignified employment, and merit-based training for our educators.

This is the Colombia that must challenge us, as we have grown accustomed to observing it passively. It is not enough for us to be told that the budget for the sector is the largest allocated by the State and the current Government if the educational institutions themselves do not take on their self-critique and their own transformation. Certainly, additional resources are necessary, but they must be accompanied by a thorough reengineering of the sector. Otherwise, we will continue to see budgets increase in proportion to operating expenses, but with low impacts on quality and relevance. Just as someone who quickly forgets, it will always be said that the resources allocated to the unwieldy system will never be sufficient to meet its demands.

This lack of awareness has caused us to repeat mistakes without having been able to address profound questions that, not having been formulated or resolved at the time, have accustomed us to live with daily urgencies instead of addressing structural issues with comprehensive solutions.

Perhaps this is why we have yet to create and promote a relevant social system where education dares to overcome its resistance to change and fosters innovation. This system should provide appropriate training for equitable economic development, dialogical political freedom, and cultural expansion based on the principle of education for all. It should unleash the creative potential of minds, strengthen talents, and affirm the value of relevant education.

As various emerging historians have well stated, the deepest misconceptions in the narrative of our history stem from the inherited contradictions regarding our conception of our ancestors and their reactions to the impositions of the Spanish Empire during the Conquest and the Colony.

We still possess a distorted image of the supposed passivity and naivety of the Indigenous peoples who preceded us, as portrayed by the so-called "enlightened despotism" promoted by the Spanish crown and its representatives in the Americas. Indeed, we still recite verbatim some of those who taught us to lament this historical fact, leading many to believe that our trajectory has always been, is, and will be one of backwardness in constructing a true vision for the future. In this vision, the cartography of our territories, rather than their geography, allows us to determine beyond the splendor of our natural wealth and the bounty of our lands and their fruits, the intelligence of our people, and their talents. This way, we can align our environment with our dream of a happy and equitable nation.

This could happen if clear policies emerge, based on the arguments derived from knowledge management and the application of new pedagogies, as well as the intensive and

axiological use of technologies in a more pertinent, efficient way, with a commitment to regionalization that addresses multiple opportunities in this diverse and multicultural country.

I insist that it is time to consolidate these goals in the most neglected regions, prioritizing them in political and educational agendas and without excessive rhetoric, to find the balance to eradicate exclusion and inequality from these areas. A concerted effort between local and territorial governments and the national government would constitute a significant first step toward ending educational social fragmentation.

Let us not forget that a significant part of our structural problems is the result, among other factors, of our ineffective education, which has been reduced to its bare minimum due to geographical fragmentation, physical distances, and the lack of adequate infrastructure in both architectural terms and coherent technopedagogical approaches. We require pathways for teacher pedagogical qualification and diverse, relevant training offerings for all types of student populations, supported by versatile technological infrastructures crucial for reaching communities in all directions. It is also essential for us to acknowledge ourselves to prioritize opportunities and issues arising from the absence and deficiencies in services such as electricity, drinking water, telecommunications, and sanitary infrastructure.

No more complaints of empty words about those who continue to violate fundamental rights. That said, we need more strategic actions to strengthen the rights granted to us by the wise Political Constitution of 1991, particularly regarding equity in opportunities for work, education, and health, among others.

As a society, we have become accustomed to the excuse of persisting in the enthusiasm of an activist discourse that has been denouncing the sector's neglect for decades. A discourse accompanied by the selection of superficial leaders in their manner of representing the country and in their irresponsible failure to reaffirm commitments due to their ethical inability to act effectively and manage resources properly. The periodic failure to meet local, territorial, or national government programs, amid exhausting controversies, has allowed the postponement of established goals, which then become hidden over time by media invisibility.

In today's Colombia, we do not coexist with a national identity. Except for events such as soccer and occasional performances in various sports or in music and the arts that succeed due to the individual efforts of some compatriots abroad, there are no other elements of national cohesion. Artists such as Shakira, Karol G, Juanes, Carlos Vives, Fernando Botero, and Sofía Vergara, among others; athletes like Falcao García, James Rodríguez, Linda Caicedo, Egan Bernal, and Nairo Quintana, among others; and writers like Héctor Abad Faciolince and Mario Mendoza, among other notable figures, including the "manufactured" farmer Juan Valdez, constitute, among other things, references of national identity and pride.

We coexist amidst regionalisms such as the strength of Antioquia, the Santanderean and communal lineage, the Caribbean joy, the majesty of the capital Bogotá, the lush Pacific, the immensely beautiful and green Boyacá, and, in general, the particular expressions of all our beautiful regions, including the Llanos Orientales, the Valle del Cauca, Cauca, Nariño, *Eje Cafetero* (Coffee Region), San Andrés and Providencia, the Gran Tolima,

la Amazonia, and the Orinoquía, each with its cultural, musical, artistic, dance, literary, and gastronomic manifestations, along with paradisiacal places provided by a bountiful and generous nature.

However, although warmth is a common denominator among Colombians across all the idiosyncrasies of each region (Costeños, Boyacenses, Pastusos, Caucanos, Cundinamarqueses, Sanandresanos, Vallunos, Chocoanos, Caldenses, Huilenses, Tolimenses, Llaneros, Santandereanos, Antioqueños, Islanders, Guajiros, among others), we are a multi-diverse and multicultural nation with slow and limited progress in respecting and adhering to the key values of coexistence and collective well-being. Those born in Colombia are neither more nor less than citizens of other countries. The difference is that we live and die with the same problems that have persisted for many years, decades, two centuries, and across entire generations without having provided structural solutions. This has created the paradox of being identified as "warm" yet simultaneously taciturn and conformist, but also complainers. As we do little to find solutions, we allow despair to prevail. We coexist with eternal evils arising not from a lack of intelligence, but from ancestral negligence, and we periodically succumb to the promises of flashy leaders.

With this essay, I want to propose a pause along the way, and as I mentioned in Chapter 1, to review: Why are we like this? Why are we mere spectators of the same old problems? Why have we been so determined, almost obstinate, in destroying the good that has been achieved? Why do we, with envy, resentment, and other negative values, disregard and lash out at those who bring about significant change? And why do we place undue importance on, to the point of astonishment, what is done in

other places? We tend to approach destructive criticism more than justifying inertia, sometimes leading to a vegetative social behavior in response to what is happening. We remain focused on complaining about what, but we are rarely able to identify the how and the why. In every government, era, and generation after generation, Colombians have allowed opportunities to pass by and have failed to create a more just and equitable country, better educated, informed, and respected.

And we have done so, or rather, we have not done so because, unfortunately, our educational system (which, to begin with, does not function as a system) has become accustomed to being inert and ineffective in its fundamental responsibility for holistic education. Although there has been some improvement in productivity in science and technology in recent years, our advances have not fostered a genuine commitment to respecting others among children and young people, nor, with few exceptions, have they ignited a passion for the various fields of knowledge.

As I will present later, our educational sector incorporates elements that inherently subject it to periodic crises and render it ineffective. Its primary motivation is encapsulated in satisfying especially the interests of specific groups, causing many of its stakeholders to forget the essential nature of their vital socioeducational work in favor of the benefits derived from life projects and the development of individuals, communities, and territories.

We have become accustomed to stifling the educational system in which citizens are shaped from childhood and youth, undermining the capacity to think and behave decently, the motivation to create, and the skills to develop critical and independent thinking. We lack self-criticism and objective self-regulation on the part of political actors and educational leaders. This Colombia has become accustomed to following small hegemonies that manipulate and suppress dignified, intelligent, and productive work and the practice of a motivating and liberating education of great talents.

Colombian education still does not reflect its central purpose of providing holistic education to those who are educated within it; it does not create prospective models for social growth at the basic, secondary, and professional training levels, nor even at the postgraduate level.

Colombian education still does not reflect the fundamental value it should provide to inspire a passion in children and young people for ethics and morality as guiding principles in their lives, for the basic sciences and disruptive technologies, and teamwork for participatory construction. As an education incapable of charting its own course and that resists new challenges, it seeks easy solutions provided by actors who view it as a business. It is an education that refuses to incorporate social and educational innovations that, despite being recognized in other parts of the world, are incredibly criticized by the very leaders and communities who prefer to believe that what is foreign is better than what their own country could generate if it invested in innovative educational models to enhance collective efforts to strengthen multiple intelligences and talents in the places where they are born and reside.

This resistant, dependent, easy-going, and exclusionary educational scenario is not new. The pedagogue Alberto

Martínez Bloom (1989) describes this well in his book *Crónica del Desarraigo*, highlighting the disastrous legacy of Spanish domination, which instilled a disinterest in education among the colonized. He describes how, from those ancient times, some of the rigors of the Inquisition were brought to this territory, particularly the lack of interest and the absence of coherence in education. From there, it was understood that illiteracy was, and remains, one of the primary weapons for devastating tens of thousands during that time among Indigenous and mestizo populations. For three centuries, this formula enabled thousands of Indigenous people to betray their fellow community members by allying with European conquerors instead of supporting the defense of their own compatriots.

Colombians lack quality and relevant education to strengthen our capacity for assimilation and integration for the improvement of living conditions. It seems that Colombians like to bow to outsiders rather than trust in their compatriots. We live in an ingenuous mysticism that asks God to grant us the miracle of better living conditions, but we forget that it is through education, effort, and discipline that individual and collective well-being improves.

This self-destructive phenomenon of undermining our own is still reaffirmed today, as governmental entities prefer to trust foreign agencies over education or technology. Support for local initiatives is often avoided, and those in positions of power do not always recognize that history is also shaped by all the individuals who are part of the same nation.

This does not mean, especially today in the era of globalization, that foreign contributions are not valuable or important. I want to emphasize the importance of a healthy balance in decisions

regarding the future of our society and the focus of our educational institutions. This means understanding the necessary creation of educational policies that value the existence of educational institutions not just to help them survive but to allocate resources based on indicators of real impact to amplify their effect, improve their quality and effectiveness, address problems for future generations, and foster new opportunities.

Multiple facts in our history explain why, culturally, we have become self-destructive and incoherent in what we think, say, and do. This should not serve as a justification, although these facts and factors are not unique or exclusive to Colombians and are present in societies worldwide.

Indeed, the main factor in the near extinction of the Indigenous population can easily be identified as the smallpox disease, which claimed millions of lives. However, it is also true that some of our Indigenous ancestors contributed to the devastation of other peoples, including, in some cases, their own, in inexplicable complicity with the foreigners who ruthlessly exploited the wealth of this territory. All this highlights a segregation of various groups and communities that has occurred consistently and periodically in every region and community, overlooking intersections that remain in the historical memory among the inhabitants of different ethnicities and regions.

If we become aware, a high percentage of today's Colombian children start their lives burdened by the legacy of being immersed in a society that enslaves them early on, beginning in schools or colleges where, in their formative years, they encounter a mainly depressing public educational institution. This institution tends to capture their dreams to frustrate and destroy them. Today, it

is threatened by those who control it, which are not the school authorities but student gangs manipulated by external criminal influences, perpetuating a culture of violence as a reliable reference in each generation, which leaves an indelible and tragic mark that discourages the educational path as a beneficial transformer of existence.

Defenseless education does not denounce what has been described and becomes intimidated by the challenges of implementing the structural changes that must be urgently promoted, so that our legacy is not once again one of despair for future generations.

Towards Education with Purpose

Without an education that is properly conceived, structured, and aligned with the country's institutional framework, we rely on spontaneous, non-planning events, which pose a significant risk of shifting paths, metrics, and objectives from one moment to the next. An education without purpose is subjected to thoughtless reactions of the free market that globalization outlines today. We must design an education that provides us with benefits and allows us to demonstrate added value in the holistic formation of children and young people who will be our responsible leaders of viable economic and social transformations in the future, with an equitable vision of wealth distribution in an environment of healthy competition and transparency.

In Colombia, it has also become a habit for us to view local and national reality as a shared experience of complex adversities. First, due to a lack of a clear vision of where we should be heading;

second, because the direction and incentives for collective construction are not expressed in strategic actions but, on the contrary, in misguided populist decisions that foster concerning polarizations, turning us into enemies without cause and, even more seriously, without any consideration for life and dignity.

We require an education that fully dignifies us as individuals, preventing us from viewing each other explicitly or implicitly as adversaries simply because we think differently. To be more tolerant and never enemies, more reasoned and dialectical, and less visceral. While we are not, as is the case in all countries around the world, simply by being humans, a nation of angels, we must commit to building an educational system that lays the foundations for peace, participation, and action for and towards others, overcoming the practices and erroneous paradigms of our ancestors, who succumbed to wars and violence that buried the dreams of millions of compatriots.

I would like to propose that we rescue the valuable aspects of the country, its people, and their culture, understanding the challenges and goals we must strive for to strengthen our democracy and close the gaps of freedom, equality, and equity.

The time has come for us to commit, out of conviction, to transforming education to embrace peace as our banner, solidarity as our slogan, and collective well-being as our great purpose. By learning about the importance of personal and collective effort, we will take significant steps to become and appear as such. Putting this into practice will influence future generations, so they can reference it as something inherent to the dreamed-of nation.

In this way, we will seek strategic alliances to build a network of efficient public and private institutions that contribute to the goal of shaping ourselves into a nation where contradictions are recognized as necessary, flexible, and respected. The redirection of our educational system must impact us as Colombians to reaffirm our identity, respected and respectable among ourselves.

I refer to a nation that recognizes the potential of each region and demonstrates meaningful learning from its communities, where participatory democracy is claimed and inhabitants are taught to envision the new possible realities for themselves.

We are facing a great and favorable opportunity to prioritize Colombia's educational institutions. We cannot afford to miss this chance, especially now when the symptoms of our degradation as a society are more evident and visible than ever.

This educational institution must train us to learn to respect, to understand the customs of others, to reaffirm their idiosyncrasies, to strengthen national and regional identity, and to prioritize our belonging both regionally and nationally.

Our innovation, as a value of the nation, is scarce because we have closed the door to educational access for intelligence and talent. We have not allowed it to flourish due to an education that has stifled dreams, limited fantasies, and suppressed motivation.

We must leave behind that education, which has only served as a context for complaints from a segment of selfish unionism, justified by the belief that "we have always done it this way and it cannot be any other way"; we must set aside that education that lagged behind because of the ease of minimal effort. Instead, we should develop an education that embraces its social forefront and is not limited to addressing its new challenges. That education that complains about the allocated budget must be left behind, as those who receive little often fail to make the most of it. In short, that education that perpetuates itself through inaction must be left behind.

I emphasize education because I am an educator and firmly believe that it liberates, encourages argumentation, and promotes debate as ways to overcome the yoke of the mental prison in which thousands of Colombian educators find themselves. Fortunately, many educators have managed to free themselves from such demagoguery and have been able to see education as a social opportunity to build trust, to protect, to teach understanding, to learn how to learn, and to cultivate good individuals based on positive examples for anyone in need. More than just teachers, they are dedicated educators committed to leaving a mark and being remembered for their great devotion to a better Colombia.

There is a need for an education where everyone, hopefully, can smile despite the sadness that for generations has brought tears from dedicated teachers who, despite their voices and efforts, saw nothing change, and the educational deficit due to a lack of access, relevance, and quality continued to surpass the efforts.

Of course, education is not just an act generated by institutions; it also involves parents or guardians who influence the formation of children and heirs. It is essential that education instills the value of prudence and mastery through argumentation, prioritizes the value of truth, and is liberating rather than libertine. It

should teach civic responsibility, set an example for recognizing and correcting mistakes, and foster compassion and support. Education must instill in new generations how to exercise their rights and encourage fulfilling duties as something embraced rather than imposed. Above all, it should teach the value of dialogue while exemplifying sincerity, integrity, and charity.

We need an education that instills integrity, teaches how to leave behind vanity, demonstrates honesty, guides toward a clear conscience, exemplifies why, how, and when to speak, and also teaches when to remain silent to avoid false accusations and insults intended to offend. An education that encourages leaving behind human misery, defends nobility and benevolence, and fosters reasoning in all its educational processes.

It will be intelligence and collective work to patiently find the path that will help us to collectively envision the strategies for mapping the country we desire. It will be prudence that will help us understand what vision and what actions we will take to solve the serious structural problems that keep us immersed in shadows.

From Conflict to Coexistence

As a society, we are obliged to act with caution, but with the rigorous demand to read what has happened in previous years and decades and, of course, to understand that history often becomes a cycle, but also a vicious circle if we do not learn from it. Humanity is always on the lookout for self-interested actors aiming to maintain their *status quo* at the expense of widespread well-being.

When there is no awareness of the tragic consequences of a present without a clear direction, the future becomes alienated without points of reference for action.

Today's world is hyperconnected, and every activity, no matter how remote, is known, almost in real time, by a significant part of the planet.

We live in a time of change, and it is necessary to confront an urgent and collective analysis of the future to learn how to read our reality and understand that our history must go beyond the assessments of victors and vanquished that have accompanied our slow evolution and identity.

The world is experiencing a period of polarization between the left and the right. We are in a moment of upheavals generated by, among others, the war in Russia and Ukraine, Israel and Palestine, tensions between the Koreas, China's strategic positioning, the power play of the countries in the Middle East, and even humanity's wars to overcome extreme visions of climate change.

Amid a warlike environment, it is paradoxical to observe that if we were to review the great empires and their expansionist spirit of conquering wealth and lands, we might find that the most prosperous were those who did not devastate the conquered peoples, but rather those who learned to coexist with them.

It is time to leave behind sectarianism and regionalism, which malevolently feed on everything bad that occurs. Maintaining these attitudes leads to the perpetuation of biased perspectives that only benefit a few insensitive minorities.

Only an educated populace will be able to establish and coexist in solidarity, relevance, and effectiveness to ensure principles of common good policy (such as distributive wealth scenarios, participation, and collective production) over inappropriate socioeconomic models.

Given this scenario, the equitable and inclusive development of Colombia will be viable as long as it is accompanied by an educational foundation that strengthens a moral perspective, ensuring ethical legitimacy for every Colombian, as well as the positioning and recognition of the State in relation to its own civil society.

If not approached collectively and urgently, this reflectionaction on our model of coexistence as a society will continue to deteriorate, leading to more suffering and more loss of life amid a conflict that has, clearly, regressed ideologically and persists due to the confusion created by criminals, cunning, and twisted minds that generate social unease and despair.

It is vital to analyze why this conflict is also fueled by prejudices and falsehoods that we have historically mobilized and that today keep us in situations of unjustifiable domination by those who have always held power. Also, by other actors who, as I will present later, begin to create chaos based on the subjectivity of expressions of violence in all their forms, which have been permitted in the past, thereby paradoxically creating a condition resistant to the construction of a collective vision for the country.

I reiterate that it is indisputable to acknowledge that we are facing a change of era and that perhaps this is a very special opportunity to recognize ourselves as an important part of the world, but also to reflect positively on a reality underlying the comparative advantages we share as those who have had the fortune of being born or welcomed in this beautiful territory.

I also insist that this is not about continuing to fall into polarization, paying attention to arguments detached from objective realities put forth by false leaders who, in a prodigious use of immoral perversity (crossing ethical lines) and manipulating media with incoherent and distorted messages, provide evidence that if we do not correct our course, we will succumb generationally as a viable society.

I reiterate that humanity is moving at a frantic pace in the face of change in an environment of globalization and hyper-digitalization. We have a history to build that will be for the better if we know how to project ourselves into the future and do not fall into the temptation of the illusion-based rentierism for many and profits for a few.

We need to address the holistic education of our compatriots with a spirit of transformative leadership, marking a starting point on the value of education for all, with investigative capacity so that from science and technology, we can make the benefits of our wealth accessible to everyone. Colombians and Latin Americans, in general, must emerge from the marginal space in which we have positioned ourselves due to a lack of conviction, leadership, and limited beliefs about ourselves.

We have not been able to recognize our potential, our intelligence, and our great talents to create and add value to our human wealth without depending, like an addicted consumer, on what external others believe.

It is time to prepare ourselves and the new generations with quality, relevant, and widespread education so that the rest of the world understands the value that Colombia, and hopefully Latin America and the Caribbean, also have in strengthening the common well-being and happiness of all.

I reiterate that in Colombia, a quality education focused on the new demands of innovative models can be the necessary engine of change to improve both the well-being of its people and the conditions for a dignified life in other environments around the planet. We also urgently need to address an analysis of the phenomenon of Westernization and the growing needs that arise in the Southeast Asian world and several regions of sub-Saharan Africa.

Today, more than ever, we are witnessing a profound increase in misery and poverty in many countries, particularly in the Global South. In our daily lives, we see how millions of people suffer, but not everyone understands the reasons behind the recessions that advance due to the misguided vision of those who have led and continue to lead this nation in the past and present.

Answering how far we are from building a beneficial vision for the future depends on us. This vision is necessary to motivate our participation in free trade, in multilateral trade agreements, and in both domestic and foreign investments that help improve indicators of education and decent work, timely and efficient healthcare, and, of course, to give strategic value to state institutions that, through rigorous policies, incentivize efficiencies contributing to development for the social balance of our times.

An absent state must be replaced by one based on productivity and competitiveness. If this is not the case, with undeniable frustration, our reality will extend over time, not just for one but for several future generations, as it is easier to perpetuate poverty than to distribute wealth.

More than two centuries after Colombia was established as a nation, we have learned to extend and deepen our structural problems of exclusion and social inequity, widening the social gaps that shape poverty and misery, both material and axiological values. Our society has not gained the necessary awareness through the current governments and leaders, many of whom have made well-intentioned promises but have resulted in negative outcomes in their actions. It is about shaping and developing policies and strategies, including educational ones, that will allow beloved Colombia to take a significant step towards ceasing to be a subjugated nation.

From the beginning, our parochial party ideologies have failed utterly. Proof of this is how, in the constant debates about the future of our society, there is no true and objective political confrontation but rather an electoral manipulation by poorly trained populist charlatans with minimal levels of argumentation.

Another aspect that also nurtures this reflection on the lack of relevant education is crime, which has adhered to the regime or government of each era to justify fratricidal wars (whether between liberals and conservatives, between the left and the right, or among bandits from all corners) and that have left all kinds of armed groups that move through the territories forgotten by the State as if they were in their own home.

These seemingly eternal conflicts provide arguments to reaffirm the lack of clarity of our leaders and to assess that they have never been able to prioritize freedom and order, as our national coat of arms states. We have been complicit in internal and external policies that violated the dignity of generations and that for many years strengthened irregular armed groups from the left or the right (guerrillas, paramilitaries, and others), with the sole purpose of destroying what little had been built, especially throughout the last century.

If we keep a distance to analyze it objectively, peace in Colombia has never been realized. We have dreamed of it, we have tried to make progress in the regions of greatest conflict and violence through comprehensive talk or dialogues among the armed actors, but the longing for peace has repeatedly been postponed, once again frustrating the efforts of the State and its institutions, especially the educational ones.

A commitment to recreate a new peace scenario with high viability must start from a state policy that guides the education of new generations at all cycles and educational levels so that each one of us, regardless of age, feels involved in love for the country, in seeking solutions to all types of conflicts, and in striving for a sure and lasting peace.

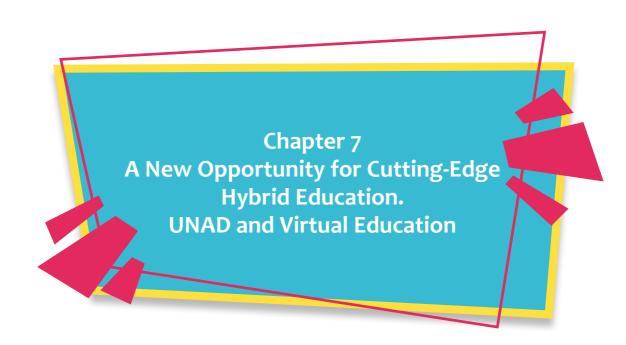
Today's Colombia is a nation seemingly trapped in a dead end, especially because we all want to distance ourselves from what is happening without considering the consequences of such indifference. Let us not forget that we come from cultural legacies that, born from the Conquest and the Colony, left us with a prevalent and counterproductive attitude of low motivation to participate. In response to the indifferent calls of various civil

governments, there has never been a desire to be an active part of the argued solution, always choosing the fateful and easy path of war and violence arising from the apathy of "if it does not involve me, I do not care."

Thus, the socially inherited destabilization of why we are the way we are? has had the effect of an unprecedented social decomposition. The current reality is shaped by minority interests that gain strength amidst sectarian struggles of the left and right or among new movements that emerge and vanish without real solutions to the structural problems and events that, day by day, make us less able to act intelligently in critical situations. Due to a lack of strategic preparation, our leaders have been unreliable and unpredictable in their decisions.

For all these reasons, our education needs to earn a leading social position on its own merit, helping to build a new history marked by cultural transformation, the recognition of diverse identities and idiosyncrasies, our values, our research frameworks, and innovation in knowledge. Not without reason, we are still not a nation that generates awareness of our identity and the values that invoke our actions, such as respect for the law, guarantees of equality, and expressions of freedom and fraternity.

Our commitment as a nation must be that our system, not just the educational sector, acts through the example and positive attitude of its leaders, executives, and transformative educators, as it is a source of creating new possibilities for transformation from an intellectual point of view, rather than relying on the political slogans used by pseudo-dogmatic leaders who do not even understand what they are saying or how to achieve it.



This essay has sought to draw attention to the importance of redefining the education of Colombians so that it is coherent and consistent in developing processes that positively change the educational trajectory of new generations, allowing for the strengthening of the human spirit and the nurturing of good citizens and good individuals.

Since the late 1980s and 1990s, the concept of *Knowledge Society* has been expanding and, at the same time, becoming more visible. For many, it is nothing more than a headline in a scientific or educational journal, but we cannot overlook its meaning and significance across all types of fields and sciences (social, basic, educational, health, political, economic, among many others).

The Knowledge Society was born and established in an era of humanity that should have marked a more significant impact on the demanding educational transformation needed for the twenty-first century across all continents, according to Marshall McLuhan's concept of the global village (2011).

This notion about the importance of knowledge in the cultural context created principles for a new society marked by the generation and applicability of all types of learning, as with knowledge, anything is possible, and there is no region or field of study that is separate from it.

The Knowledge Society is also an information society, active and dynamic with knowledge, and it invites learning as a continuum of everyone's daily life. The very originality, initiative, and human spirit were what propelled it. It is expressed through the disruptive development of technologies that, without asking, were born and evolved at a frantic pace. Several of them even

had their genesis in garages¹², where restless and dissatisfied young people, by the slow pace that much of the educational institutional framework around the world imposed as a brake on creative development, could not see their innovative initiatives thrive at the pace required by their brilliant minds.

Unfortunately, it must be said that, as I have mentioned, our educational heritage from Medieval Spain was established more for the worse than for the better. I reiterate that, as Alberto Martínez recounts in his *Crónica del desarraigo*, we not only born poorly in education but have continued even worse, as I have stated in various sections of this essay. In Latin America, this problem is endemic and has severely deteriorated the social progress of our democracies.

Today, except for pioneering educational systems known for their growth, relevance, and quality assurance, such as those established in Finland, Sweden, and Germany in Northern and Western Europe, or in Asian countries like Japan, Korea, China, and Singapore, in Latin America and the Caribbean countries, we resist change and even create various arguments for education to disconnect from the social forefront it should embody, slowing down its limited transformative capacity.

Not few nor small are the large companies that were incubated in small garages, thanks to the visionary spirit of their founders. Some of those that can be mentioned are Hewlett Packard, Apple, Microsoft, Dell, and Google.

Virtuality as an Undeniable Option

At the World Higher Education Conference (WHEC) held by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Barcelona, Spain, in 2022 (two years after it was scheduled due to the emergence of COVID-19), concerning effects of the pandemic were identified, especially in the conventional settings of higher education: the increase in average educational inequity worldwide, the reduction of in-person student groups, and the dismissal of thousands of teachers in most countries. The pandemic confirmed that a regrettable and common practice of rejecting technology only served to postpone an overwhelming reality of change and transformation: the new pedagogies and didactics based on learning to learn, along with technologies as support, complement, or vital setting for education, work, and even entertainment, prompted both insiders and outsiders in the sector to recognize their value in many cases.

The pandemic forced many actors in the traditional educational system, teachers and administrators, who had rarely, if ever, used technological platforms, digital repositories, remote laboratories, simulated labs, multimedia environments, applications, and digital interaction devices, to incorporate virtual interactions or, better yet, remote classes with students almost from scratch in many cases. This led to dangerous compromises in quality, as they had to quickly adapt materials, distorting the essence and rigor of the virtual learning environment without learning the basics of the new and diverse pedagogical structures and falling into a subjective assessment of the true and innovative model of virtual education.

Not surprisingly, while dropout rates in university classrooms increased worldwide and in Colombia, enrollment rates fell and some programs were even closed at certain universities, in our country, the Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD), had already been on this path for nearly 40 years, to the point that with the pandemic, it grew even more than before¹³.

I would like to bring and present in this essay, as a verifiable fact, the educational and innovative model led for more than four decades by UNAD, the largest public university in Colombia by student enrollment, which has been institutionally accredited for high quality by the Ministry of National Education.

The UNAD was founded in 1981 and specialized as the only public educational institution dedicated exclusively to enhancing its model of open and distance education in virtual environments. The history, obstacles, and achievements of the UNAD in its first 40 years are detailed in the book *Educación, Virtualidad e Innovación*, and the digital link is available to you through the following QR code. Dear reader, I also present a new hypothesis for you to falsify or verify.

¹³ Between December 2019 and December 2021, UNAD increased its student population by over 30%, a figure that, conversely, reflects what most traditional in-person universities lost.



Sixth hypothesis: Thanks to multiple pedagogies and disruptive technologies, education can now be expressed in all its dimensions without compromising its quality and its purpose of holistic training individuals in any field of knowledge and discipline, with innovative curricula, neuroscience-based pedagogies, and digitized didactics.

Virtuality as an educational model has undergone all sorts of quality and relevance assessments regarding its responsibilities to educate, research, innovate, internationalize, and, above all, include all kinds of people in programs and services not only in higher education but also in the preceding cycles and levels of training.

This model focuses on learning to learn, which in itself evolves the concepts and classical methods that have prevailed in conventional teaching, driving it toward a differentiated pedagogical practice regarding the role of teachers, strengthening effective communication skills, and emphasizing the transformation of support for each student in their own motivation for knowledge.

UNESCO has recognized and valued virtual education for more than 30 years. It considers it the future of higher education integrated into a hyper-digital society to facilitate connections with local environments and global contexts. At UNAD, we began this path of virtuality long ago, criticized by many, but fortunately, for the history of global education, it has proven to be accurate and has had a very high social impact.

Today, UNAD represents an essential governmental initiative to provide free, universal, and quality higher education, while also addressing educational inclusion projects at all levels and cycles, both within and outside the country. It has students in various undergraduate and graduate programs across all fields and areas of knowledge, as well as others enrolled in literacy programs, primary education, and virtual high school, in addition to continuous education courses and multilingual training.

Its territorial presence extends through a network of 72 regional centers (techno-pedagogical architectures) throughout the country, serving students from 1,016 of Colombia's 1,123 municipalities, as well as two legally established international campuses: the first, founded in the late 1990s in the United States and recognized as UNAD Florida, and the second in Spain, established in 2021, to support compatriots in those regions of the world.

However, the challenges of global higher education go beyond UNAD's experience. New forms of education are changing the inputs, methods, and objectives of knowledge that have

traditionally been provided. This shift, coupled with the global aspiration of humanity for access to higher education as a universal, inalienable right, is still not achieved in many countries (including Colombia) due to economic costs and restrictions on access, coverage, and connectivity, among others. The debate regarding the advantages, benefits, and importance of virtual education as a public policy to guarantee this long-sought right is still lacking.

I believe that new hybrid models, which combine inclusive and personalized virtual education with in-person learning, should enhance the appreciation of differences at all levels. These are pathways to the forefront of higher education that Colombian society demands. We need an education that reaches students where they are and does not uproot them; an education that adjusts to their sociocultural and economic conditions; an education that recognizes that quality learning and training must be a real possibility for all individuals, at all times, ages, and stages of their lives; ultimately, an education that helps eradicate hopelessness.

This reflection does not align with reality. The Roadmap set forth by UNESCO at the World Higher Education Conference (WHEC), titled *Beyond Limits: New Ways to Reinvent Higher Education*, confirms that initiatives like UNAD are not part of the past or merely alternatives but rather shape a highly promising future reality.

This leads us to conceive that virtuality and diverse technologies must not only be part of the teacher-student interaction and the process of learning how to learn but should also help recognize differences, foster innovation, and change, address economic, social, political, cultural, and environmental challenges (such as climate change and biodiversity loss, armed conflicts, income inequality, and the general decline of democracy), and seek to educate and respond to global challenges, as identified in the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, to which UNESCO has invited universities to commit, incorporating them into curricula and contextually sensitive, pragmatic initiatives tailored to the realities of each country.

Higher education systems and models around the world must strengthen to be at the forefront, but this will not be possible if institutions do not dare to meet the training expectations of new citizens who will lead this vision. It is imperative that this sector continues to evolve and increase efforts regarding new pedagogies and didactics, with the necessary qualification of the new competencies expected from educators to understand their new role in a world that is radically different from before. In this context, there is a pressing need for awareness to grasp the speed and frequency of changes, which, after all, are the only constants in today's world.

In previous chapters, I have indirectly described a historically patient Colombia, almost stagnant and always expectant of social changes that help overcome inequity and inequality. I have also noted that one of the paths to achieve this lies in inclusive and quality education—critical and relevant education that aims to improve coexistence, basic living conditions, applied research, the integration of other levels and populations into the educational system, and the enhancement of quality-of-life indices. In critical moments like the present, higher education becomes a catalyst that could reinforce the common good and reduce risks that may threaten the sustainability of the planet.

To achieve this goal, educational management must be refocused. While certain experiences are positive, such as UNAD's advancements in virtual education that challenge the vast majority of higher education institutions today, we must not settle for this. Colombia and its educational sector have suffered from chronic complacency, which not only wounds institutions but also impacts society as a whole.

Reframing Educational Work

My call is for us to continue evolving and recreating an education that guarantees quality, equity, inclusion, and social justice for a humanity still distant from its existential essence: to serve and to serve through learning to learn, a goal yet to be fully achieved.

We must overcome the colonial tradition of a transmission-based education that has only led to poor memorization of concepts and knowledge (do you remember the old Spanish saying "La letra con sangre entra" [You have to learn the hard way?]), which caused many to underestimate the value of classical languages like Latin and Greek, and to disregard the importance of philosophy and the study of history. Not to mention the minimal impact of social sciences and how mathematics has become the "boogeyman" for students rather than an opportunity to understand and leverage the basic sciences of nature. Up until now, all these key areas of knowledge in education have presented themselves more as requirements for obtaining grades, certificates, and degrees, distancing them from their real contribution and value to the continuous process of individual and social growth.

In any educational process where the urgent reframing of education levels is undertaken—from early childhood to university settings—radical transformations are needed to achieve a redefined education at all cycles and levels, grounded in a holistic approach that harmonizes with curricula at all levels, where both teachers and students are dynamic agents of social transformation.

Holistic education should result from a process that determines growth in how we are, think, act, and, of course, feel our identity, in the respect and warmth that define *Colombianitud*, as it is linked to our solidarity as part of a nation that values meaningful learning within its historical, political, and social context.

This involves taking on the challenge of making fundamental breaks with the inherited and prevailing practices that have degraded the roles of institutions, teachers, and students. I hope my assertion does not offend anyone, but deep transformation requires unlearning entrenched habits that defend complacency, hindering the understanding and implementation of new educational approaches and methodologies.

This break also serves as a call (to attention) to the intellectual elite that has monopolized the possibility of expanding and managing knowledge to contribute to social equity. It is about breaking away from the classic institutional vision that still resists change and continues to rely on education that yearns for the classroom and memorization-based teaching, failing to grasp the significant contributions of more open pedagogical models that engage students through curricula linked to addressing sectoral or community issues, while making intensive use of expansive tools like technology, which can never replace the teacher

who guides, motivates, and sincerely supports the educational process.

In this reflective context, I am surprisingly confronted with positions from those who demand a return to paper books while denigrating digitized versions and the technologies that facilitate virtual learning, as if these have lost their relevance and are perhaps more sought after than ever. The reality is that people now read them in digital formats that make them easier to carry and access. Libraries remain as relevant as they have always been and will continue to be; however, they have also evolved into repositories that, in the digital world, expand and facilitate exchanges in networks and discussion groups through blogs and virtual forums to enhance usability. Ordine (2013) stated that virtuality kills classic books and poetry as if they had been expelled from our humanity and universities, but, on the contrary, thanks to the knowledge society, supported by technology, it is easier to recognize their essence—not only for a privileged few in physical classrooms, as before, but for any inhabitant of this planet who accesses them through the internet.

Some still long for the disciplinary and contemplative teachers of bygone eras, who provided great service by being a guiding light in the lives of their contemporaries and thinking. However, in today's knowledge society, the emphasis must be on vigorously questioning teachers to help them learn how one-on-one communication remains relevant, but is no longer the only method, demanding pedagogical reflection to strengthen key competencies and behaviors essential for well-being in life.

Clearly, today's humanity bears little resemblance to that of ancient times or the Middle Ages. Therefore, it is absurd to

hear expressions that attempt to classify today's education as mercantilist compared to the past, ignoring the differences in times and the connections that both universities and education must have with their era and with the generations that must be prepared to successfully face the future.

Regardless of the approach, model, or structure of the modern university, it must understand and embrace cutting-edge pedagogies and technologies to serve its mission and goals. The university should recognize that it is perhaps the most significant social organization of the last millennium. Now more than ever, it must rethink itself to promote holistic education through research, innovation, internationalization, inclusion, and social transformation and mobility, particularly in light of the crisis it faces due to a loss of expected prominence.

In Colombia, specifically, universities must urgently contribute to recognizing the essence of our national and regional identity to establish key pathways in the education of children and youth, prioritizing values such as solidarity, respect for others, responsibilities, and an inalienable love for the homeland and family. Education should enhance the uniqueness of those talents that, with intelligence, contribute to collective well-being. It must ensure that students develop a free and responsible awareness of the consequences of their actions and their relationships with others.

This envisioned education will become a key requirement for learning to live and coexist, with an ethical (and even aesthetic) orientation, guaranteeing the best for everyone in an environment of tolerance and personal, community, and familial discipline, fostering freedom and holistic development. This will lead to the realization of thought and word in actions directed towards the common good, above individual interests, in a context that helps us understand that specific superiority is not defined by material wealth or socioeconomic status but by spiritual value and the merit of those who contribute to justice and freedom for others.

The richness of the language we share, our creative and noble ancestral customs, and the kindness of our race and interactions as brothers and sisters will regain their essence as we strengthen our values and national purposes through education.

We must nurture transformative educators, aware of the need to act with open minds, educational flexibility, and vivid metacognition in all life circumstances. If we can instill in new generations the concept of ethics and a clear capacity for discernment to make just and compassionate judgments, we will transcend to an education forged for the collective, contrary to the tradition of dangerous individualism (the "me first, me second, and me third" mentality) that has hindered any possibility of dialogue or consensus.

Accompanied by a good teacher, a holistic individual will find meaning in their actions, act with purpose, and project virtuous competitive spheres that present new challenges and horizons in the global society, as well described by Edgar Morin.

Because educating individuals involves recognizing their essence in its entirety, not only valuing their cognitive potential or capacity to act but also offering a metaphysical perspective on the best expression of their being, in a commitment to strive for improvement through the development of a vocation for service and coexistence based on desire.

This is necessarily possible in every institution, in light of its autonomous and independent educational project for different education levels and cycles, provided that these are viewed from an ethical and political dimension that enlightens each student on the meaning and significance of their life and existence, fostering coexistence and striving to reduce inequality and social gaps.

Today, our civil society is weak due to its limited argumentative capacity and, in particular, because it has not managed to seize the opportunities that arise for citizen participation in debate and collective construction. This particular goal must be addressed by primary, secondary, and higher education institutions, especially universities, which, generally distant from the realities of communities and territories, deploy curricula that, within a vicious cycle, overestimate the value of theoretical knowledge while restricting its applicability, undermining its educational relevance and effective social impact.

It is the universities, particularly public ones, that should recognize their leading role in building society, helping to identify these pivotal points as a result of academic debates on what organization and type of knowledge teach how to learn to learn.

The history of our Colombian public education has shown how it has been generally marginalized, because its being and its work have succumbed for decades to the erroneous union decisions and its recurrent collective activism; to an unjustified resistance to change endorsed by resentful speeches, harangues and

activist despair that undermines the probity of being a teacher in its spirit and detracts from its professional work. I repeat my invitation for union action to be inalienable and to oxygenate teachers with true social dignity and commitment to the extended social welfare.

Accepting this turning point thanks to an open and argued dialogue would mean a historical turning point that Colombia has always expected and that, once and for all, would move towards a state policy that strengthens the sense and meaning of teaching merit.

With the proposed approach, the teaching profession would be one of the most prestigious and best recognized, generating social trust (ethical respect), sufficient freedom and autonomy for teachers, with or without legislation, to develop a disinterested disciplinary exercise of contribution especially for the entire generational collective of children and young people.

Edgar Morin (1999), in his work, Los siete saberes para la educación del futuro (The Seven Wisdoms for the Education of the Future), illustrated this dimension of personal transcendence as follows:

First, from the integrated vision of science, including the human sciences, which must work articulately towards a permanent concertation with scientific thought.

Second, on the relevance of knowledge to the extent that it acquires importance when it is applicable in diverse contexts to take advantage of opportunities and solve structural problems.

Third, in learning about the uncertainty involved in being aware of the need to approach and overcome reality, with results that affect it positively, if possible.

Fourth, in recognizing the value of social networks to strengthen ties that, over time, are reproduced to overcome conflicts and guarantee a balanced management of power, at any local or global level.

Fifth, in recognizing the ethical worldview of each being, where the "we" is always above the "I" to avoid the tiresome confrontation between the singular and the particular; according to Morin this will be the axis of present and future sustainability of humanity in a concept that requires a deep reflection of the educational institutionality, to address moral effects of the current and future world.

Sixth, in recognizing the value of the formative processes in each modality and methodology of teaching and learning, which outline scientific rigor, the management of information technologies and the art of asking questions.

Seventh, and last, the value of neuroscience and neuropedagogy, incorporated in the understanding of multiple intelligences and their dynamic and active role in the relationship between the two fundamental actors of the educational process: students and teachers.

If today's education, focusing on its impact on tomorrow, is capable of assuming the challenge of projecting its own restructuring and accepting the urgent change required by its institutional framework, it is feasible that the conditions will be

in place to move towards a comprehensive education, based first on learning to learn and learning to think, and then on learning to do and, most especially, on learning to be.

The proposed education of tomorrow, hopefully lived from today, should be assigned and marked by experience and by living, because only then we will leave behind the contemplative knowledge that was provided for decades to several generations, where the art of education was transformed into a mechanical trade without major incentives, giving priority to judgments coming from particular interests, based on collective interests, which contributed little or nothing to the development of a prosperous society.

It is not a truism to say it: when we speak of ethical and moral formation of students, we also speak of the same concepts of ethical and moral formation of teachers. This is the only way to start from the requested guarantee of coherence necessary for teachers to understand the privileged nature of their social role and to assume it as an indelible seal of their daily lives. Reflection on their conduct and discipline should inspire new norms that regulate our educational institutionality and leverage the critical conscience of society expected from the educational process.

In this sense, it is a matter of creating conditions that strengthen education in order to strengthen Colombian society by encouraging in children scenarios of axiological social formation, which determine in their tasks the recognition of the importance of the scientific spirit and in the guarantees of intellectual formation so that the formative process, as a planned continuum, guarantees that the educational process will guarantee the development of the children, as a planned

continuum, guarantees thinking capacities and competencies that derive in intellectual skills supported in the pluralistic vision of life, of the environment and of the fundamental value of learning, so that both teachers and students exercise them in the art of knowing how to be, how to think and how to do.

If we are able to do so, integral formation will cease to be a simple repetition or grammatical recitation of the educational project of each institution. This challenge implies strengthening a vocation, from zero formation to university formation, where ethics is assumed as the discourse proper to every educational act and, consequently, beyond knowledge, it is oriented towards integral, solidary, and rational human action.

If this is projected in this way, in the vision of Jürgen Habermas (2010), there would be behaviors based on dialogue, respect and fair moral action, in order to forge personalities with a transforming leadership. It would be a teaching profession that thinks and acts from its social being, strengthening the duty to be a citizen and respect, giving prevalence to reason as a fundamental referent of the general interest in the formative path of its students.

Establishing ethics and morality as a principle and goal of education in general for our country, implies the practical exercise of an action that goes beyond the individual as an interest towards the collective, as the fundamental. This is how this dimension of female-male education around basic values will help to reduce the gaps established today, so that equality, inclusion, recognition, and true respect, are individual and collective expression of those who are and will be in the future, and of those who hold the pride of Colombian nationality.

A nationality that will be recognized throughout the world by a hermeneutic of ethics, as a comparative expression of our actions, of responsibility as a pragmatic exercise, of our reasoning and of respect for human dignity as a key fact of the Colombian citizen's behavior.

This dreamed Colombia, based on an education that becomes its moral support as a source of balance and social sustainability, will determine conditions leading to peace, from the basic consensus for the existence and construction of the country in an action based on pluralism, diversity and the worldview of a nation of regions that institutionalizes the value of the State and respect for it.

The new generations will grow in the challenge for their permanent contribution to the strengthening of an open, plural, and equitable society, supported by dialogue and whose voice expresses the will to define strategies and actions that involve a sustainable human development above any other type of human action.

Education thus transformed will be a spiral that aggregates individual and collective wills by and for the common good. It is there where the values, norms and attitudes instilled by a rigorous and at the same time flexible initial training, determine a fundamental added value for all government actions of any kind to respond with policies and concrete practical actions that transcend all sectors acting in the society-State-education interaction.

Colombian education must be capable of transforming its own future, assuming the commitment of an integral formation

to free the minds of students, promoting reflective tasks and habits that strengthen civic coexistence, social security, critical thinking, and solidary social action. Then, significant steps will have been taken to achieve the formation of new citizens who will evolve from their mental stages, and their intelligence and talent will be recognized from their own learning to learn.

This will make the value of life become transcendent, initiating expressions and conditions of citizen recognition as the responsible builder of an extended welfare oriented to the respect and observance of rules and justice.

If education is capable of accepting this challenge, it will become what, by definition, is its duty: to be a basic social transformer. An education based on meaningful learning will contribute to increasing the value of the free citizen in the exercise of his own thinking and his actions towards others, thanks to the maturity of his discernment.

In summary, educational formation for all in Colombia, in all cycles and levels, should form a true system. This, in itself, is a challenge that cannot be postponed for those of us who are part of the current institutional framework, as well as for those who, from the legislative and executive branches, define public educational policy.

That said, it is a matter of building an educational macro-system that strengthens, regardless of the condition of each individual, but in terms of merit based on intelligence and talent, human sensitivity and, above all, the great capacity to coexist and create environments of respect, tolerance and healthy peace, both locally, nationally and globally.

Education driven by innovation, freedom and creativity, will allow us to leave behind Prussian models, anchored since the beginning of the industrial era, since we are in the advanced industrial society 4.0 and it is there where it is necessary to create competencies around living to recognize personal freedom and the freedom of others and to manage knowledge from education, research and innovation as purposes of strengthening our civil society.

Thus, education shaped for the demands of modernity will allow us to contribute to building a society that strengthens the authentic Colombian nationality and its educational identity. This is a priority task that cannot be postponed and is vital to consolidate our democracy as a fair, egalitarian and equitable nation.

Chapter 8 Autonomy and Trust: Key Drivers for Continuous Improvement in Colombian Education

The competitive advantages of any sector correspond to its capacity to make effective models and strategies that favor attention to the populations that gave rise to the creation of a given institutional framework. In the case of education, there are countries and institutions that have implemented successful strategies in their development and achieved competitive advantages in terms of the way they have reached, after a period of evolution, the necessary maturity to ensure the fulfillment of goals and favorable impacts on the student populations they seek to satisfy. I now formulate a seventh hypothesis for your consideration, dear reader.

Seventh hypothesis: In the case of education, competitive advantages are determined by a clear relationship with innovation and the breaking of paradigms, which are not always understood by the same actors in the sector and the institutions themselves. Education has historically reflected a clear resistance to change for its own improvement; especially of the classical structures of its organization and pedagogical models that were created since the 12th century and whose activities have involved differentiations more of form than of substance, in terms of their relationship with the historical situations and stages of the society they serve.

It is vital to insist, once again, on the urgency of a disruptive transformation in the Colombian educational sector and to show the interrelationships that should be assumed as parameters or assumptions for the formulation of a strategy that calls for the effective participation of society in its educational vision for the next 30 years and how this institutionality will be a key factor in strengthening democracy and the very vision of a country that

must be equitable, egalitarian, competitive, productive and with a high scientific and technological capacity.

This will provide the basis for a coherent society with opportunities for its citizens, children and young people to have access to a high level of education that favors the management of knowledge, competencies and behaviors of an axiological, scientific, epistemological and teleological order and that will project to the next generations the national pride of building an equitable and egalitarian nation.

Understanding why a single educational system will allow the development of a value chain so that the different levels and cycles of education become a powerful tool, will minimize the effects that Colombian society suffers today in terms of its limited relevance of educational offerings and the scarcity of integral values implanted in the axiological level of children and young people, so that they have a clear behavior as good people and good citizens both in the present and in the future. Therefore, it is a matter of valuing new concepts, modalities and methodologies and of highlighting pedagogies referenced in neuroscience.

It is time to break the ties generated by the hierarchical structures that currently prevail in most of our sectorial institutions. Those who have not done so can transform them, in the exercise of their autonomy, to achieve maximum educational achievements and competitive impact indicators (such as the OECD ratings), from a systemic perspective that contributes to guarantee an integration with multiple references of diversity, typical of this pluricultural and pluri-ethnic nation.

An integrated education system will make it possible to value the interrelationships from initial education to postgraduate university education, and will support children and young people, as the subjects of human dignity that they are, so that they can strengthen their talents and intelligences and their life projects will ensure their fulfillment and well-being.

On the other hand, this system should move towards total geographical and population coverage to allow each institution to share and coordinate strategies and activities of value through training processes articulated with the characteristics and conditions of each regional environment and each community in which the student's life develops.

Also, the behaviors, competencies and knowledge that integrate the value chain of each institution should motivate a radical and harmonious transformation of an educational sector that must assume its vanguard without further delay.

UNAD: Autonomy with Quality

As part of this debate, and due to the relevance of the topic for Colombia and the countries of the region, I transcribe the principles developed by the educational community of UNAD, sent to the Colombian Ministry of National Education in July 2023, in response to the invitation of this organization to the country to move forward with a proposal for a single statutory law on education:

Since education is a right of all, which allows dignifying lives, elevating democracy scenarios and enhancing personal and

professional development, Colombia must have a single statutory law, which constitutionally protects access to knowledge, educational continuity, articulation, welfare, protection for the integral formation of students, the dignity of teachers and the modernization of all public and private institutions in all cycles and levels of Colombian education.

The definition of actors, institutions, training levels, methodologies and organization of programs and services must be preceded by national consensus on the purposes and goals of a comprehensive educational system that contributes to social issues so that the country consolidates a national educational policy of the State that clearly defines its vision and long-term course, replacing periodic government and sector plans that have only left impacts and immediate actions and not real attention to the sector's crisis.

Higher education must be thought and managed within the integrality demanded by the entire educational system, in accordance with axiological, teleological, and epistemological principles and purposes. Its quality and impact will be more relevant for the country to the extent that it is duly articulated with early, basic and secondary education, occupational training and human development, and the most varied modalities and offers that, proven by their impact, favor the quality of training in the face of the challenges of the knowledge society.

Beyond the characteristics, levels, structure and academic model of the institutions, the educational projects must be innovative and recognize the social and economic context of their students, the diversity of forms of learning and the realities to contribute from their graduates to the dynamic evolution of their environments. This is the only way to effectively contribute to closing the gaps that hinder access to and permanence in higher education.

Autonomy at all levels and in all educational and institutional spheres, conditioned by the essential values of democracy, coexistence, and constitutional respect, must characterize the proper jurisdiction of educational projects that contribute to the country's vision agreed upon for the medium and long term and, consequently, must be protected.

The intended integral formation, expected in all the educational processes of the past and today, must ensure the disposition, competencies and behaviors to make it possible for all nationals who pass through the educational institutions to experience and promote scenarios of freedom with responsibility, solidarity at all levels, entrepreneurial alternatives, passion for knowledge, pride and defense of the axiological values and those of the Colombian identity, innovation initiatives, recognition and respect for diversity, and to be an example in the defense of inclusion at all levels.

The creation of new institutions or educational centers must be supported by rigorous investments derived from projects that, among others, sustain in the short and medium term both their sustainability and their impact on the consolidation of scenarios in which the social and productive sectors contribute to the national and local government's entrepreneurship promotion programs. Therefore, it will be a rigorous requirement to present strategic educational proposals that contribute to productive growth, the impact of research and the promotion of innovation

for a sustainable and sustainable development of communities, territories, and micro-territories.

Pedagogical innovations, new didactics and the intensive use of connectivity and new computer tools, as well as the relevance of disruptive technologies should be an essential option for all types of institutions and educational actors, as support for the promotion of autonomous learning, meaningful learning and collaborative work, and should also be part of curricular innovation exercises to enrich the formative process of students and prepare them to face the challenges of the knowledge society and the learning society.

The interrelations of the different cycles of education should include two main routes: one, the classical academic education in the development of disciplines derived from the fields and areas of training, such as medicine, law, engineering, agricultural, livestock and environmental sciences, administrative, financial, economic and accounting sciences, as well as social and human sciences, the arts and educational sciences, which are incorporated to develop professions related to the needs and especially the structural problems of their territories. The second route derives from dual education at the occupational technical level, or professional and technological level with postgraduate degrees at the specialization, master's, or doctoral level.

State funding should also recognize, in equity, the efforts, conditions and measurable achievements through management indicators that encourage the work of educational institutions in areas such as regionalization impacts from applied research, generation, adaptation and adoption of knowledge and technologies for the service and welfare of vulnerable

communities and territories, graduation rates based on the impact of graduates on regional and national development, innovation in extended welfare strategies, national and international academic mobility that provides applicable and effective frontier research, as well as to promote free access and permanence of students.

The Responsible Exercise of Autonomy

I also mention a reflection of mine on university autonomy made in the book "La autonomía universitaria en Colombia. Precisiones sobre su concepto (University autonomy in Colombia. Precisions on its concept)," developed by the Colombian Association of Universities, ASCUN and UNAD, in 2016, and which maintains its full validity:

"...I would like to recall, as I am sure many of you will, the important milestone sown in the 1980s and early 1990s with the seminar on university management developed by the superb Jesuit teacher and priest Alfonso Borrero Cabal, to highlight two of his important teachings on the role of the university and its rectors. He said: the university is a social force; it is the conscience of society; it is the conscience of students, professors and administrators at the highest level; and he also said: the voice of the rector is the voice of the university conscience directed towards social events; the university, mentioned and reiterated, is the space in which the truth is sought and in which the truth is constructed."

In this sense, autonomy, the subject of this reflection, was conceived by the National Constituent Assembly that resulted in the current Political Constitution and developed by jurisprudence so that higher education institutions of a university nature can structure professional training projects aimed at achieving their own educational and cultural mission, within the academic sphere of higher education.

The generalization of autonomy for all types of educational institutions, as a principle, would constitute a legal guarantee that protects the freedom of configuration of their educational projects and organizational structures, of their diverse offers of services and programs whose promotion serves to accompany and strengthen their training processes and their other substantive responsibilities that today are only proper to higher education.

In synthesis, the concept of autonomy implies the consecration of a general rule that consists in the freedom of action of the educational centers, in such a way that the restrictions are exceptional and must be foreseen in the law, as clearly established by the legislator, whose role is very important since it is in the jurisprudence where the limits of the aforementioned autonomy are to be found.

Indeed, it is important to foresee that the exercise of autonomy does not constitute, by itself, the creation of islands within an educational scenario and that, on the contrary, it requires us to manage ourselves with the attributes of a multilevel educational system.

Current Colombia is the consequence of the base of its red balances in its educational institutions, but also, on the side of the governed, there is a serious socio-cultural problem. It is clear that in the origins of our modern democracy we were not educated to be in solidarity, among ourselves and for ourselves; neither were we educated to be respectful of the lives of others; the violations to our law never moved us too much, and education, which should be the protagonist in the integral formation of thought and citizen values, has acted as one more spectator, because it never built enough pedagogical fruits to contribute to the true and effective transformation of the sector and the formation of its students, who consequently, have been, are and will be the citizens that from their earliest ages in the future will exercise as leaders and authorities.

I believe that it is not too late, and we can rebuild from education, the leadership of our educational institutions and with them the certain future of a Colombia prepared for the integral and collective welfare of Colombians of today, but particularly of tomorrow.

The central ideas of this reflection are still valid, despite the fact that I elaborated it almost eight years ago. That is why I quote it in this essay, which advocates not only autonomy for universities, but also for all types of public or private institutions at all levels and cycles of education, within a system that must approach its management and development from the full exercise of its autonomy and full confidence of the State.

Mutual Trust

The main and most important educational systems in the world coincide in the trust that the State gives to its institutions so that they respond, with high quality guarantees, to the formation of different generations of children and young people so that, from a young age, they connect with the vision of the nation that they have built collectively to promote knowledge and talent that, integrated, nurture personal and group experiences to their different generations.

I also mention the idea presented in my book TIP Trabajo Inteligente Productivo (Productive Intelligent Work) related to two-way actions. "In order to trust, one must be dependable. It is an imperative condition for harmony. It entails a deep responsibility for truth, commitment, and consistency between what is said and what is done." This in itself is a great challenge for Colombian educational institutions and for its various stakeholders.

In TIP I also point out how:

"being reliable, you might say, is the best expression for being an ethical, correct and coherent person. Who is dependable and trusts others, does not polarize, moderates his expressions, has a positive attitude, works as a team, is patient and supports and accompanies the purposes and work of others, even if the results sometimes take a long time."

If the State extends this trust to legal entities whose public or private nature is to provide the service to guarantee the right to education, it means that it is extending the responsibility to be trustworthy; in other words, to deliver results with the expected social impact.

The educational institution holder of this trust will have no other option to preserve and deepen it than to exercise a correct conduct focused on social recognition, empathy, respect, and closeness with and from others who are part of the sector. An educational organization that complies will be dependable because it guarantees that its work is managed according to preestablished rules and agreements and that its goals, indicators, and commitments are also fully met.

An educational institution will be trustworthy because it has earned that trust, but also because it extends trust to its key actors: managers, teachers, and students, who should act in coherence with others as they would like to be acted upon.

Mistrust, on the other hand, is expensive. Individuals, families, communities, and companies where distrust is prevalent become unviable, their members are confronted with hatred and arrogance, most of the time they become inefficient due to reprocessing (revisions, repetitions...), they generate few good results and face more conflicts. But when there is trust, relationships flow, people feel more valued, committed, and empowered as productivity increases and the environment becomes more pleasant.

An educational organization that extends trust to its teachers and other employees will be eminently winning and successful. This will mean that, in a coherent and visible way, its leaders (managers and teachers in particular) will be a permanent example that will express, in their thinking and acting, the experience of

the mission purposes, and will motivate their teams to reach a greater understanding of the vision of their educational project through the axiological positions assumed, and in particular to strengthen a culture of solidarity that permeates the daily life of the formative work.

With this, there will be an exponential growth in the styles of transformational leadership, as a product of a coherent formative process of each educational institution.

In the case of teachers, it is important to understand that trust towards and from the teacher is assumed in the being of each one and is managed in the doing and in the way they release inspiration to generate connections with the other; this means, with each student who at the same time identifies why and for what he/she studies and acts socially.

Therefore, the exemplary life represents the possibility of determining ourselves as teachers and as people with greatness, whose inner self empowers the liberalization of the potential of each person, not in the perspective of control and authoritarianism of the past (as I already mentioned: "to spare the rod is to spoil the child"), but in the logic of the inspiration of "knowing by learning transforms". A person is integral when his or her work not only exemplifies, but also inspires and goes beyond motivation. A person is integral when he/she understands that there will always be something for everyone and that in his/her leadership role it is more important when he/she takes care of others and the team before the unhealthy competition between them.

It is not a matter of assuming tasks only as chores, but of putting them before the service and interest of all. This type of action derived from trust must generate lasting influences in time, since they are born from within and are oriented towards the other in the externality of their humanity. To begin to free oneself, trust must be, at the same time, individual and collective; it must be the purpose of a leader whose permanent disposition is to serve under the exemplarity derived from trust and inspiration to others.

Education itself must generate role models for teachers and students, demonstrating that their purpose in service to others is based on their own credibility and moral authority. A teacher is synonymous with trust, example and inspiration; he/she is part of the construction, here and now, of human teams that give meaning to contribution, solidarity and, of course, in giving clarity to the student of all kinds of reasons on why and how to achieve better relationships with others, resulting in better conditions of access to knowledge based on learning to learn.

This assumption motivates the attempt to help achieve the noble ideals in a country and in a society, seen from this perspective, full of people and dependable leaders who inspire the most powerful deeds, and who generate conditions of greatness, wherever they occur.

Wherever there is a teacher or a network of teachers, the condition of individual and collective achievement of their students must always be foreseen, because therein lies the true inspiration for success. It is their essential disposition: to serve young people and children who as individuals are moved as examples by the greatness of their own teachers.

A teacher must always trust and believe in the dignity of his role, in the exercise of a role that is born because he has confidence in himself and because he is willing to trust others, and because that confidence at the same time has generated reliability so that he is able to strengthen from his spirit the example of the path of one or all the students who see him as a beacon of light.

When we become an example of service, people think "I want to be like that person." Therefore, I invite teachers to join, by conviction, to contribute to each one to serve as an example and to serve as an inspiration.

The Colombian educational organization based on its institutionalism needs permanent beacons of light to strengthen new citizens who nourish their families and, from them, their communities with motivation. Colombia, today more than ever, needs to feel as part of a great family, of a great community, of a great society, understanding that our country does not require more conformism, but true transforming leaders.

This is a cascade effect that determines new forms of leadership in the exercise of the educator who, with determination, assumes new ways of living, trusting and inspiring others.

The various roles that have been exercised so far in educational institutions have not served us to generate a better society. Let us hope that in the future we, especially teachers, will have a clear determination to become more people makers.

This text also invites reflection for a change in what teaching implies. Teaching today is sadly impregnated with authoritarianism and excessive and repressive control, and we

must recreate it in order to turn it into an inspiring and positive motivating action for all people.

Because the example given implies being clear about the need for continuous improvement so that those who work as teachers know what their work entails, since those around them, their students, benefit permanently from their teaching styles.

Finally, it is also about developing in each student their best talents, their intelligence conditions, to help them to see themselves and to treat themselves using their own greatness, their own conditions and competencies and their own talents, so that they become authentic beings who connect with others in a life path.

Chapter 9 Colombia's Role in Globalization and Vice Versa

The title given to this chapter has no other intention than to contribute to this structural analysis of the future, since we cannot forget that in these years, we are inevitably living in an era that for some is maddening, but at the same time interesting. An era in which we are witnessing a profound transformation of the world, especially in the last century and a half. The constant innovations in technology, and particularly now with the advent of artificial intelligence, should be positively constituted in a reality that hopefully will contribute to favor the good life of all the inhabitants not only of Colombia but of the entire planet.

In order to go deeper and understand more, in the light of the context I have been presenting, the concept of Globalization, I now deal with five key concepts that could contribute to understand the reason for the great opportunity that opens up to all of us in this new era of humanity.

Below, I formulate an eighth hypothesis to be refuted or verified.

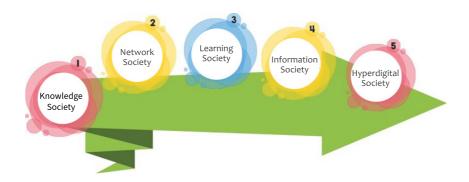
Eighth hypothesis: in the knowledge society, the value and power of each person are intimately linked to deep and specialized knowledge in one or more fields or subjects and to the social recognition he or she can achieve as a result, either because he or she shares his or her knowledge, or because he or she applies it, or because he or she produces welfare for others.

The first, the "Knowledge Society" (1) which, as I mentioned before, corresponds to the reordering of the scientific, technological and social orders that the world has experienced in the last 60 years, since it was described by various organizational analysts, today considered futurists, such as the Austrian Peter Drucker (1969) and the American Daniel Bell (1973), who saw

how change assumed as something constant would be the most genuine expression of the new humanity. This reality was complemented as a second concept with the way in which the world began to connect individually and collectively from anywhere on the planet, which is why the Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells (1998) also called it the "Network Society" (2).

The knowledge society is closely related to the "Learning Society" (3), which refers to the one that gives singular importance to learning how to learn. In a world where change is constant, the knowledge acquired at some point in life is quickly obsolete, which necessarily implies having the capacity for continuous learning and comprehensive assimilation of new concepts and methods, and for re-evaluation of the knowledge incorporated in our minds at some point in life.

The last two and no less important concepts related to globality are, "Information Society" (4), which refers to that society which, thanks to libraries, databases, social networks and the Internet, keeps up to date with events occurring anywhere in the world, often in real time, and, as a fifth concept, the globality that is beginning to be expressed as "Hyperdigital Society" (5), resulting from new forms of interaction, access and transmission of information and, in general, of any form of communication thanks to digitalization, artificial intelligence and disruptive technologies.



These five expressions have brought us to an unprecedented era in humanity's evolution, of shocking social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions and, in particular, for leaders and educators of all nations. This forces us to rethink our role in life and how we should navigate this evolution, making the best of it and creating opportunities to solve structural problems that have historically accumulated, restricting inclusion, justice, and democracy for millions of people.

It is no secret that the present and our future are intimately linked to knowing how to understand **the knowledge society and the hyper digital era** which, like rain at the end of the summer, are determining important changes to foresee the autumn of every existence.

We are facing an imminent global transformation where humanity is facing an unprecedented digital revolution, which for five decades has been manifesting itself with greater power, to invite us to build and participate creatively in an interactive world based on common interests that, unlike what has been built so far, will overcome the current situation that today makes us egomaniacal and individualistic beings, who do not enjoy the possibility of being participants in the construction of the fair

and equitable society that we all dream of, although we currently seem unable to build it.

Colombia is not far from this reflection. As a country, it is also living one of the most interesting times of humanity and in addition to consolidating a meaningful identity, it must get on the train of modernity; that is, of transforming itself and strengthening its vanguard position in the global environment, projecting itself and with the responsibility of having consolidated the political and real commitment to contribute to the distribution of wealth, of equality without conditions and of the generation of opportunities for progress thanks to merit and talent. In other words, the promotion and protection of democracy, which today remains a great ideal in many countries due to the lack of a collective vision.

Although this country does not escape multiple threats to its democracy, the desired vision must arise from a conscious and orderly participation, the result of a high impact generated by education in its citizens, thanks to which children and young people assume their value as individuals, give prominence and vanguard to the social and civic being, leaving behind historically inherited pathologies that only contribute to widen social gaps (violence, corruption and state inefficiency in all areas).

Education to Transform Reality and Consolidate Democracy

The social reality of Colombia has changed more for the worse than for the better, and the absence of forceful responses from the State must challenge us to act "now or never." We cannot defy fate or risk unmanageable social variables.

We must go to the national spirit and not to the hundreds of laws and thousands of norms that are being drafted, because they not only wear out the democratic legislative action, but even more serious, they have left aside the fundamental values of human coexistence. Politics, badly handled by a good part of those who exercise it, has increased the weariness of those who elected them, pushing us to be a society without a clear or sustained course, that lives on slips, fights, polarizations and stumbles, that does not learn from mistakes, that plays sides, and that listens to the one who shouts the loudest and not to the one who truly makes arguments.

Perhaps it has not been understood that we lack a political symmetry that puts, in the first place, fundamental questions, which have never, in a conscious and organized manner, been asked of us as a thinking society. Nor is there any long-term planning or a coherent linking of local, territorial, and national governments. Even today, the predominance of minority political conglomerates that, without results to back them up, seek to maintain power in each electoral period, focusing their batteries to perpetuate themselves, is still normal. This has given rise to the daily proposal of alternative solutions that are disconnected from the diverse and critical realities experienced in the different territories and communities.

For decades, democracy in Colombia has been threatened by its inaction, as if it were self-kidnapped. With little vitality, as a reflection of the programmatic and pragmatic deficit inherited from several generations. The absence of a pertinent and

quality education that strengthens human coexistence, which understands the value of the social exercise of politics and that guides the development and functioning of an organized and non-anarchic society, have contributed to this sad situation.

Democracy is minimized when we witness events that surpass the imagination for their cruelty, acts of expulsion from the territory, corruption of those who hypocritically denounce it, intolerance, and inefficiency of the State, generating that we lose interest in the legitimacy of official acts, the sovereignty of the State and respect for authority. I am not justifying it; I am only describing it.

Disbelief, the lack of state support for valuable ideas and programs to promote creativity, among others, has made us ignore the value of science as a tool for social consensus and of technologies as an aid to the evolution of children's and young people's thinking.

And instead of reacting to this panorama, education itself does not perceive itself as a structure of social vanguard. It remains stuck in its own banal and linear explanations that overvalue its historical performance and prevent the objective self-criticism of its actors, to recognize its faults and weaknesses, to expand its frontiers of thought and knowledge. It is necessary to break with this unfortunate chain to create policies that challenge the qualification of education itself and its role in the consolidation of our nation.

Resistance to change places us in a condition of chronic weakness. For decades, small intellectual elites, stuck in their supraego, slowly and perversely, have dismissed efficient and effective solutions coming from scientific and social thinking to solve the real problems of Colombian society. A handicapped education generates a handicapped society.

Except for individual actions of some guilds or industries, and even universities, productivity and relations between the education sector and business, are really far from science and the effect it produces for the strengthening of democracy.

This chronic crisis that Colombia is experiencing must be viewed with rigor, so that, unfailingly, from various sectors, especially academic and research, as well as economics, sociology, political science and even engineering and political philosophy, become a permanent scenario for dialogue and participatory, interdisciplinary action, in response to the challenge set out in our Political Charter of 1991. It is urgent to rethink our democracy in order to revive it by strengthening rights that are intimately linked to the will expressed in the Constitution.

In order to strengthen Colombia as a democratic society, it is crucial to understand the logic of how to address its most complex problems, in order to be able to govern based on strategies that aim at a structural solution. It is about generating the capacity to move from theory to practice.

We gain nothing if from time to time leaders, decision-makers and candidates to occupy positions in the State and in trade and productive organizations at the national or regional level propose solutions that, in the long run, turn out to be ineffective, because the problems have been poorly identified and, therefore, without proper planning. We have nothing to gain if we continue with the polarization that is strengthened by mistrust. We gain nothing if

we cling to technocratic positions without context and that end up governing badly, because they were only guided by technical criteria forgetting the legitimate obligations to read the realities from the human and social order.

In the midst of the already traditional, and not for that reason effective, most significant ideological constructions, recognized as left, center and right, prevail populist positions that sell themselves as redeemers of historical claims of the people. They hide themselves behind speeches of slogans and flashy phrases, but with little practical foundation. In the end they are not of the right, center or left and pardon the comparison, they are identified with numerous names, like a bad splash of sour, bitter and rotten fruit, from which it is difficult to taste anything.

These bad and crafty combinations, not to say mess, are lacking in conceptual background, and fall into a vortex of supposed ideologies with multiple metaphors focused on the "overcoming" of the crisis of capitalism, which several decades ago and since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, took an unprecedented boom in the world, strengthening the concept of individual interest over the collective, ignoring key dimensions in social valuation and in the necessary insertion of all types of subjects to the structures of a proper structure of a social system, These have taken an unprecedented boom in the world, strengthening the concept of individual interest over the collective, ignoring key dimensions in social valuation and in the necessary insertion of all types of subjects to the structures of a democratic state. Overcoming these reductionisms is possible in a truly democratic system supported by a vanguard education that promotes the common good.

How can we make these "light and diverse movements or groups of vindication" that have emerged today become strong and rigorous political parties? In order to do so, we must start by ordering the role of each one of us who make up this society. If we do not do so, we run the risk of being governed by reductionist approaches, with anarchic visions biased by extreme ideologies of liberation of the people or limiting unionist positions, in the belief that everything can be solved through an anachronistic participation of leaders who operate more as activists or rigid ideologues, than as true political leaders and managers of the longed-for participatory democracy.

If we had to answer the question of whether there is democracy in Colombia, we would have to say: "of course there is democracy," although we must also recognize that it is weak and that it corresponds to an erroneous application of what was envisioned by the constituents of 1991. Democracy needs to build coherent and compatible scenarios for its development. The nation must respond to an organized, planned, and visionary State.

Multiple constitutional requirements must still be fulfilled, both in duties and rights, to strengthen a true idea of a democratic country full of equity, inclusion, and welfare, in order to overcome the troubled reality experienced by Colombia. So far, the inertia as a State frustrates a longed-for peace. The internal dynamism is permanently interrupted by the ineffectiveness of its governments.

In my experience as leader of a metasystemic public educational organization, I have been able to attest, with my leadership teams, to the value of cybernetics and the management of complexity from two fundamental concepts: simplification and simplicity to

contribute to an effective and efficient administration, making use, among others, of exponential technologies that, not far from the global scenario of a democracy and its interdependence with other societies, help to maintain, through reticular structures (human networks), an adequate response capacity for conjunctural problems and an important foresight capacity to reduce and provide in-depth answers to structural problems that, in conjunctural accumulation, permanently arise.

The best way to manage complexity begins in the legislative body of a nation, sufficiently prepared by an educational system aware of the value of intelligence that forms citizens in solidarity. This allows the exercise of rigorous ethics to be the source of a social morality that subjects the previous analysis to the proposals of laws to ensure that, when they exist, sustainable decisions are made for the common good.

It is a matter of sowing, from education, the expected fruit of a generation capable of formulating a structured model of nation, and where the state administration integrates and combines policies, resources, and human capacities to strengthen the equal progress of its millions of citizens.

Colombia has shown a regrettable inability to transform itself as a competitive nation, in the midst of a global environment that demands social investments, financial equilibrium and advances in innovation and research. In order to have real room for action, we need to be able to react in a timely manner to integrate into a world where the global economy is constantly fluctuating, and which requires knowledge capabilities to strengthen its exports and give value and competitive advantage to its goods and services.

In this environment, our development model has been limited to the recognized progress of the productive and financial sectors, but the alarming inability of the state to distribute this impact has resulted in millions of our inhabitants having little social mobility, and the poorest and most vulnerable, who make up nearly 60%, are deprived of minimum conditions of housing, transportation, education, health and justice.

It is required, then, that politics and those who exercise it be an example of transparency and morality, that with the power granted they manage the expressions of globality described here, so that these serve to generate political structures sensitive to social participation. It is necessary to build conditions for coexistence and the development of institutions that privilege merit, where respect for rules is imposed as a fundamental requirement for the integral insertion of Colombia in the global economy, and where criminal activities are eradicated.

Colombia could become an example for Latin America if the State strengthens citizen security and gives way to a development model whose strategic action patterns consolidate a nation with a modern vision based on the diversity of our regional cultures, ecological tourism supported by road access through first class routes to the wonders and natural beauties of our territory, in festivals for art, music, diverse culture, in a multiplicity of events for all types of sectors and fields of knowledge, for health and new technologies, in world-class sporting events, in extreme sports, in organic agriculture, in the regional multi-service industry and in products transformed with innovation and creativity.

Only in this way will the Colombian State obtain due democratic legitimacy. It would be an unprecedented model based on

collective benefit, on the applicability of science, knowledge, learning and research in favor of the communities, creating public spaces for real social mobility, leaving behind times of confrontation and polarization, where the machinery of power exercises its autonomy in a transparent manner and is the starting point for coordinated and effective work between the private and the public spheres.

The Colombia to be built should not be built on the ruins of political projects of minor impact, except to learn from their failure. Globality today represents a fantastic opportunity and is a great ally for Colombia to assume a new posture, which requires historical patience and extended social awareness, to find precise ways to face the multiple crises, turning them into opportunities for all of us, as vital social actors. This globality calls us to a new society capable of understanding the preponderance of democracy installed from the affection and respect for the law, and that serves to strengthen human dignity.

A reference to enter into this transformation are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that, with ethical height, will rebuild the humanistic culture of our country and the world's own survival. It involves establishing new ways of life so that democracy allows for political and cultural practices based on fundamental principles and purposes, giving value to justice, education, and life. It is about forging a society based on the example of its leaders and administrators, to forge a new nation that supports its vision of the future, in a deliberative citizen action and with critical thinking, so that debate and participation are the new referents of work and individual and collective action.

This will guarantee respect for dignified life. This requires an education that promotes autonomous thinking with the conviction of the value of democratic participation in order to contribute to political decisions, so that analytical reflection accompanies the construction of individual autonomy, but also to think about respect for collective autonomy. In this order of ideas, scenarios should be provided for multiple socio-cultural movements in defense of diversity, allowing the creation of habits of ethical value and, especially, so that the populations, especially those historically violated and far from the possibility of well-being, are the starting point of the egalitarian gesture for equity and justice.

This Colombia, thus reflected, will respect, and promote the traditions of our Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples and the diversity of genders, and will give transcendence to the construction of spaces to vindicate the diverse identities, ethnic and regional idiosyncrasies, and to strengthen the identity of the Colombian being and the national pride.

With these referents, the political identity of young people will be shaped in the desire to participate in order to build proactively in their local, regional, and national spheres, inspiring solutions to structural problems of all kinds. Young people who, instead of creating despair, forge hope based on the fulfillment of fundamental agreements. For this, it will be necessary to understand how, in a participatory manner, the future can be planned, so that Colombia can be local and at the same time global, and mobilize from rigorous knowledge in order to know how to solve the demands of its society, giving value to the strategic aspects of education, science, technology, innovation and integral development, to leave behind times of corruption

and inefficiency, so that ethics prevails, and so that the moral aspect is prioritized for individual and collective development.

Reviewing the Educational Paradigm

Up to this point, this essay has stopped in its first eight chapters to illustrate and reflect on the evolution of a society that, like the Colombian society, reflects, for its majorities, the absence of a dynamic and prospective state with a sharp vision of the future. The result so far, in terms of past and present, is a society with an education prostrated in its resistance to change and that after more than two centuries of our independence has not awakened from its lethargy.

The frenetic changes of the second half of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st and their special impact on the means of production, on knowledge, on the nature of work, on the distribution of wealth and on the mechanisms for the dissemination of knowledge (thanks to the enormous technological developments), should lead us to think about our future as humanity, which is nothing other than the vision of our future as a species.

What awaits us in the coming decades? This will surely be directly influenced by hypersociety: a society that is not only living the first dawn of digital transformation, but will see how the social, economic, and personal implications will be the expression of a hypertransformation.

All this will necessarily lead to radical paradigm shifts, especially in scenarios as cross-cutting as those of education itself. We are in times of opportunities, and as a collective we have to assume a central position regarding what Latin America and the Caribbean, and especially Colombia, will be able to reference in order to take control of this new era.

We must be aware that we are living in a moment in the history of humanity where daily changes are vertiginous. For this reason, it is imperative that educational institutions become a beacon for humanity to have capacities, competencies, and behaviors that, from the beginning, allow us to understand the why and how of the transformations that require deeper and deeper analyses, as well as pragmatic and effective results.

Because it must be recognized that, until today, the reductionist approach of the classical scientific method has not been able to explain political, social, economic, and natural phenomena on a larger scale; it has led to a view from specialists who only see the part and not the whole. The individual study of a phenomenon, through disciplines, does not generate the same answers that can be obtained through the inter, multi and transdisciplinary interaction of the knowledge that conforms it. The need arises, then, for a change of educational paradigm that allows the trained subject an integral observation of what happens in science and consciousness around their direct and global environment.

In contrast to simplified thinking, Edgar Morin put forward the basic notions of complexity, a term that semantically denotes, for the common mind, disorder, uncertainty, and confusion, and that when mentioned, the first thing that comes to mind is a problem and not a solution. But this requires education as the only key social device to urgently strengthen complex thinking through open and complementary relationships in a dialogic

interaction between contrary situations, such as between the rational and the irrational, uncertainty and certainty, order, and disorder, good and bad, beautiful, and ugly, and so on....

Simplicity, in turn, is the antagonistic notion of complexity. The simplicity of Western thought, represented by Descartes' rationalism, with the search for certainty through the inductive-deductive method and the intuition of "I think therefore I am." This simplicity was later worked on by his followers, such as Pascal with the anthropological rationalism on the body and soul and the idealism that limits the knowledge of reality to a set of ideas that are more dogmas of faith than real demonstrations of its existence. Simplicity has been assimilated by logical positivism and critical rationalism, and in both cases the empirical evidence fundamental to validate theories guaranteeing the objectivity and neutrality of scientific production is limited, since the subject is a passive being and the conception of knowledge is only linear.

Although three decades ago Morin (1994) already recognized the contributions of simplicity in the progress of science, he severely criticizes it as an obstacle to the evolution of scientific knowledge. Morin's main observation is that, in his opinion, Western thought, besides being rationalizing, hyperspecialized and formalizing, constitutes a lack of contextualization of this way of educating.

This is due to the fact that the distinction made from the decomposition of the parts eliminates the integral relationship of the subject with the object studied. The objectification of science ended up being a limiting influence of the social subject on the object and the explanation of facts lies in a mere analysis without context. Simplified thinking can achieve a result that,

determined by reductionism, cannot and does not even attempt to look at the holistic, since it would be the result of observing the whole and the part at the same time. For many years, this principle of simplicity has been the guide and orientation of a thinking that taught us to divide in order to analyze or to unify in order to synthesize, but that hardly managed to complexify our analysis and derived results.

Observing the singularities implies stopping at the parts and with this we risk losing sight of the whole, which is not the most convenient thing to do either. It is necessary to integrate the parts with the whole, forming a closed entity isolated from a context that affects and transforms it in an infinite number of ways, which is why current education relativizes us in our intervention on realities.

The fragmentation of thought characterizes scientific knowledge in the contemporary western world, dominated by mechanists and simplifiers incapable of visualizing the globality, ignoring the interrelationships between phenomena, which leads to the loss of the sense of reality.

It does not mean that abstraction is not important, but that the particular only has a determining value within the framework of a previous contextualization. Today, a marked tendency towards inter, multi and transdisciplinarity is required, which produces an evolution and enrichment of knowledge itself; unfortunately, disciplines are still mostly maintained in interaction with and among themselves, consolidating a reductionist conception divided into fragments of specific knowledge.

In the traditional educational process, the classroom represents the immediate context in which the learner develops, and in which various levels of exchange are originated, but it is rarely connected with the context of reality as proposed in Morin's paradigm of complex thinking. To this end, it is vital to strengthen the training that reinforces thinking to rethink what is known, knowing how to solve, and creating to innovate. In this way, the student learns the value of dialogue with peers and teachers, engaging in meaningful conversations, finding collective solutions to the problems that arise, taking advantage of the exchange of ideas, communicating their knowledge, confronting their observations from different points of view, having to find different opportunities to build their way of being, feeling and thinking.

A New Way of "Being Smart"

The current millennium brought the Internet as a communication alternative that was not so remarkable for most humans in its early years but is now essential in the daily lives of almost everyone (not to say everyone). As a complement, still incipient compared to what it is believed to become, artificial intelligence is installed, which for some futurologists is as important as the discovery and application of fire itself. What is clear is that we are no longer faced with the need to reinvent technology, since it reinvents itself every day, but to reinvent ourselves in the face of new products and services as a new way of seeing, knowing, understanding, and doing things.

History has been made to learn from it, although it is often not done. The future is built as the prospective calculation brings us closer to the creation and results derived from our own innovation and entrepreneurship. Those who live their lives tied to the past and its prejudices generally find all kinds of obstacles to overcome them, since these lives are full of impossibilities to build new realities, which implies difficulties to have certainties about the new paths to build.

Shakespeare rightly said that "what's past is prologue." I would complement this by affirming that the present can be understood as a book to be written, with an enormous potential of great educational value for human existence and extended well-being.

I believe that those who have been the designers of artificial intelligence, surely had emotional intelligence as an ally, that which expresses the full potential of the human brain, matured since birth and childhood and that mark for better or worse the mind and heart of each recipient. Learning throughout life allows redirecting the emotional intelligence of the different environments where it acts, whether at home or at work.

I have tried in this essay to make clear the value of education as the main manager of leaders. Without this education, emotional intelligence is not sown, including our own, there is no leadership that is worth, since this intelligence does not only depend on the IQ but on the way, this is merged with the new daily learning as determinants of individual and collective behavior and with the performance that this determines in the here already mentioned Productive Intelligent Work.

Emotional intelligence is synonymous of capacities and adequate behaviors as determinants to establish if anyone, man or woman, can assume challenges of transformation of their own being as a starting point, so that they can discover, by themselves, the potential that allows them to direct their destiny, and with their experience to accompany those who also seek a path of transformation.

A few decades ago, the concept of emotional intelligence was not well understood in the educational world, much less in the workplace. Today, the competencies, behaviors, and skills that each person cultivates and possesses are a guarantee of success and a sine qua non condition for exercising the transformational leadership that is expressed by example.

I have been reiterative in denouncing the bad legacy of an education based on the transmission of knowledge and the opportunity to transform it for one based on the management of knowledge, which gives significant value to learning to learn and teamwork, since it is human collectives who can develop maximum levels of creativity, and therefore productivity.

This means that the sum of the individual intelligence of one and others becomes the added value of collective intelligence, which implies knowing how to articulate and coordinate knowledge and efforts in search of a common goal, which in its proper dimension requires open behaviors and flexible minds.

Education must be aware of its own self-awareness, of its empathy with external environments (i.e., its social awareness), and must be rigorous (not only in the transmission of knowledge but also in its management). Of course, it must also make each of its members gain self-control, self-regulation, adaptability (always with a cheerful outlook) and the proactivity of the

collective (that conforms successful formative management teams).

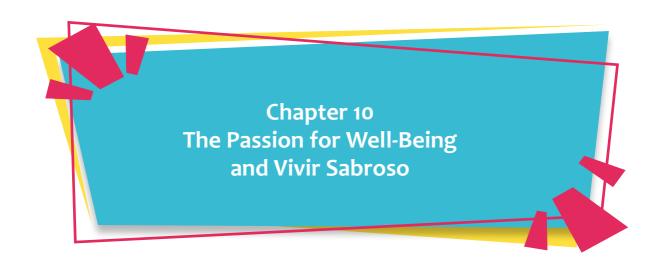
Just as artificial intelligence is the result of static algorithms, emotional intelligence is based on the interconnection of neurons that produce permanent learning synergies. The differential aspect is in neurogenesis, which shows us that we have an added value since we are endowed with neuroplasticity, which implies the capacity of permanent restructuring of our brain in the face of the daily experiences we live. The result of this is the activation of new connections that can modify habits and customs, if we so desire, because these circuits are always ready to grow to adapt to our new motivations.

Forming these minds with an unusual interest in superior performance and love for knowledge, to know how to develop it in pursuit of extended welfare corresponds to a good and competitive educational institutionality.

It is time that Colombia, in its efforts for an educational transformation in the development of a social transformation, overcomes the handicap - instead of the surplus value. It is time for such education to collectively shape what could be one of the most relevant chapters of its own history by assuming the entrepreneurial spirit as a vital element for its own transformation and to know how to handle the challenges that, in the midst of the complex reality, require strategic routes that know how to take advantage of the opportunities of technological evolution. Because, in order to assume the integral formation, education needs to generate enthusiasm in children and young people so that they can take profit of the competitive advantages of natural resources of all kinds.

The new scenario must overcome unknowns and establish new alliances among the priority stakeholders of the native organization, with synergies that build real possibilities of transformation, where the public and private sectors are potential partners that turn education into the essence of the daily life of all children and young people.

One swallow does not make a summer, that in order to promote an educational transformation, efforts and wills are required that arise from the institutional framework itself, and that this requires convictions and commitments from its actors, as well as a conversation for consensus development and, at the same time, sustained social investments with State policies that define resources proportional to successful impact indicators. If these conditions are met, the qualification of active teachers at all levels and educational cycles, and the pertinent and transparent incorporation of technology, will contribute so that good education expands adequately and equitably and gains reputation when its impacts respond to the interests and consolidate a virtuous circle that gives real credibility to the sector.



The title of this chapter speaks of "vivir sabroso" (a concept referring to living in dignity, joy, and freedom) and for this it is vital to reconsider the leading role of education. I am trying to answer the question of how to achieve this.

The concept of "Vivir Sabroso" is intentionally used in reference to the fact that the Vice President of Colombia (2022-2026), Francia Márquez, popularized it as a way of expressing a desired lifestyle and political action purpose for the country. The vice-president, an Afro-Colombian social leader and human rights defender, said: "'vivir sabroso' is to start to stop living in comparison; 'vivir sabroso' is freedom and the interests of integrating with others as a philosophy that was born in the African South and whose name is Ubuntu, which means 'I am because we are'." It is, in short, a lifestyle far from violence and close to a peace that is the result of reconstruction at all social levels.

On the other hand, according to Diego Angulo Martínez (2022) in his essay "Vivir Sabroso", this approach is composed of the conditions of a philosophy that seeks to rebuild and generate conditions for social development by providing opportunities for the vindication of those who have not been heard for decades. Angulo calls for reflection on true economic justice and invites to build pacifism from the reparation to feminism and the guarantees of equality that with an open dialogue can be given in the interest of building a solidary society.

I now propose the ninth hypothesis for its validation or falsification, dear reader.

Ninth hypothesis: The conceptual development of the "vivir sabroso" allows us to approach, as a social collective, in the

search for a participatory nation that recognizes in the failure of its own history the interest in the construction of solidarity, equity and peace, which integrates ethnic visions, cultural diversities of peoples and races that today make up the Colombian identity.

Thus, it will be possible to formulate true policies of equity and equality that reflect freedom and well-being, supported, as Angulo (2022) points out, in economic justice, so that opportunities are basic rights and wealth is spread in the same way for all.

This "vivir sabroso" should have as its slogan "I like people" (like the song): those who vibrate with enthusiasm to contribute to the collective vision; those who should not be forced, who should not be told what to do because they already know where to go, with the capacity to analyze and not to leave solutions half-baked or to chance. We should like people who are flexible to work as a team, who do not lose sight of our humanity, who distinguish themselves by their sincere and honest attitude, and who are able to oppose with serene and related arguments to the opposite thought, being able to criticize constructively and directly, because they have criteria, because they do not swallow whole, because they recognize their mistakes, because they are loyal and persistent, because they do not lose heart in the face of obstacles and assume them as a challenge and a challenge, because they work for effective results, and above all, because they are guided by convictions rather than by money or material goods, feeling proudly Colombian.

Towards a Life with Meaning... and Purpose

René Descartes, founder of modern rationalism, contributor to the mathematical sciences and analytical geometry, left us his famous phrase "cogito ergo sum" -therefore I am- or I think because I am, in a precise description of the importance of life linked to its own existence. Why did we come into the world? Why do we have the obligation to give meaning and significance to our living and existing, or what is the same, how to orient and promote within a short or long life, habits that contribute to the sense of happiness, derived from our own fragile human condition?

There are too many examples of people who, in the history of humanity, knew how to answer these questions, explaining the success of their existence. Beyond exceptional circumstances or strokes of luck, in a few cases, in most of those who gave meaning and significance to their lives, there are a series of common traits, which, in my opinion, are especially these five:

First, their ability to value and take advantage of time, which runs against them. They were observant enough to recognize that, with rigorous study, sustained effort and unconventional methods, they could solve problems or change ways of life valued from another approach, fostering innovative conditions resulting from their creation to address radical changes that, as always happens in an emerging scenario, surely for many was little understood by their contemporaries.

Second, they were capable of having a true visionary spirit, anticipating the structural, unexpected, cultural, and operational changes that have been taking place in society and, with courage

for their times and acting with great passion and conviction, they contributed to transform their dreams into realities that fostered collective happiness. This allowed them to be recognized at the time or in the future, as a disruptive example of the value of change produced by creation in any field of knowledge.

Third, they led revolutions, silent or vibrant, around transformations necessary to bring well-being to hundreds, thousands, or millions of humans.

Fourth, they dared to change their history, without disappointing, contributing interesting lessons about their experiences, efforts and also sufferings, being important entrepreneurs in the construction of the map of their own present and especially contributed in a positive and significant way to the future of thousands.

Fifth, they were sowers of seeds of solidarity and widespread triumph, leaving important footprints of their passage through the world to forge the future, and their thought was established for others as an essential scenario of life with their own example, despite not having been understood at the time as forgers of the conception of what we assume today in our daily lives as that the constant is change.

In today's world, there are many books, guides, and manuals on how to achieve happiness. Many of them with important recommendations, and even steps that guide the reader in this search, but beyond whether these routes are true or not, it is important to understand the meaning of the human will and the significant value of the mind embodied in our brain as the concepts that act as key referents to promote the belief in values and principles that guide our existence.

Reflection on this subject could also serve to increase awareness of the questions of who am I, how do I dream of being, why and what do I live for, how can I achieve my dreams? To bet on giving a due answer to these questions can help to have control over our own existential process. It is not easy. From birth we evolve and, in a few years, we go from being children and young people to adults who age faster and faster, because life is a sign that gives no respite. That is exactly what happens to almost all of us; we endure difficult moments and learning before finding clear ways of why and for what we exist.

Those who knew how to find, by their own motivation and initiative, a good course, have been, are and will be drivers of their own future. Life smiles at them because they have control and the vision of where and how to take advantage of their limited existence and their life bet seeks to pass and leave a mark. They were, are and will be those who never doubted the why and how of their existence or the added value that, every day, they seek for the welfare of their lives and the lives of those around them.

Other people, on the other hand, due to different circumstances (family, work, professional, sentimental, or economic, among many others), give up walking and stop in order not to fight. A big mistake! They stopped taking on the rush of challenges, from savoring triumphs, from acting on principles and values; they put aside opportunities, avoided perseverance, chased away personal growth, took away the productivity derived from

effort, and never knew about full happiness and even less about the value of the dedication that wisdom demands.

The popular saying goes that "Two in distress, makes sorrows less." This happens to millions of people who spend their existence letting themselves be carried away by everyday life, who never ask themselves the why and wherefore of their course. They are meaningless lives that disappear without leaving a trace. Their time, energy, and goals to achieve became frenetic nonsense, letting themselves be carried away by an uncontrollable chain of events of which they rarely or never had control. They were and are people who have not enjoyed a true existence and, on the contrary, have plunged into a vicious circle of unstable events that, without any personal or social support, have distanced them from the self-confidence and tranquility that nurtures a good existence.

Nobody loves what they are not taught to love and of course nobody loves what they are not taught to value. In Colombia we need to specify the value of our cultural traits to put them at the service of our collective life, to strengthen our Colombian culture in future generations. The time has come not to be ashamed of what we are and what we were; the time has come to show ourselves with pride in front of the world for what we are and what we represent. The current generations should rethink ourselves as seeds that are planted for a new forest, as the runoff of rivers that must be cared for to enjoy their transparency and to be the pure oxygen that will feed the new air that Colombians will have to breathe. A generation that should enjoy the tranquility of being covered from the storms, aware of the lessons learned from the failures of their predecessors, and optimistic of a better future, because of trust, respect, and freedom to interact.

We cannot attempt to reconstitute Colombia without a true attitudinal change that overcomes our insane and, at the same time, helpless conception of the painful disaster of violence. A change of attitude reflected in actions that transform injustice into total justice, who give meaning to the value of existence and profound respect for one's own life and that of others.

It is necessary for our education to encourage us and give us strength and understanding of axiology, to appropriate it with wisdom and for each one of us to give sense and meaning to healthy coexistence, to the collective and participatory, to understand, among all, the teamwork that allows us to overcome differences and adversities.

We must leave behind the historical frustrations and we must revive the spirit of *Colombianitud*. We have to assume that the problems belong to all of us and that their solution implies choosing options that overcome complaints and allow us to focus on the mistakes to overcome and correct them, and not to make a manipulative use of coexisting with them.

How different would be the daily life of Colombians if the talents, intelligence, and energy that we have wasted in blaming others for our problems, had been spent and used effectively to solve them! In general, Colombians are recognized in the world for our joy and smile; that is, for our warmth, although we do not tend to think positively or be grateful for all the benefits we have. We are on the borderline between what we want to be and an accumulated hopelessness. The greatest threat to a nation like Colombia will not be the fratricidal war or even virulent diseases, but ourselves if we do not rigorously assume the personal, social, historical and even moral responsibility of managing our own

destiny as a country. Not learning from the failures and tragedies of the past and not reversing them would be our greatest threat as a society.

Overcoming And Going Beyond Ourselves

The time has come for Colombia to stop being the servant of multiple interests, particularly dark ones, which, in the face of an inoperative State, have installed themselves as a growing spiral of corruption fed by national and international mafias, revealing our incapacity due to the absence of the guardian eye that inspires a critical conscience and at the same time, acting on the reality of our country.

The Colombian soul must be linked to the indomitable spirit sown in the ethnic mix. We need our hearts to be immersed, as a passion, in the collective construction; that the new generations breathe freedom, that they approach the formation of rigorous and at the same time kind behaviors, and that our children and young people do not look for effortless ways out of hopelessness. The time has come for Colombia to drink in cups of optimism, to breathe airs of prosperity and joy, and for the will of all to overcome the chains that many carry inside, brought from previous generations.

So that what has been said here does not sound like political speech, we must assume simplicity and simplification as variables with which to manage the complex reality on the basic rule of always being willing to lose something in order to gain the greatest treasure: sustainable, lasting, and extended peace. This means that Colombians will have to lose in order to win if we want

to rescue the joy of smiling. Losing bad energies, hopelessness, and pessimism; gaining more illusions, emotions, and efforts, like those of our athletes who achieve marvelous feats, and being aware that problems cannot be solved overnight but that, when we want to with heart and commitment, dreams are possible to achieve.

Moving forward, Colombia will have to understand that true change must be assumed in a collective and positive way, oriented to solve structural and not circumstantial problems; and to overcome radical ideological visions that only fragment instead of uniting.

And we will have to learn that solving problems requires time and planning under ethical criteria.

Colombia: A Positive Attitude

Colombianitud is the attitude of that good Colombian man or woman who goes through the world with the fascination of discovering what surrounds him or her, who expresses their talents as humans of good will, who are great citizens, observant and respectful of laws and rules, and who, regardless of their trade or profession, serve as an example to all, especially to children.

The spirit embodied by *Colombianitud* is of one who learns to look at the simple to make sense of the complex; who puts his knowledge and work at the service of collective causes; who insists, with tenacity and grace, so that his mind, heart and eyes connect and project the desire to go further in knowledge; who

is interested in truthful and objective information to find truths, who seeks experiences to know the world and its wonders; who wants to strengthen their own skills and their ability to be amazed by new knowledge in search of a better existence for all.

The attitude of every good Colombian man and woman will also be related to their charm to know and spread their geography and natural beauties; to value the true and important of our history. This attitude will know how to respect the lives of others, leaving behind times of violence; it will promote science, art and the powerful expressions of the authenticity and happiness of Colombians, so that Colombia will be recognized as an example for other countries in the world.

Finally, Colombianitud is the beautiful and affable expression of the character of the nationals of this corner of the planet who act with humility and dedication to serve as leaders, and as promoters of solidarity, of love for the planet and for the homeland, despite having suffered persecution. Colombianitud will be recognized as the attitude of the Colombian being who knows how to dynamize, with service projects, the diversity of his activity and that of his territories and who, in addition, is studious and at the same time curious to learn from his past in order to build a better future.

The Consolidation of a Real Citizenship

All of the above should lead us to constitute a true democratic citizenship in which all citizens have morality and ethics as their reference points for action. After all, a well-formed citizenship is the key support for a consolidated democracy. This requires,

necessarily, that all (citizens) have the proper education to recognize which are the civic practices and virtues of their civic actions, so that they are not indifferent to the social, political, and economic problems of all communities.

A society is duly consolidated and lives well when it recognizes that it is part of the solution to its problems and is aware of what it implies not to guarantee the due inclusion, the necessary equity and the fundamental welfare extended to avoid social violence such as those experienced by Colombia in different periods of its history, which have destroyed its social fabric and have created, as has been stated several times in this essay, despair of life and the deterioration of our pride in belonging to this nation.

Because one is not a real citizen for the simple fact of being born in a territory, but when one understands the value of what it implies to do so and the obligations that come with being part of a democratic, free, and egalitarian society. The challenge of living well and pleasantly requires, especially, a trained moral and social conscience, and this implies that education as a key referent of integral formation must leave its mark both in the pride and in the social shame that we must feel in the face of unworthy situations that provoke critical, reflective and representative action of society, in defense of its own interests.

Colombia's mistakes as a democratic society cannot be repeated. Education must contribute to safeguarding the fundamental principles and values of our democracy. This implies that children and young people should be engines of change, promoting equality, rejecting injustice, and leading by example what is known as a "decent society."

Transparency also implies a sine qua non condition for the development of a good government characterized by social order and citizen participation in the management, territorial and national, of public decisions guided by ethical actions in all acts that seek effective social development.

This Colombia of the "vivir sabroso" urgently requires weakening corruption and generating citizen confidence derived from the effectiveness of democratic social reforms that begin with the most vulnerable. Sustainable human development, the growth of the Gross Domestic Product and the due distribution of wealth are necessary requirements so that each and every Colombian citizen, in any part of the territory, feels the effective presence of a State that protects and respects their rights. A State, such as the one projected by the Political Constitution of Colombia and qualified as a Social State of Law, must be sensitive so that its decisions are based on the extended welfare and guarantee transparency, effectiveness, efficiency, and opportunity in the provision of opportunities for all.

Thus, the Colombia of the "vivir sabroso" will require public servants who, in their daily work, strengthen productive intelligent work for the benefit of the users of the services they represent, creating a strong will to bring down corruption and exercise due control of the public.

"Vivir sabroso" also requires the necessary transformation of Colombian education to generate a dynamic relationship with the new pedagogies and technologies that, frantically, generate the imperative formative disruption in an increasingly hyperdigital world. It will be education that will help us to think about our

future as a Colombian society, which is none other than the vision of our future as a nation.

It is clear that digital hypersociety challenges us with new, and still very unknown, scenarios in the medium and long term. The new societies that will be delineated will demand a social, economic, and personal hyper-transformation where avantgarde and anticipatory education will prepare new generations of citizens whose leaders will overcome the current daily life rooted in various forms of violence, collective and individual insecurity, and multiple inequalities. This will necessarily lead to radical changes in the current educational paradigm in order to be transversally effective in all types of social and productive scenarios.

This is one of the reasons why this reflection wants to contribute propositively to these scenarios of design of the nation's vision, to take into account vectors that must be rapidly transformed, and to understand that we are in a time of opportunities that, as a collective, we must assume to co-participate in the global co-construction that will demand an innovative design of local, national and planetary societies.

All this demands, especially from the educational institutions, to become the lighthouse in which the envisioned Colombia is projected and the capacities, competencies and behaviors are provided so that the new generations understand why and how to collectively build this dream.

The expected transformations demand deep analyses and pragmatic and effective results, leaving behind the reductionist approach to the country.

These changes entail to review the paradigms of the scientific method, as seen in previous pages, as Edgar Morin warned that it is still limited to give holistic explanations to phenomena of all kinds, since it is taught only to value in isolation a constituent part of the problem or opportunity, but not to learn to value the integrality of the whole.

Unfortunately, the scientific capacity in Colombia is still not developed with the rigor and depth with which it is done in other nations of the world, and this is because it is not even a main purpose of public policy and a visible objective of the educational system. It is enough to see the scarce governmental budgets to promote its development, added to the fact that its teaching does not seem to inspire children and young people, who are not motivated in pedagogical or didactic scenarios. At the end of the day, the individual study of a phenomenon through an optic limited by a discipline does not generate the same answers that can be obtained through the inter, multi and transdisciplinary scientific action of knowledge. It is for this reason that the need arises for a less simplistic educational paradigm shift, which allows the trained subject an integral assessment of what is happening around the diversity of environments, both the immediate and the global.

And what does this have to do with "vivir sabroso"? The reader will ask himself: a lot! Contrary to simplified thinking, Morin raises the basic notions of complexity, a term that semantically denotes for the common people, disorder, uncertainty and confusion, and that when mentioned, the first thing that comes to mind is a problem and not a solution; therefore, in order to "vivir sabroso", it is also required that the educational system acts as a key social device that, urgently, strengthens in each

of us a scientific thinking that teaches us to promote open and complementary relationships in a dialogic interaction with others, to share similar or contrary situations, such as between the rational and the irrational, uncertainty and certainty, order and disorder, good and bad, beautiful and ugly; In short, to learn to respect, to learn to coexist, to learn to argue and thus close historical behavioral gaps of violence without dialogue. We need to educate in a different way in order to experience values and so that these, together with the science of knowledge, can be learned from an early age to contextualize and agree.

Today, a marked tendency towards inter, multi and transdisciplinarity is required. This produces evolution and enrichment of integral education. Unfortunately, in Colombia, disciplines are still mostly maintained in a reductionist conception divided into fragments of specific knowledge that even influence the way curricula are designed in different educational cycles and levels.

In the traditional educational process, the classroom represents the immediate context in which the student learns under the repetition and scarce application of knowledge and under a reduced exchange with the context, since it is rarely articulated with the external reality as stated in Morin's paradigm of complex thinking. In this way, students learn the value of dialogue with other student peers and with their teachers, engaging in meaningful conversations, collectively finding solutions to the problems that arise, taking advantage of the exchange of ideas, communicating their previous knowledge, confronting their observations from different points of view, so they will have the opportunity to find multiple opportunities to strengthen their

way of being, feeling and thinking. In short, laying the necessary foundations to later learn to "vivir sabroso."

The Colombia We Dream of... and the One That Is Possible

The Colombia of our dreams must be built now. There is no more time! This Colombia will serve to transmit our warmth to others, as a product of our own evolution and awareness that we must leave behind those who invite us to devolve.

The Colombia of our dreams must leave behind the burden of hopelessness, to walk on confidence. The Colombia of our dreams must be a source of strength and permanent renewal, to heal its wounds with the daily conviction of learning how to overcome difficulties. The Colombia of our dreams must teach us to have faith in our own strength and in our capacity for renewal in order to overcome difficulties and to build viable solutions in the midst of the diversity of problems and opportunities.

The Colombia of our dreams should help us to identify the routes to guarantee peace in harmony, rather than to survive from day to day. The dreamed Colombia must keep, as a treasure, its identity for the pride of the current and new Colombians since there will be deposited its joys and its capacities to learn to overcome problems and sorrows. The dreamed Colombia assumes forgiveness as part of its own knowledge and knows how to value, as learning, a history of violence and pain that must be avoided to be repeated. In short, the dreamed Colombia is a refuge for everyone, to live life to the fullest in joy and plenitude in this land.

Chapter 11 The Collective Transition toward the Common Good

The traditional political positions experienced in Colombia give the impression that this is a nation without an ideological identity defined with certainty. It is not based on conviction, neither to the right, nor to the left, nor to the center. We are a country where we are all waiting for what to do to break a vicious circle of repeated failures in our national political history, which repeatedly lead to more tensions.

The tenth hypothesis is formulated below for your consideration.

Tenth hypothesis: trying to break this vicious circle, disagreeing with the way our leaders have acted and seeking alternatives based on values and criteria, implies assuming a position of constructive criticism in search of effective answers and a vision based on the diversity of what we are and what we represent.

For this we need to learn to argue in a reasoned way, looking for how to become what we dream of as a country. The discursive and respectful approach to ideological and regional differences, and even to those dialects that have been historically made invisible, are essential conditions to grow in this scenario. To return to falling back into conflicts, failures, polarization, and corruption as a way of life would constitute a real failure of our modernity, and this is a possibility that we should not even contemplate in our educational system, which is the first thing that must be transformed.

That nation, united by the common language, must contemplate diverse paths and ways of thinking, but -that is- always leading to the consolidation of democracy, as the environment where every morning we discover affection, share the pain of the victims and,

above all, look with objectivity to the future to learn from failure and dream of welfare.

Knowing and admitting the facts of history in order to learn from it should be another purpose to walk towards the common good and not to wear ourselves out in senseless controversies. It means leaving behind enemies, foreign or ideologically close, so that the Colombian identity reflects the deepest part of the spirit. The remarkably diverse political positions (right, left, center, center right and center left...) do not make us more or less civilized. With diverse views, they all try to respond for better health, better working conditions and, above all, better education.

An effective educational system, with appropriate learning methods, which helps to solve the problems of academic leveling and early mortality that exist today, will help us in this purpose. A system with flexible access, rigorous promotion with pertinent curricula to solve from formative research in the first educational cycles and applied research in higher education, attention to the diverse local and national problems, and to learning and analytical thinking skills.

The graduates of an educational system such as the one proposed will be able to contribute to raise and evolve the present state of the social art, to evolve towards a maturity as a country, where respect for thinking, saying and acting coherently, as part of the new national ethics, are part of our daily life and of the common sense of the new generations.

In order to properly nurture the curricula, in their evolution towards knowledge with the help of technologies, a powerful academic-teaching body will be required to pull the harmonious development of the formative process. When intelligence grows and conditions are provided to favor knowledge, criteria and innovation, good mood also grows, because the challenges of life are duly valued. This also highlights the pride in being part of the homeland. We need a Colombia that does not stop on its path of disrespect for everything and everyone, that does not live from the past except to learn from its failure and not to generate greater hatred and resentment, and that only remembers the horrors experienced so as not to repeat them.

History teaches us that enemies wear us down, but that with friends we build, if the members of a nation are determined to work for the common good, trust will soon arise, based on building, sharing, and contributing collectively to the realization of ideals and the strengthening of our identity and culture.

This will be possible if we fully understand that the life of the nation passes through our minds and our hands, through our desires and our thoughts, through the value we give to freedom and order, through discipline and social culture, and through the demand for rights after being aware of and responsible for our duties.

The more Colombians develop these levels of awareness (and education is the best way to spread the good example), the more we will undoubtedly increase the sense of belonging and the more expeditious will be the construction of a vision for a better country where everyone respects the daily life of others. Colombia needs to start with a new slogan about its national identity and this implies giving a democratic sense to the discovery of affection for what we are and for what we

must teach, so that the new generations learn from a very young age to respect, to listen and to understand history, about the good in order to strengthen it and about the bad in order not to repeat it.

The more education, the more progress, better coexistence, greater productivity, and more social imagination in favor of peace. Education favors its own mobility, thanks to more freedom, more thought, and more creativity.

We Colombians cannot continue to display an inferiority complex and remain helpless as we observe how, before the world, the defenders of existence and the yellowish media market an image that highlights us all as criminals and perverse partners, as shown in television series and movies that distort and misrepresent the Colombian way of being and doing things. On the contrary, we are that creative, original, good-humored, innocent, and optimistic homeland that, in the midst of beautiful literary figures, created the Nobel Prize winner Gabriel García Márquez with his "magical realism." It is a matter of understanding that we are entering modernity as never before with a culture impregnated with values that reject self-failure, foolishness and inaction, a culture capable of astonishment, capable of casting anti-heroes into oblivion.

In a balanced nation, the rights to health, education and work are not political biases, but the result of a constitutional exercise in the traceability and extension of State policies; this will define the vision of the Colombia we long for and for which we have to work collectively. A country that does not subtract and of course, that has as a slogan to overcome the conditions of recession

and poverty that always accompanied the senseless political struggles and that altered our country politically and socially.

The new proposals for a "Plan Futuro Colombia" (Colombia Future Plan) (it can be any name) must develop the conditions and grounds for agrarian, industrial, technological, scientific and research reforms, among others. Today more than ever we need the trajectories of a nation that gives economic value to effort and intelligent productive work, public or private, in order not to despise us neither materially nor morally and of course, to bring us closer to the world and to have cultural, economic, and social links with the countries of the region.

The Homeland that we inherit to the next generations should be a Colombia where everyone can be born in equal conditions and live according to the development of talents that are recognized for their merits. Let us give them the opportunity to sow their dignity in every place and circumstance. Let us leave behind the nation that expels its inhabitants from their territories, and that allows social leaders to advance their dreams of extended welfare.

Helping to build and collectively dream a vision of the country's expectations will help us overcome the current shortcomings of that vague existence, which we still live and lived many of our previous generations. We need to heal wounds and resentments to overcome polarizations and learn to face the consequences of a transcendental change tomorrow. I know that nothing will be easy in terms of the positive transformation of our people, and that this will not happen until everyone understands why and what change is worthwhile. I will not tire of pointing out that the starting point must be the educational system.

We must leave behind senseless chatter; we must live without the chains to which history has often subjected us; we must take advantage of our regional diversity as a way of consolidating our identity; and we must strengthen the sense of national unity, dignity, and patriotic pride.

Educational environments must also include the knowledge and appreciation, as a nation, of folklore and its diversity, which represent expressions of pride for and towards our talented artists, singers, composers, and representatives of Colombian art. This extends to athletes, and even to renowned intellectuals and researchers.

It is important to work on the positive self-concept of being Colombian in the youngest children. This pride in being called Colombian, added to our natural creativity and resourcefulness, recognized in other latitudes, in addition to our capacity for work, our intelligence and physical beauty, especially of our Colombian women, will enhance the desire to learn more and to show more what we are and what we can do. If we complement this with reflection and awareness about respect for rules and good examples, we will be empowering powerful leaders.

We have a great opportunity to reverse erroneously generalized behaviors driven by thoughts such as "el vivo vive del bobo" (there's a sucker born every minute), "dar papaya" (ask for trouble), "la malicia indígena" (cunning), "así somos y qué, de malas" (That's how we are, so what). This type of expressions can be changed in order to impress with assertive and respectful ways, based on rigorousness.

Colombia needs to create experiences in which the capacity and warmth of its people are recognized as their own. Optimism should mark our daily life and for this it is necessary the motivation, that for the well-being is felt in our formative processes from the family and school.

We must move away from corruption in all its forms, creating value by merit and not by surnames or possibilities of access to power. We must give legitimacy to governance based on citizen participation. As a society we have to play for merit, but without any exclusion, to leave behind the lottery of the cradle. As Sancho said, "one man is not more than another, but he does better than another."

If we seriously ask ourselves what we want to be and what we must do to become it, we will be able to find the answers to be an educated country. Let us dream of a dignified country that recognizes history so as not to repeat it, but also to look to the future and to change as a constant whose engine is good education, which will allow us to overcome the inertia of those who never made an effort for the collective and social commitment. The future depends on us and we will be what our responsibility allows us to build as a viable vision of the future. It is time to close the disputes of the past and to project the lessons we want to leave for the future, to believe in what we are as Colombians, "jbien verracos, carajo!" (really tough!)

The time has come to unite in the purpose of facing problems, to leave behind anachronistic debates, so that Colombia may one day become one of the most valued powers in the world, learning to respect, to be and to feel solidarity, and to recognize

ourselves in our strengths, talents, and multiple and diverse intelligences.

As I have shown, the inherited violence has not guaranteed our society to achieve continuity in its policies and opportunities for individual and collective well-being. Overcoming such violence will mean allowing all Colombians, without discrimination, to be well educated, to understand the value of the common good, the sense of altruism, solidarity, and service. If the institutions, especially the State and those who work in and for it, fulfill the purpose of serving others, social, economic, and political solidarity spaces will be created in favor of all.

Colombia needs to outline its society supported by a State that starts from now on, the substantive contribution of the understanding of the common good as the opportunity and principle of life that covers everyone, covering their basic needs, in the midst of participatory democracy.

These bets must be directed to what I call "pro-sociality." The whole society and the institutional framework should be focused on maximizing resources, work efficiency and impact on quality products and services in favor of a community respectful of others, of their history and potential. When a State like the Colombian State can generate prosperity, its new actions will gradually correct the symptoms and effects of violence that have always accompanied us, since the State that has not been there will be replaced by a socially supportive, equitable and fair one.

With the pandemic, the world demonstrated how a welldirected collective effort makes it possible to overcome great challenges. When there is trust and the political order is well planned, satisfactory results can be expected in the short and medium term. For example, the Spain of the early 80's was considered a country with multiple deficiencies and expressions of underdevelopment and today, 40 years after undergoing an unprecedented transformation, it is one of the most balanced and equitably distributed nations in the European conglomerate, demonstrating the relevance of a State that learns to come together from a collective vision and designs strategies to overcome historical crises. Spain is a country very close to the Colombian sentiment and from that nation we can learn geopolitical reorganization and its successes in building infrastructures focused on satisfying the basic needs of all types of populations, especially coexistence and respect, because the key conditions of life: health, work, education and food sovereignty, are satisfied.

I have shown the historical weakness of the Colombian State since its very conformation. This weakness has grown over time due to the failure to resolve complex problems in a timely manner. It is not for me to make this analysis, as economists, sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, and other exponents of important disciplines would do with greater depth and argument. However, as an educator, I believe that I can offer an optimistic and historically proven vision.

Alternatives must be considered that do not de-institutionalize what has been advanced, that allow a re-engineering of the nation, on policies that impact the daily life of Colombians and their public and private entities. For the state institutionality to stop privileging interests based on an individual and collective eagerness to protect and defend union achievements, which

should be respected as long as they contribute to the welfare of citizens rather than thinking about their own.

I invite us to stop acting on mirages and define country best in favor of the law to avoid confusing legal tangles. I speak of the urgency of respecting and experiencing, as a country, universal rights, based on personal and institutional ethics imbued from an education that makes us more demanding with ourselves and with our collectives, in pursuit of an extended common good. An education that seeks to empower the legitimacy of the State, so that it can decentralize resources with the trust of all for the welfare of all.

It is necessary to understand that the State alone will not be able to respond to historical shortcomings, and that civil society and private organizations working for the common good must also become involved.

While the problems mentioned above require a structural analysis of their why and what for, it is essential to project how the transformation of the State will be approached. It is not a matter of taking the path of dilapidated reforms that take years and never guarantee effectiveness. Colombia is still a young country that must overcome those habits and malicious customs that have threatened equity and coexistence. The bet, among adults, is to reflect on the integral welfare to give value to individual and collective life and to allow new organizational structures to shape new behaviors in citizens and public servants.

Let us structurally design that collective vision of the country, to create a future scenario that allows us to reduce fractions and avoid interruptions in the progress of a nation that, like the Colombian nation today, is inequitable due to its lack of justice and the absence of solidarity, creating serious situations, particularly due to the unconsciousness of us, its inhabitants.

Today's Colombia needs institutions with effective management times and rhythms that strengthen intelligent collective work, which overcome the complexity it apparently has and change those temptations to serve. This must be framed in an environment of trust, resilience, and dedication so that the common work satisfies everyone. It is a matter of continuing what has been well done and avoiding changes in government do not ruining the little or much that has been built before.

Our society needs an education that strengthens competencies in all fields of knowledge, which promotes an integral reasoning capacity in all those who seek the mastery of knowledge and attraction. We need to build, unlike in the past, supports and platforms for transformation so that young people understand the rational use of natural resources and the necessary transformation of these into manufactured products destined to be part of a circular economy, whose objective is to strengthen competitiveness and productivity. It is necessary to face the challenge of revoking the obsolescence and inertia of the national industry, so that it can strengthen its growth.

It is a state model with a foolproof morality and a collective audit that guarantees current and future generations a balanced and harmonious economy that transforms energy and understands that the constant source of life is in the basics.

Today the world and our nation must be more efficient. One of the challenges in this transformation must be to improve the quality of life with better education, which allows understanding that there is an intimate relationship between the ecosystem and the ways of educating; that there is a complex interdependence, but also sustainable, of those who in distant environments can have a footprint of satisfaction in this sustainable economy.

The Technological Breakthrough... towards the Common Good

It is impossible not to mention artificial intelligence, big data, the iCloud computer and all those developments and technologies that are linked to scientific research and daily life. This poses at all times new directions for each field of knowledge and discipline, as they demand to create, adapt, and adopt tools and methods capable of helping to understand today's world. This intervention will become more effective to the extent that education is transformed to help introduce us to a concept based on principles and the operationalization of models, increasingly dependable and related to human beings, who must not only produce them but also use them to meet their needs and improve their quality of life.

Colombia cannot escape the transformation of society due to technological evolution. In addition to a social revolution from its transversal educational structure, this country needs to apply, adopt and create new technologies for its own economic, cultural, and political development, and this should force us to question ourselves not only as a nation, but also the role we play in the global context.

It is essential to understand that we are living in exclusive times never before experienced, as we have never had the privilege of observing, feeling, and experiencing a simultaneous accumulation of innovations and creations from and at the service of human intelligence.

The digital era has radically changed the way we live and coexist, marked by multiple and worldwide communications in immediate time. The means of production are automated daily, changing the ways we knew physical and intellectual work, and for all this education must be prepared to assume its responsibilities, no longer in the logic of knowledge transmission, since they flow faster and are available to all, but to make a radical change towards knowledge management. The enormous changes that we will witness place them in the face of a key concept that must profoundly modify our way of seeing and doing things, and of understanding that the fundamental element of humanity, of the future and especially of today, must be marked by an essential interest in well-being. Digital technology is part of the new conceptions of hypereconomy, technological advances and a new way of conceiving change, hopefully dreamed to live in peace.

Today more than ever we are witnessing the evolution of knowledge and the change of roles in all fields, areas, and disciplines of knowledge. Technologies derived from human intelligence, called artificial intelligences, can serve to coexist, and cooperate in the search for a better quality of life, but also to face the challenge of the survival of objects created by humans in the face of their own finiteness. It is necessary that this essay serves to be interested in participating in a debate that our Colombia urgently requires, around a vanguard education

that leads the social, economic, and other sectors of the State changes towards the common good.

If Colombia starts to understand fully and in an integrated manner the reason for its change as a nation around purposes, all of us, from our understanding and dreams of the country, will begin to consciously immerse ourselves in a responsible analytical reading of the reality we live in. It is about formulating one or many educational models, which strengthen the formation of strategic minds with the spirit of collaboration and to enhance the exponential effect of existing knowledge and new knowledge.

Every day in the digital era, technological devices will serve to assume responsibilities that were previously located only in the human capacity. It is necessary to promote applied knowledge in the different educational levels and cycles, and of course, to make a deep reengineering on the usefulness of the classic ways of evaluating and certifying the knowledge of students and teachers. Each new day in the digital era will dispense with the mechanical forms with which millions of factories in the world operated, to give way to automation or robotization as an intensive use of artificial intelligence.

If all this became evident in a country like Colombia, we would have a clear opportunity to reduce inequalities and our social and economic model would not produce such marked differences in the current social classes, which by its stratification creates unfair and unnecessary differentiations and few opportunities for education, health, and work.

Eventually all this generation of technological and digital infrastructures will be extended to all nations and societies on

the planet, which is why a country that is predictably prepared so that its human talent can manage its knowledge will also be recognized among the economies that will distribute wealth. It is clear that today's so-called rich countries, entrenched in the era of digitalization of robots and artificial intelligence, will want to maintain their primacy and will try to continue leveraging their cost reduction with cheap labor force of those countries that, like Colombia, is considered third world, precisely because they have not attended, nor planned the preparation of its citizens, in appropriate knowledge that would allow them to be competitive in the new and current times.

If Colombian education, as a system and institutionality, prepares itself to manage its own transformations, the new stories of its effect on society will serve to create opportunities for a society that, with its individuals, prepares itself to face the new hyperdigital realities. The time has come for our leaders and authorities to make fundamental decisions, and for Colombia to produce an "intelligent and dynamic revolution" that puts the interests of the vast majority of its citizens first, to train them in a capable manner in significant areas and fields of knowledge and technologies, through pedagogical models that favor learning and give everyone the ability to manage their own training and self-regulation.

Chapter 12 Final Thoughts while Enjoying a Delicious Colombian coffee

Well, dear reader, we have come to the end of a perspective of the history of Colombia from a self-critical expression of our education as a crucial factor to understand the social crisis that has become constant. A crisis in which, unfortunately, the learned hopelessness of our Colombian society limits our collective spirit, given that continuous flow of intolerance and exclusions that, for decades and centuries, have expressed worrying situations derived from a violence that has become endemic.

Let me now invite you for a cup of coffee, and reiterate my manifest interest in discussing with you something that could help us to focus first, our attention, and then our energies in the urgent search for the transformation towards an education that serves as an avant-garde reference to assume the social direction in its perspective of integral formation of human beings.

With this I intend to point to the urgency of diminishing in the new generations the prolonged anguish for the current Colombia as a nation that vanishes in our hands, since its social performance has been ineffective and the State has been diminished in its capacity of effective response to the different problems throughout the length and breadth of the national territory.

I make this first sip of coffee so that we can think about whether it would be viable for us to transform those negative emotions that have harmed us enormously and have taken away the due attention that we should have had as a collective society, to give value to the dream of a better country in which the new generations conceive and feel that their education is the vehicle that transmits new and better behaviors. Also to take responsibility for encouraging and distributing, for individual and collective benefit, millions of Colombian talents, and intelligences

to sensitively address, as a flag, the spirit of Colombianitud and consolidate it before the world and their own as a state of mind that expands our capabilities, skills, and individual and collective behaviors. As well as our solidarity so that Colombians are able to generate valuable perceptions of our own esteem and natural performance as a conglomerate of positive people, emotionally focused on productive intelligent work and capable of distributing feelings of warmth to get involved in the solution of problems.

Thus, the new generations of compatriots will leave as a mark, unlike what is happening in the present, the illusion of building happiness, optimism, dignity, and the desire to live. Because we are in a time where frustration, anger, indignation, and sadness accompany an atmosphere of hopelessness that permanently increases anxiety and worry not only in adults but also in young people and children.

Making this transition leads us to another sip of coffee, to make a rigorous prospective with which we dream and design, with an important representation of compatriots, the effort to outline a system where, given the good competences and future behaviors, it is allowed to be always at ease where we work, or study, where good humor and good attitude favor the full life and the efficiency of minds and talents. From today we must dream of a society that knows how to respect and apply the rules, that guarantees the integral formation of good people, so that we form true leaders who have the capacity to make complex decisions, thanks to flexible minds, influenced by a collective way of thinking, imbued by a serious optimism, and that allows, individually and collectively, to advance in established goals and objectives thanks to persistence and judgment.

These new nationals will be the fruit of an education that has permanently helped them to recognize creativity driven, from the beginning, by an education that helps to stimulate intelligence and talents but, especially, to recognize the value of dialogue and effective communication based on trust with others and towards others, increasing and highlighting aptitudes and attitudes where emotional intelligence makes them enthusiastic about life and solidarity and cooperative work.

The essay you have just read has not been written under any purpose of destructive criticism of current leaders or previous generations, but it does assume a critical attitude towards a history that has not been well told to us and, much less, that we have not been taught to recognize its essence in order to learn from it and not to repeat mistakes that have become daily occurrences and the seed of conflicts and disputes for a power that, particularly in politics and education, has failed the Colombian nation.

Today we need new well-trained generations, who can prove in practice the fabulous scenario that within the globe has been granted to us to be one of the best nations on the planet, reflecting harmony and ensuring that joint efforts to balance the application and equitable distribution of wealth as a source of collective welfare are worthwhile. We must work with quality and warmth in the relations of the members of any type of company or organization so that we all live in a cordial climate where the good mood of every day is a constant for each and every one of the inhabitants of this immense and beautiful Colombia.

It is necessary that the current generation of leaders and those who will come in the next few years, commit themselves to the interest of directing any of the sectors in the public and private sectors of Colombia; That they develop additional efforts to fulfill a prosperous and fair vision of the near future, and that from a comprehensive and integrated education system but also from the example of its current leaders, it is possible to create a culture of respect among ourselves, given that our moral and ethical example to young people and children who today are imbued in the superficial world of cynicism, mediocrity, drug addiction, criminality and easiness that makes them sensitive to the miserable contagion of these 10 scourges described here.

From always, but more visible today, a good number of the leaders have led the country in the opposite direction to its collective welfare. They, with valuable exceptions, have mistakenly seen that the duty of the public sector is to nationalize and create more bureaucracy and that the private sector is synonymous with illicit enrichment, widening social gaps and generating greater social polarization. They have also sponsored a scenario of feudalistic continuity, today protected by savage capitalism. For all these reasons, it would be a terrible mistake to follow either of these two paths, especially when infected education mostly defends petty interests and those of particular collectives that do little to benefit the duty of its vanguard as a sector.

What has been described here consolidates the radiography of a political scenario of hundreds of leaders and of an educational institutionality with a red balance, given its limited impact throughout more than 200 years. A dependent educational institutionality, lacking transforming leaderships and with reactions of permanent discontent, uncertainty, resentment, and little influence among society.

Today many, if not almost all Colombians, are the fruit of a society that has not renewed or enriched its past because it did not know how to learn from its accumulated failures and mistakes. A social organization that bets on its own improvement from the redefinition of its educational institutionality to contribute to the new citizen and to forge Colombia as a fair, equitable, inclusive, egalitarian, and enterprising nation.

If we look at the indicators, diagnoses and analyses of all times on social mobility in Colombia and the factors that have historically influenced its poor results, we can understand how the absence of good and broad educational coverage has been, among others, one of the main causes to understand the reason for the behavior of our people and their scarce interest in participating in nation building. This society has been incapable of creating conditions to guarantee national pride and to cover us with the feeling that will propel us to a better future. We continue to be influenced by a macabre model in which social insensitivity grows exponentially and our own relationships diminish in trust towards others.

This feeling limits us in our interaction and many times brings us together more to exercise evil than to strengthen good. From there I raise a question about what would happen if our children and young people with a good education learned to overcome differences from their own experiences in the study; an education that achieves the closing of gaps, and all, boys and girls, without exception, are formed with curricula that inspire learning to learn and inspire that relationships with others should be based on respect, dialogue and the power of intelligence.

This would redirect the role of key actors, such as teachers and students, so that they are nurtured symbiotically by example, based on the collective optimism that brings joint returns from education itself and from the results that, in the future, its graduates will provide as transformational leaders to society. A chain must be guaranteed so that, in a continuous operation, all our people, inside and outside any type of organization, are emotionally infected with hope and optimism, and where conscious and unconscious emotions are experienced that strengthen interactions with others, creating a culture supported by a true connection between nationals and inhabitants of the different countries of the planet.

Let's Get to Work!

If Colombia and Colombians today were capable of creating a vision of how transformed education can create positive impacts for the Colombian society of tomorrow, guaranteeing educational excellence and organizational effectiveness, this essay will have fulfilled its **first purpose**, which is to **serve as a useful guide for reflection and effective motivation for the educational leaders of today and the future**, especially teachers and students themselves, to develop an awareness of what education implies to forge a society with ideal conditions for people to succeed in the humanity perspective.

I honestly hope that my reflections have contributed somehow to your knowledge, understanding, analysis and, above all, to act regarding the role of each one of us as protagonists in the face of this reality. If this essay has left at least the concern of the **necessary change of the current education** so that, among others, its great influence in the emotional development of the students is understood and as an engine to sow the privilege of serving others and to overcome inheritances and bad habits, as well as absurd confrontations, which until today have been the source of our endemic violence in all types of social class and formative level, the **second purpose** of this essay will be fulfilled.

I insist that it is required, as a starting point, that the current educational actors assume an emotional self-awareness that connects their feelings with the vision of a new country created on the basis of the values of ethics and morality as a key reference of the necessary change.

When the Colombian educational system prepares people who act as good citizens, when its graduates are good leaders who know how to be honest and authentic before others and are capable, in the face of any eventuality, of being proactive because they are convinced of their principles and fundamental values in order to contribute to others, Colombian society will have matured into a real democracy.

For this reason, educational institutions and their actors must understand the value of self-evaluation as a responsibility derived from a self-awareness that recognizes and expresses, without fear, its limitations and strengths, in order to assume constructive criticism and performance results as a real and effective option of accompaniment for continuous improvement and, from there, focus training and qualification strategies as a necessary and indisputable support to assume new challenges

and challenges of educational leadership. If such awareness is possible, the **third purpose** of this paper will have been fulfilled.

This essay aimed, as a **fourth purpose**, **to leave a message to each and every teacher about mastering their knowledge**, **skills and competencies** in order to strengthen them in their continuous learning, but also to recognize their deficiencies and act towards a permanent qualification that will make them stand out in their teaching practice, with the purpose of generating impacts that, in the future, are expected from their own formative self-management as an example of self-improvement for their students.

Addressing the radical transformation of the education sector in Colombia requires, as the fifth purpose of this paper, that the leaders and sectoral leaders propose the creation of innovative strategies to address the multiple discontents that are currently disturbing the educational climate and which make it necessary to overcome the current crisis evidenced, in part, by the postures of leaders who act in a non-transparent manner. It requires the necessary example and integrity shown to the educational communities (teachers, students and graduates, and even to their own management colleagues) also seeking recognition of the path of continuous improvement that involves a thorough review of current problems and that these do not become structural, as they affect ethical conduct of the teaching profession.

Therefore, I appeal to educational leaders and teachers to proactively adapt to new and innovative ways of managing their organizations. To teachers, so that they know how to effectively manage curricula through the innovative exercise of multiple pedagogies that help to overcome existing ambiguities in the ways of assessing students and to know how to transform the rigidity for a flexibility that allows effective adaptation to new challenges that require mental and emotional agility for meaningful learning.

The constant from now and forward should always be continuous change and prospective planning. In this vein, recursiveness should be a permanent expression in the management of educational praxis so that the objectives proposed for student training are always valued and measurable, but at the same time stimulating. This creates a new fundamental feature that must be appreciated in the work of teachers so that they guide and accompany them in learning to learn, but also in teaching others to improve, based on their own example.

It would not be possible to advance in this educational redirection without allowing the initiative of each institution, which must be accompanied by its own autonomy to take the path of its own mission and vision, so that the members of the institution, as a community, take advantage of opportunities and are able to create them. In this way, innovative transformations will be created to build one's own future. A challenge will be to learn to notice opportunities and reduce threats to the extent that an educational community learns to see the glass as half full and not half empty.

Every educational institution in Colombia should emphasize social awareness, which is nothing more than understanding what we have rewritten in all the chapters of this essay in order to understand the reality of each community served. Because education must be effective in guiding and motivating its

own responsibilities, such as research, innovation, and social projection. Empathy is required between the leaders and the different levels, whatever their nature, so that each institution, be it a school, college, institute, foundation or university, is capable of building its own organizational culture, so that in a world like today's, the guarantee of recognizing the value of social networks and learning networks become the strongest structures to operate the guiding values of each institutional mission and vision.

The culture established will have to be supported by good service, understanding that from now on, and by conviction of the educational community itself, this will be the challenge that must accompany the healthy competition between institutions, in such a way that the people who are part of each community understand the value of the satisfaction of its users as the best expression and reward for the daily and daily effort and the loyalty of those who at one moment, acting as their students, will be in the future those who best represent the educational legacy as its socially recognized graduates.

This essay makes sense if it becomes a source of inspiration for every reader, but, above all, for every member of the sector. The interest is none other than to promote a fundamental transformation that embodies the true historical meaning of education to stimulate every human being in the improvement of their life projects and their daily lives and thus contribute to achieving the ultimate goal of human existence, which is none other than happiness and individual and collective welfare.

This essay will fulfill its **sixth purpose** if it is also **influential** in creating indicators to assess the impact of educational

institutions with a dynamic that leads to the construction of a better Colombian society that promotes change and renews itself. A nation aware of the failures of the current status quo and of the necessary vision to support a change that favors convictions that overcome obstacles and prejudices that until today have kept it in the absurd circle of effective social inoperativeness.

It is undeniable that Colombia suffers from a weak management of the state organization, which does not produce the due social impact and presents serious ruptures of the social fabric that, not being solved in depth, keep us living periodically with dysfunctionalities. Since the State has not been there, uncertainty and hopelessness have gained prominence among the people, who are helpless in the face of their governments. This, according to sociological specialists, could be called "social anomie", a term used to register how there is a predisposition to crisis not only due to the creation of millions of norms and laws that instead of articulating and integrating for the better, hinder and paralyze the State and make it ineffective in the face of problems that, like those described in each chapter, coincide in their ethical and moral absences, since before our genesis as a free nation in 1819.

Perhaps the most concerning thing, and which I reiterate here, is the way in which these questionable conducts are extended to each new leader in each era, who does not learn from the failures of history, but from the tricks and twisted devices of the leaders of yesteryear.

This country today is the result of what warriors, feudalists and landowners wanted to make of it, who created armies of humble

people to fight for petty interests and for causes unknown to most of them. This caused a good part of our previous generations to sink into the unhappiness of state abandonment. Violence became a virus that still contaminates us, stealthily inoculated by the violent ones of yesteryear and taken up by new capos and hitmen of powerful national and international groups that swarm as criminal mafias, which in the course of each day leave us submerged in a chronic despair.

Despite the speeches and rhetoric to the contrary, the truth is that exclusion continues to be a reality not overcome, and on the contrary, radicalized with violence, which appropriates the public patrimony, devastating with excessive anger what has been built with our scarce resources as a nation.

Many of the speeches of our leaders are more decorative and curious for their proposals, in the name of democracy and misinterpreted freedoms. At bottom, they lack a vision of homeland, of education as a social support, of science, research, and innovation as "weapons" to build a just and prosperous nation.

The political chicanery and trickery are strengthened, against the merit that should be recognized to any compatriot, regardless of their origin, race, region, or social class. It is time to start working to silence the weapons and replace intrigue, fraud, and corruption with the strength of the spirit of solidarity. It is time for the new generations of Colombians to feel and live, in their daily actions, the interest of building scenarios of argumentation that structure regional decentralization, autonomy, dignity, justice and the collective as a purpose in the priorities of governments.

Social anomie is a sociological term that refers to the absence of practical norms to achieve the goals of society; however, in Colombia, the remedy has been "more serious than the disease," since there are more than 5 million laws forged after Independence, which in general, have been at the service of small minorities.

Colombia cannot continue to succumb to low-impact projects that divert the collective interest to avoid answering the where, when, how and why. Colombia cannot continue to promote projects and macro-projects with indefinite expiration dates, while the social impact they seek to achieve is not achieved and, on the contrary, their adverse effects increase, as well as hopelessness throughout our geography. Consequence of this has also been the exclusion of ethnic minorities and majority population groups, such as peasants and workers in large cities, who grow uncontrollably with very diverse problems, given the scarce effectiveness of the political will to solve them and the absence of a critical mass of leaders and leaders duly trained by an educational system that has not yet managed to act sufficiently as social conscience of the being and duty to be of our Colombian society.

The statistics regarding inequality and social stagnation in Colombia are not only critical, but also shocking: 40 %; that is, 20 of our 50 million inhabitants are below the poverty line, which is a phenomenon that, instead of having some level of solution, in the last decade worsens every day¹⁴.

Thomas Piketty, a French economist specializing in economic inequality and income distribution, has warned that in Colombia between 70% and 80% of the wealth is in the hands of 10% of the population, while

The desire to ideologize them in the service of political or union interests from the bad example of their own teachers generates greater despair, frustration, and resentment. The facts speak for themselves: the critical position that Colombia occupies annually among Latin American countries in the performance of the Pisa tests, as well as the national average in the different Saber Tests (at all levels) confirm worrying differences between public and private schools, and between classrooms with children and young people of lower and higher economic resources.

All this confirms the absence of fundamental solutions for Colombia, a country that is struggling in an unprecedented ethical-political confusion. A dynamic educational system that is not marginalized and aware of the historical role it can play in the construction of a better society can and should offer us valuable insights.

I am sure that much of what is presented in these pages will be a source of argumentative conflict, but I appreciate that this happens in order to understand how far we are willing to listen and understand different points of view on how to confront the ideal of country and nation that we should draft on behalf of the whole society.

the 50% below barely owns close to 1%. According to the National Administrative Department of Statistics, DANE, a little more than 40% of the population lives in poverty (more than 20 million people, of which more than 7 million live in extreme poverty - their income is not enough to consume the calories a person need for good health). Indicators of domestic violence, sexual abuse, wage inequality between men and women, and even families lacking public services and children dying of malnutrition, confirm the worrying picture.

The Colombia we dream of is also a co-responsibility of educators, committed to an integral formation conscious of rebuilding ourselves as a supportive and prosperous collective, to overcome by far the scarce social results that our past has left us.

We need to assume the construction of the future with an education that can extract from the sum of social failures, the design and management of new forms of work and education, and cultivate the virtues required for the Colombians of the future to also be an example of creativity.

We need, collectively, to work and educate ourselves so that the inhabitants of this planet understand the peculiarity of a country whose new generations have the certainty of transforming Colombia to overcome a reality stuck in the middle of multiple instances of ignorance, as an explanatory principle of a past that has been a cradle of violence and scarcely visionary so that in the future this should never be repeated.

To conclude, I invite you not to forget that the strategic relationship of Colombia with other nations of the world, if projected as a nation in an intelligent way, would allow us to design and strengthen a dream of a viable, cooperative, and solidary nation among us. Also, with other countries we would assume a leading role in order to take important steps of global cooperation with unprecedented positive social effects, which encourages a free flow of investments and exchange of products and services from every cardinal point of the country. We inhabit one of the most privileged geographical environments on the planet in terms of its biostrategic value, which with dependable partners will make Colombia an indispensable nation for the rest of humanity.

This is the only way we will be able to redirect all the energy deployed as a source of inspiration for the common ideal of a prosperous and equitable nation of extended well-being for the following generations of Colombians.

My appreciation to the team that accompanied this production from different points of view and to my family who, as always, gave me the time that I have always taken from them to fulfill this educational cause.

EPILOGUE

THE COLOMBIAN FLAG Eduardo Carranza

THE WIND OF THE HOMELAND

When in the dark nights I am calm in my peaceful shelter, I think of my faithful and beloved homeland and that I would give my life for its sake....

And we marched through the streets of the town in naive imitation of the military parades. The tricolor burst of the flag was above us. The flurry of bread, blood, the Dream. The wind was shining in the cornfields. And the sound of a bugle rose in the golden silence of the peasant afternoon. An emotion invaded us, impossible to repeat now with tired, drizzled, graying words; it was a kind of pure intoxication that sang in the childish temples, a kind of sublime pang that lifted us to a vibrant, to an illusionary world of reverie and heroism. One like levitation in the heroic, magical and mysterious. We felt we were heirs and perpetuators of something sacred and exceptionally beautiful. And a feeling of fierce pride for what was, and of faith, hope, and Love for what is to come, descended on our foreheads. It was the Homeland circulating through our veins: Colombia, Colombia! In the distance, the bluish smoke was blowing away the mountains. The heart was melting with tenderness and illusion and a secret of Love and Honor was beating in the depths of the future. Soft and translucent, the evening moon appeared:

Let us sing the glory and the martial triumph of the Colombians there in Boyacá....

A child among children was Soldadito Carranza, under the flag. The same one that now returns to those days, to that Flag, the graying Heart...

In that town, in that street, in that golden sunset field, in the shadow of that vanished tower, in that square where I dreamed the water of a stone basin, in that sweet childhood memory, the Colombian flag flew for the first time over my six-year-old heart. Now I am twenty years old and have a star in my hand. Youth, like a blue sap, matured my heart. The day, like a red sparrowhawk, flew among palm trees. All around, the brown girls with the light in their teeth. A white deer with its blue ribbon crossed. "I was on horseback and with a dagger in my belt". And, in his right hand, a verse thundered:

...All is well: the forehead that waits for me, the water with its walking sky, the humid red in the loving mouth and the Wind of the Homeland in the Flag.... I was followed by the light of the Llanos, where the ancient of my veins lives, the light stained with leaves like a tiger.

When it was the high noon of my life, I wrote the Prelude for a Hymn to the Colombian Flag, which I dedicated to my sons Ramiro and Juan Carranza handing them the rose, the ember and the Flag: Take my son, this flag Place it over your heart as if it were a beloved face, as if it were the national song of spring or the word Love.

There, the field of ears of corn to the blue space ascended and in aerial stream of silk the blue sky thinned and the heroic drop of blood in red bird flew.

And the immense tree of the homeland became a fine flagpole.

Raise, my son, this flag leaning on your heart until it touches the stars of Bolivar.

Make it float pure and whole, like the word Honor. She is the wind of the homeland.

If you kiss her, you kiss her Atlantic forehead and her Amazonian feet.

If you listen to it, you will hear veins of gold beating, veins of dreams and jasmine and the ancient pulse of the rivers and the breathing of the abyss and the blood of summer burning in the waist of the earth and the foals fleeing across the plain before the rope of lightning.

And you will hear the seas of the homeland: the one that bathes it with song and mother-of-pearl and the one that bathes it with solitude. Its two seas like two wings open on the future.

Raise your eyes, my son, to look at this flag.

She is the gust of bread; poetry and youth - which, they say, is purple - And with the dreams of your people and with their blood it was woven.

Watch it pass, in it, the people with its memory and its illusion.

It comes from behind as Colombia and from hand to hand it passed, from heart to heart over the night, over the day, over pain, over love, over the sleeping one who smiles and the awake one who dreams and sings who loves, who suffers, who works:

how dreamed by time and by the blue wind of God!

Dream, my son, this flag inaugurating the future like a tricolor archangel.

See, my son, this flag flying like a song: towards the land of hope; wing of anger and love.

Raise, my son, this flag leaning on your heart! And years ago, my Epitaph is written:

This was flame. It was the youthful mouth of Spring. When he dies, lay him on the ground. With his earth dress the dream. Put him under his flag...

Where the rooster put the Cross. ... And only this sign: Eduardo Carranza waits here.

Segovia, October 1983

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Throughout 12 chapters, this essay traces the genesis of our country, from the description of our ancestors and its evolution as a society, analyzing the role played by education in the construction of our current social composition and development and from various angles I insist on the urgency of revitalizing education, as a structure, system and public policy, to recover the essence of our nationality, our Colombianness and our possibilities to be a progressive and peaceful nation.

