

ETHNIC CITIZENSHIP IN COLOMBIA

The Experience of the Regional Indigenous Council of the Cauca in Southwestern Colombia from 1970 to 1990*

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Abstract: This article argues that the national political context of Colombia in the 1970s and 1980s led the Colombian indigenous movement to elaborate an ethnic citizenship. The failures of the left and the decline in effectiveness of partisan citizenship played a large role in the representation and political practices of the premier indigenous grassroots organization Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca; CRIC). This article focuses on the formative moments of the 1970s and early 1980s when CRIC began to represent its movement as a primarily indigenous, ethnic one, minimizing the importance of nonindigenous actors. The nation-state, at each stage of the movement's development, fostered the "ethnicization" of the indigenous movement of Colombia in hopes of weakening the southwestern insurgency and legitimizing its institutions:

INTRODUCTION: DEMOCRACY, VIOLENCE, AND ETHNIC CITIZENSHIP

Colombia is one of the few countries in Latin America with a long and continuous tradition of electoral democracy.¹ Unlike Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, Colombia only experienced one brief period of dictatorship in

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1. This article is largely based on a series of interviews that took place from February 1998 to July 2001 for my dissertation research, with the exception of one interview in October 2004. My first contact with the indigenous communities in Cauca Department took place in July 1997, when I accompanied a human rights delegation as a graduate student. I returned to Cauca in February 1998 to begin my dissertation research. I started interviewing the indigenous leaders and nonindigenous activists of the Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (CRIC) as a result of my previous contacts with this organization. I taped or took notes during these interviews. The interviews took place in the interviewees' homes, offices, and in cafes or bars both in Popayán and in Bogotá. After interviewing one person, that person would inform me that I should really interview another person. My questions changed as I learned more from each interview. Most of the interviews lasted at least several hours.

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the 1950s.² Moreover, in contrast to Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia, Colombia has allowed all men over the age of twenty-one to vote since 1936 without any literacy, income, or ethnicity requirements. But this exemplary record (for Latin America) of elections and of citizen participation in elections is coupled with the enduring problem of political violence. So here we have what is known as the "Colombian paradox": a democratic country with endemic and pandemic violence.³

Operating within this political paradox, the indigenous communities of Colombia and their allies have emerged as a major political force that successfully mobilized to achieve economic and political change. This article argues that the success of the indigenous movement was made possible by the elaboration of an ethnic citizenship.⁴ I use the term *ethnic citizenship* rather than *ethnic identity* because I focus on the relationship between indigenous groups and the nation-state. Other scholars such as Jimeno (2005) and Barth (1969) have defined ethnic identity in a relational manner as well, but I find the term *ethnic citizenship* more useful given my exclusive emphasis on the political nature of the claims made on the basis of ethnicity.

The elaboration of this relationship between indigenous groups and the nation-state did not occur in a vacuum. Activists, guerrilla armies, and political parties altered and at times shaped the interaction between indigenous groups and the nation-state.⁵ Emphasizing certain key moments, I explore how from the 1970s to the 1990s indigenous groups, in conjunction with the nation-state, elaborated a new reciprocal relationship that stressed the ethnic character of the claims made by indigenous groups and at the same time gradually limited the class element of these claims. The repression of broader claims by peasants and the overlooking of the cooperation of nonindigenous social groups in the construction of the indigenous movement were intrinsic to the elaboration of indigenous citizenship.

2. The period of military dictatorship lasted from June 1953 to 1957.

3. The latest historical scholarship on citizenship in Colombia has concentrated on the nineteenth century. Lasso (2003, 228) argues that, in the period after independence, Afro-Colombians played a crucial role not only in fighting for independence but also in shaping republican politics. For a brief period after independence, the republican discourse seemed to offer Afro-Colombians full participation in the political system. However, the Creole elite rejected this full inclusion and proceeded to use the republican discourse to silence issues of racial inequality (Lasso 2003, 240). Sanders (2004) suggests that partisan politics expressed through elections, political clubs, and participation on the battlefield allowed Afro-Colombians' real participation in the political system in southwestern Colombia in the nineteenth century.

4. For an excellent explanation of how political scientists have used the term *ethnic citizenship*, see Van De Sandt (2007, 22–23).

5. Jasmin Hristov (2005) also explores the importance of the political and economic context in her analysis of the Cauca indigenous movement.

Colombia is an interesting case for comparison when looking at the interaction between the state and the indigenous movements because it was a formal democracy before other Latin American countries experienced the democratization process.⁶ This article, while not minimizing the agency of the indigenous communities, argues that, in the case of Colombia, exogenous factors played a crucial role in the formation of ethnic citizenship. These exogenous factors emerged from the violent yet democratic context of Colombia in the 1970s and 1980s. Emergency decrees interrupted and diminished Colombian democracy in the 1970s and 1980s, and human rights violations occurred on a regular basis, but a limited formal democracy existed in that elections took place. Thus, recent studies examining the privileged role of ethnic politics in the general context of political democratization have focused on the decades of the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s (Brysk 2000; Jackson and Warren 2002). Colombia provides the case study of a formal democracy that experienced the shift from class-based claims to ethnic-based ones in the 1970s and 1980s. During those decades, the left (broadly defined here), while clearly on the wane, had not yet lost its worldwide ideological influence. In addition, the armed left is still very much present in Colombia and currently poses a real strategic challenge to the nation-state. In other Latin American countries, no guerrilla army currently presents a viable challenge to the nation-state.⁷

Scholars of indigenous movements throughout Latin America have noted the shift from class-based claims to demands based on ethnic identity from the 1970s to the 1980s and 1990s (Pallares 2002; Sieder 2002).⁸ In her introduction to *Multiculturalism in Latin America*, Sieder (2000, 1) notes that, in the past decade, ethnicity rather than class has become the key focus of political demands in Latin America. Pallares (2002, 34) suggests that in Ecuador a new *indianismo* allows for a “double consciousness” à la W. E. B. DuBois, which allows the indigenous communities to maintain the material demands based on class identity while framing them in an ethnic way. Although I agree with Pallares that class demands are not abandoned but rearticulated, I suggest that this rearticulation has an important ideological and social cost for the majority of Colombian peasants. I certainly do not believe that class consciousness is the only important consciousness or that ethnic identity is some form of false consciousness, but I do think that, in Colombia, the state promoted the move away from a class discourse with the objective of diminishing the power of class-based movements.

6. In the 1970s, both Bolivia and Ecuador, two countries with strong grassroots indigenous movements, were under intermittent military rule.

7. The Zapatista army in Chiapas that emerged in 1994 does not threaten the existence of the Mexican state. In Peru, Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path), a significant threat in the 1980s, has been essentially neutralized since the capture of its leader Abimael Guzmán.

8. A number of scholars have focused on indigenous movements in Latin America. For reasons of space, I have named only a few.

Ironically, the indigenous movement in Colombia emerged from a tradition of the left. As this article shows, a number of indigenous leaders and nonindigenous activists started off their political activism by participating in leftist organizations. Tate (2007, 73) has shown how the first wave of Colombian human rights activists of the early 1980s arose from the leftist political culture of the 1970s: "For the vast majority of self-defined human rights activists, however, activism was not simply a response to political violence but was profoundly shaped by the political culture inherited from this legacy of radical activism. . . . For both human rights activists and victims' family members who joined the vast majority of organizations, however, activism was defined in the terms of the Colombian left. In their view, Colombian history was an unbroken line of state repression against popular organizations, which justified revolutionary violence and focused on state responsibility."

This holds especially true for the nonindigenous activists who accompanied the indigenous movement in its early stage. The gradual disillusion with the left was brought about in part by the dogmatic approach that one of the armed factions of the left (i.e., Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia [FARC], or Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia) adopted vis-à-vis the indigenous grassroots movement. The other reason for the gradual shift in discourse was the state's nudging toward an ethnic discourse and representation.

The Colombian indigenous population has enjoyed unprecedented rights in terms of land and culture since 1991. In contrast to those of Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador, Colombia's indigenous population is a small minority, representing only 2 percent of the total population. Currently, eighty-one indigenous ethnic groups, about six or seven hundred thousand people, have rights over approximately 25 percent of the national territory (Pineda 1995, 13).⁹ The vast bulk of that territory is held collectively: 80 percent of the indigenous population owns 408 *resguardos* (collective inalienable land grants created, for the most part, during the colonial era by the Spanish Crown) covering 27,621,257 hectares (Pineda 1995, 13). The nation-state, in the Constitution of 1991, affirmed the inalienable nature of the indigenous collective landholdings (Van Cott 2000, 85). In addition, indigenous communities obtained the right to judicial autonomy within the *resguardos* and to the direct disbursement of state funds to *cabildos*, the *resguardo* council authorities. In the department of Cauca, where the

9. Estimates vary. Pineda gives a figure of 603,000, which would represent 2 percent of the population. The 1997 Colombian census estimated the indigenous population at 701,680. The latest population figures for the indigenous population of Colombia indicate a significant increase in terms of number and percentage of indigenous people. The DANE 2005 census estimated that there were 1,392,623 indigenous people, or 3.43 percent of the total population.

indigenous movement emerged, indigenous communities recovered an impressive amount of land: 74,228 hectares from 1970 to 1996 (Peñaranda 1999, 92).

In recent years, political indigenous leaders have also emerged as one of the most effective voices for peace. The indigenous councils of the resguardos reject the presence of armed actors (guerrillas, paramilitaries, and the regular army) in their territory. This rejection of violence and of armed actors is enforced by an army of men who are unarmed except for their *bastones de mando*, or ceremonial canes, which represent indigenous authority.

Scholars such as Rappaport (2005), Caviedes (2000), and Findji (1992) have pointed out the distinct nature of the political practices of the indigenous grassroots group, and more recently the importance of non-indigenous allies. Although this article of course takes into account the specificity of culture and the historical legacy of colonialism, it contends that the indigenous groups, specifically those of the Cauca, reconstructed and reinvented colonial political institutions largely because of the specific historical circumstances of the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁰ I also suggest that at least one branch of the state legitimized this new type of citizenship but sought to limit it to the indigenous ethnic groups.

The indigenous movement started out in the department of the Cauca in southwestern Colombia. Indigenous communities and their allies organized themselves in a grassroots association, known as the Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (Regional Indigenous Council of the Cauca, or CRIC). The CRIC and the Movimiento de Autoridades Indígenas de Colombia (AICO, or the Colombian Indigenous Authorities Movement—the other indigenous grassroots organization, smaller and with less political clout) constructed an ethnic discourse that eventually privileges nonviolence and deliberately eschews partisan politics. This article emphasizes the points at which the indigenous movement constructed a citizenship discourse that sought to democratize Colombian society not through involvement in political parties but through the formation of grassroots associations, the creation of a pantheon of martyrs and heroes, the reinvention of political institutions, and public displays of unity and ethnic identity. This essay also focuses on the instances when the national state legitimized this ethnic citizenship and thereby ensured its success.

The formative moments I will concentrate on are the founding and early development of the CRIC and the formation of the indigenous guerrilla

10. Jackson (1995, 2002) has also underscored the importance of the national state in the politicization of ethnic identity for the indigenous population of the Vaupés. On the importance of sympathetic national actors, see also Gros (1991). For an excellent overview of the national Colombian indigenous movement, see Laurent (2005).

group Movimiento Armado del Quintín Lame (MAQL; Armed Movement of Quintín Lame). These are two defining moments when CRIC members emphasized the ethnic nature of the indigenous peasant's demands and pressed for social change based on the legitimization of their identity as *indígenas*. Thus, the MAQL claimed that it is the direct heir of the armed movement organized by Quintín Lame (a famous indigenous leader who mobilized indigenous communities on the basis of ethnicity) in the 1910s rather than emphasizing the political context of the 1980s. During these two moments the state ultimately upheld the narrative established by the indigenous movement.

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT OF THE DECLINE OF TRADITIONAL CITIZENSHIP

Before discussing the CRIC, I address the national political context that led to the decline of traditional citizenship. The trajectory of the construction of ethnic citizenship is intimately linked to that of the decline of the citizenship based on partisan affiliation and electoral participation. These changed local and national political and economic structures of power led to the "ethnicization" of the discourse and organization of the CRIC.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the indigenous groups of the Cauca were fully integrated into the political life of Colombia, which functioned as a bipartisan system. This system, however, broke down with La Violencia (1947–1953). The discourse of partisanship spiraled out of control in the mid-twentieth century and pitted ordinary Colombians against one another. Other tensions created by social class and ethnic differences intermingled with those created by partisan discourse during the conflict (Roldán 2002). In the Cauca, violence affected the indigenous communities dramatically (Ortiz 1973, 33). Loss of land and the erosion of the authority of the traditional political authorities left many indigenous communities, especially in northern and northwestern Cauca, devastated (Troyan 2002; Van de Sandt 2007).

The conflict ended in part when General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla took charge with the complicity of both the liberal and conservative elites. In 1957, Rojas Pinilla was forced to step down by the elites, who were alarmed at his increasing independence. The liberal and conservative elites agreed to end their ongoing conflict, to alternate the presidency every four years, and to ensure political parity in the other branches of the government for conservatives and liberals. This agreement lasted for sixteen years, a period known as the National Front (Frente Nacional). The stated motivation of this pact was to end the violence of the 1940s and 1950s that was attributed to partisan conflict over political power. The unstated motive was to stem the elite's growing loss of control over political power. The pact left issues of inequality and land distribution unresolved. Although

this power sharing precluded partisan rivalry, it also closed off important avenues for political participation, as each party was guaranteed political representation and therefore did not have to compete for votes.¹¹

In addition, this agreement made it nearly impossible for other new political parties and alternatives to emerge.¹² For the indigenous population of the Cauca, the end of partisan rivalry and the violence endured during this period made the exercise of traditional citizenship difficult and largely ineffective.¹³

In an effort to compensate for the loss of the traditional avenues of political participation, the state promoted new forms of political participation, such as cooperatives, associations, and local civic organizations (*juntas de acción comunal*). For some indigenous leaders, such as Marcos Avirama and Gregorio Palechor, this was an important political space in which they tested their political skills and acquired experience in leadership. For instance, Gregorio Palechor, a former leader of the CRIC, stated: "Entonces ya salió ese órgano que le llaman 'Acción Comunal.' Entonces ya en la comunidad me nombraron como presidente de la Junta de Acción Comunal, porque yo era una persona que prestaba el servicio y era progresista" (Jimeno 2005, 145).

The general context for these initiatives was the agrarian reform of 1961. Law 135 (the central law of the agrarian reform) determined that any unproductive land could be confiscated. It aimed to end unproductive latifundia and to distribute land more democratically. Other laws established the automatic renewal of sharecropping contracts for ten years and made eviction more costly. The objective was to modernize Colombia and to foster a middle class of peasants by giving them access to credit, investment, and more land.

Although the United States and the liberal government hoped to avoid a communist revolution by creating a middle class and by encouraging

11. As Sabato (2001) has pointed out, recent scholarship indicates that increasing participation in the electoral process, which begins in the nineteenth century for most Latin American countries, did not bring about a democratization of most Latin American societies. Elections and their processes did create a political space in which subaltern groups were included, albeit through the conduit of clientelism and through caciques (Sabato 2001). Scholars have attributed the growth of civil society to the emergence and proliferation of associations and volunteer groups such as artisan groups. Thus, the focus has moved from examining the purely electoral process to the formation of civil society. In Colombia, elections did offer an important way for subalterns to participate, but the agreement of the Frente Nacional along with La Violencia made this form of political participation less effective and less attractive. Statistics on electoral participation in Colombia show that during the Frente Nacional era, participation decreased.

12. An offshoot of the Liberal Party, the Movimiento Revolucionario Liberal (MRL), did emerge but was dismantled as soon as it challenged the boundaries of the bipartisan political system.

13. On the effects of La Violencia in the Cauca, see the memoirs of David Gonzalez (n.d.).

peasants to form an organization in 1966 (Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos [ANUC], or National Association of Peasants), many organizers from the radical branch of the Liberal Party and Marxists hoped for political change and a radical restructuring of land tenure patterns. Indigenous peasants participated in the agrarian reform in a number of ways. They joined cooperatives, petitioned for fair sharecropping contracts, joined the ANUC, and mobilized politically on the basis of social class. Marcos Avirama (1998), who became the president of the CRIC in the 1970s told me, "Tba en un proceso político de izquierda del 71 al 73" ("I was involved in the leftist political movement from 1971 to 1973").

ANUC's experience from 1966 to 1973 revealed to the indigenous population the weaknesses of the left and the limitations of the national government's willingness to support a real redistribution of land and resources.¹⁴ While ANUC successfully organized peasants, different factions of the left (e.g., Maoists, Leninists) soon fought among themselves, and some leftists developed a radical and antagonistic discourse toward the state. When repression ensued, in part because of these different factions' revolutionary discourse, some would-be guerrillas left the peasants to face the consequences of state repression alone (Rivera Cusicanqui 1982). ANUC eventually split into two factions in 1972 and lost most of its effectiveness. Thus, the national context of the emergence of the CRIC was one in which the left was splintered into multiple and warring factions and in which the national state had shown its disinclination to support a radical restructuring of resources based on class identity.

FOUNDING AND ORIGINS OF THE CRIC: THE FORMATION OF ETHNIC CITIZENSHIP

The founding of the CRIC is the first moment it started to construct a political space and to elaborate a new language of citizenship. On February 24, 1971, approximately two thousand indigenous peasants came together to found the organization in Toribío, Cauca (CRIC 1981). The majority of the peasants were Guambianos and Nasas, the two largest indigenous ethnic groups in the Cauca department (CRIC 1981). Most of them lived in tremendous poverty. Indeed, statistics placed Cauca's indigenous peasants at the very bottom of Colombia's socioeconomic hierarchy (Findji 1978; Van de Sandt 2007, 109). Also present at that first meeting were nonindigenous government officials from the Colombian Institute of Agrarian Reform (INCORA; Bolaños 1999).¹⁵ Their presence indicates the sympathy that indigenous peasants generated. The meeting also attracted nonindigenous peasants and nonindigenous leftist activists. Afro-

14. For a superb and perceptive analysis of the ANUC, see Rivera Cusicanqui (1982).

15. Graciela Bolaños was an activist and a member of the Colombian Agrarian Reform Institute in the 1970s. She is also Pablo Tattay's wife.

Colombians as well as mestizos attended the meeting, but their presence is not emphasized in the official literature recounting the founding of the CRIC.

Although most of the discussions addressed unequal land distribution and the need for reform within the framework of the ongoing Colombian agrarian reform, some individuals made long speeches about the imminence of a revolution and the need for revolutionary action (Avirama 1998). Marcos Avirama (1998) stated: "También participan políticos que llegan allá para aprovechar la asamblea para hacer política. Algunos plantean la lucha armada." These revolutionary speeches have been erased from the official record because of the clear repression that ensued from one branch of the state and because they did not fit into the later narrative about the mobilization of the indigenous people. The police and military army members present to gather intelligence about the meeting later arrested many of the nonindigenous and indigenous leaders of this congress (Avirama 1998; *Unidad Indígena* 1975, 2).

The first and principal demand that survived the first congress was for an end to *terraje*, a form of sharecropping. The other demands were that INCORA expropriate farms located on land that had belonged to indigenous communities and distribute that land for free to indigenous families; that the National Agency of Indigenous Affairs be eliminated; that Law 89 of 1890 be modified, which provided the legal basis for collective landholding; that the *resguardos* be expanded where land had been divided into too-small units; and that indigenous people be allowed to participate in any decisions made about them (CRIC 1981). In addition, a fair amount of discussion had taken place about Law 89, which would turn out to be the cornerstone of the Colombian indigenous movement. The only demand that survived this first meeting was for an end to sharecropping.

The anonymous authors of a history of the CRIC produced by the Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular (CINEP) attributed this emphasis on class demands to the presence at the first meeting of mostly indigenous sharecroppers rather than indigenous people who still held land in *resguardos*. The implication is that because the indigenous sharecroppers no longer lived in community, they no longer had a strong sense of ethnic identity. However, a large number of Guambiano indigenous people who had organized themselves previously in cooperatives (e.g., Cooperativa de las Delicias) did attend the meeting (Bolaños 1999; Muelas 2005, 427). Of all the indigenous ethnic groups in the Cauca, the Guambianos had most retained their indigenous language, clothing, and customs. Ethnic demands were not the most central in this founding meeting (though they certainly were present) because the indigenous sharecroppers adopted the dominant discourse of the time. Furthermore, as Jhon Jairo (1998) stated:

“Los marxistas habían hecho el trabajo de base pero no tenían la visión de la especificidad de lo indígena.”¹⁶

This very first meeting of the CRIC is sometimes forgotten or mentioned briefly; when described, it is generally depicted as a temporary aberration in the indigenous movement's linear and continuous progress toward a strong ethnic identity. No mention is made of the presence of the leftist activists and their revolutionary speeches. It was only in my interviews with former participants that I heard of the presence of would-be revolutionaries. The reason these would-be revolutionaries came to this meeting, as well as nonindigenous political actors, lies in the CRIC's origins.

The CRIC emerged from the Federación Regional Social y Agraria (FRESAGRO, or Regional Social and Agrarian Federation). Gustavo Mejía and Father Pedro León Rodríguez founded FRESAGRO in September 1970 (Cortes 1988; Jairo 1998). They did not initially intend specifically to organize the indigenous communities, but they wanted to mobilize the lower classes in general. FRESAGRO attempted to organize both the urban and the rural communities in northern Cauca, most of whose inhabitants were Afro-Colombians. According to Marcos Avirama (1998), “El equipo de FRESAGRO estaba trabajando en parte plana con las negritudes. Ellos no respondieron con la propuesta que hacía FRESAGRO de organizar.”

It is worthwhile to consider the backgrounds of FRESAGRO's founders, as FRESAGRO was responsible for founding CRIC. Mejía had just returned to northwestern Cauca from the infamous prison of La Gorgona in the Pacific (Jairo 1998). Jhon Jairo attributed Mejía's imprisonment to his participation in the kidnapping of Harold Eder, an extremely wealthy sugar planter. Pedro Cortes (1988) suggested that he had been jailed because he had killed a police officer in self-defense. Mejía's imprisonment in La Gorgona suggested that national and local authorities had taken his crime very seriously. *Unidad Indígena* (the official CRIC newspaper) does not mention any of these details of Mejía's life. When Mejía returned to the Cauca, he came as a member of the MRL, the radical branch of the Liberal Party in the 1960s and early 1970s (Cortes 1988). Once in northern Cauca, he tried to create broad alliances among MRL, the Communist Party, and the Movimiento Obrero Independiente Revolucionario (MOIR, or Workers' Independent Revolutionary Movement). Mejía's background suggests that the indigenous movement started out very much involved in Colombian leftist politics.

The other FRESAGRO founder, Father Pedro León Rodríguez, was a Catholic priest who was part of the radical, Christian Golconda movement

16. Jhon Jairo was a student activist who had participated in the mobilization of indigenous communities in the 1970s. When I interviewed him in 1998, he was the director of a successful NGO. Interview with Jhon Jairo, Popayán, February, 1998.

(Cortes 1988; *Unidad Indígena* 1982, 3). He was an admirer and friend of Camilo Torres, a priest-turned-guerrilla-leader in the 1960s. Pablo Tattay (1999), a nonindigenous activist and former Quintín Lame guerrilla member, described Torres as follows: "Era un cura de origen conservador. Pero como muchos sacerdotes que actuaron al nivel local se sensibilizó a la situación social. El fue amigo personal de Camilo Torres." It was not evident from these beginnings that the indigenous movement would eventually eschew violence as a means of negotiation and mobilization and represent itself as emerging from an indigenous tradition of resistance rather than from the national political context of leftist activism and guerrillas. The silence in the later recounting of the history of the CRIC about certain aspects of Mejía's life allows the indigenous grassroots organization to avoid being labeled by the state as subversive. Mejía's presence also explains why some activists felt that the first CRIC meeting was an appropriate venue for advocating an armed revolution. The police arrests of so many participants in that meeting, among them the CRIC organizers, suggest that they believed that a guerrilla movement was in formation.

This article considers the founding meeting as a crucial starting point for the analysis of the Colombian indigenous movement. Two interrelated issues emerge from the examination of this first meeting: the actual policy of the Colombian indigenous movement and the representation and/or narration of the movement. The founding meeting allows us to understand that the ethnic nature of the claims made by the Colombian indigenous movement were not a given. The subsequent twenty years would involve constructing a discourse and policies that would naturalize the ethnic nature of indigenous politics and create a space for ethnic citizenship. It is not that the indigenous people of Cauca were not Indians, but rather that the public nature of their identity had yet to be deployed. Also important here is the state's selective legitimization.

SECOND CRIC MEETING

The second CRIC meeting, mentioned most frequently in CRIC accounts of its history, took place on September 6, 1971, in Susana, in northern Cauca (*Unidad Indígena* 1975, 2). The seven demands elaborated at this conference endured for the following twenty years. The nature of the demands is often cited as proof that the ethnic discourse of the indigenous communities of the Cauca emerges from a long historical tradition that goes back to colonial times and was taken up again in the early twentieth century by the Quintín Lame movement. Lame was a Nasa Indian who organized the indigenous communities of the Cauca in 1910 and challenged the hegemony of the landowning elite through armed actions and legal treatises (Castrillón 1973; Rappaport 1990). By 1918 he was in jail and his armed movement had been disbanded (Castrillón 1973). He later moved to

the region of Tolima, where for the next twenty years, he again sought to organize the indigenous communities and to recover lost *resguardos*. He died in 1967, isolated and largely forgotten except by a handful of faithful followers (Castillo-Cárdenas 1987).

The seven demands of the second founding conference were almost identical to Quintín Lame's demands of the 1910s. Demands for bilingual education, restoration of the *resguardos*, and preservation of Law 89 signaled a shift in discourse and a step toward the construction of an ethnic agenda within the indigenous movement. The most important aim of the CRIC program was the recuperation of the *resguardos*, which shaped the practices and agenda of the organization for the next ten years. How do we understand this shift? Is this a resurgence of ethnic identity that had been dormant? The second conference took place eight months after the first one, and it is unlikely that a huge shift in consciousness in indigenous communities had taken place in such a short time. This conference took place clandestinely and was much smaller because of the repression that the first one had unleashed (Bonilla 1998).

Víctor Daniel Bonilla (1998), a nonindigenous participant at the meeting, suggested that he had played a crucial role in modifying the demands of the indigenous movement. Jhon Jairo (1998) recounted, "Victor no era de formación ortodoxa. No ha leído nunca yo creo a Kant, a Hegel, ni seriamente a Marx. Tenía mayor capacidad para captar el entorno. Fue capaz de traducir el discurso de las comunidades." Bonilla was a lawyer with a history of intellectual activism; in 1968, he had published the book *Servants of God and Masters of Indians: The State and the Capuchin Mission in Putumayo* about the Catholic missions' merciless exploitation of the indigenous people in the Putumayo area. The book became an international best seller.

As a result of the book, Bonilla became a lifelong *indigenista*. In his interview, he described himself as a key player in the construction of ethnic identity in the Cauca. Bonilla (1998) felt that in 1971 the ethnic identity of the Paeces, now known as Nasas, did not exist yet: "Puede hablarse ahora de los paeces casi como una identidad, hace veinte o veinticinco años atrás, no. Uno les decía: 'ustedes los paeces y decían los paeces, Que es eso? Nosotros somos de Jambalo, et cetera.' Yo tuve que hacer mucha fuerza para impulsar la identidad."

Bonilla (1998) claimed that he played a crucial role at the CRIC's second conference in suggesting that Law 89 should be maintained and in his insistence on the maintenance of *resguardos*. Bonilla (1998) stated: "Yo venía de una tradición diferente a los muchachos jóvenes. Yo quería poner el énfasis en la particularidad del indígena y no me interesaba el discurso homogenizante del marxismo. . . . Para la cuestión indígena no se podía usar la teoría marxista." Bonilla also attributed his understanding of the importance of ethnicity to a conference he attended in Barbados on indigenous people in 1971.

From the second conference, the emphasis on ethnicity endured. Other interviewees claimed that the emphasis on ethnicity came from Mejía, who had spent time in Tierradentro and had been impressed with the level of organization of the indigenous councils (Tattay 1999). When asked about the change from the first to second conference, Tattay replied: “Los que estaban en contra de la ley 89 de 1890 por la cuestión de minoría de edad, eran Trino Morales, quien cambio de posición en lo referente a ley indígena. Para mí el cambio, era que no sabíamos mucho de la ley indígena en la primera conferencia. Estábamos mirando las posibilidades. . . . Gustavo Mejía llego muy impresionado de Tierradentro por el apoyo que los indígenas les daban a los cabildos y a la ley indígena en cuanto a protección y mantenimiento de las costumbres. Creo que su influencia fue importante.”

My focus on the advisers so far is not to suggest that the indigenous communities were not organized or that they were not fully involved in the process of mobilization. However, the indigenous communities did not form a cohesive unit, and a future indigenous president of the CRIC emphasized to me that, prior to his political activism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, he had no real understanding of the other indigenous communities in the same department (Avirama 1998). Marcos Avirama (1998) stated: “Cuando viene lo de la reforma agraria en el sesenta y ocho, surge la cuestión de la titulación de los resguardos. Empezamos a reunirnos con gentes de diferentes resguardos. Yo no sabía en este momento que existían estos resguardos, estas comunidades. Empezamos a conocernos y a encontrarnos en este proceso.” What I am suggesting here is that within the indigenous communities there was a multiplicity of voices expressed through the different councils, cooperatives organized by agrarian reform officials, and Protestant religious leaders. It was not easy for the communities with few occasions to meet face-to-face to explore the commonality of their exploitation. This was a process that occurred in the 1970s. Because of the physical fragmentation of the indigenous communities and the multiplicity of voices and forms of organization, outsiders who had traveled from one community to another and who came from distinct political traditions seized an existent discourse and articulated it in the first two conferences. A synergy between the nonindigenous activists, the indigenous leaders and rank and file, and finally the leftist grassroots organization took place during this time.

Let us not forget that in 1972 Quintín Lame was essentially a forgotten political leader and his demands were not on the forefront in the indigenous communities of the Cauca. Lorenzo Muelas (2001), an indigenous Guambiano senator, told me that his sense of ethnic consciousness had to be awakened in a series of crucial moments. Like many indigenous rural folk who participated in the CRIC's founding meeting, Muelas was a *terrajero*, or sharecropper. Muelas (2001) described himself at the begin-

ning of our interview in these terms: "Yo era terrajero. Mi papá y mis abuelos todos eran terrajeros de la Hacienda de Chimán en Guambia, Cauca." Muelas also depicted himself as a rebel with no political conscience. He emigrated to Santander del Quilichao, in the northern part of the Cauca, where his father had bought a plot of land. Being in a place that was very different from his native Guambia, because of the hot climate and food and the presence of Afro-Colombians, gave him a sense that he belonged elsewhere. On a visit back to Guambia, he admired his friends who played the drums and flute and this further awoke his sense of belonging. A third and very important moment for Muelas (2001) and the members of the Las Delicias cooperative was the publication of Lame's *En defensa de mi raza (In Defense of My Race)*. Gonzalo Castillo-Cárdenas, a nonindigenous intellectual, was in part responsible for the publication. The 1971 publication of the manuscript gave newfound legitimacy to the ethnic discourse and opened up new political possibilities for indigenous citizens. Here is a very clear demonstration of the importance of nonindigenous intellectuals in locating the manuscript, in finding the funds to publish it, and in bringing it to the forefront of indigenous consciousness.¹⁷

DANE CENSUS 1972: A RETURN TO A PRE-REPUBLICAN MODE OF CITIZENSHIP

A crucial stage in the CRIC's formation and in the shaping of the regional consciousness of ethnic identity and the creation of an ethnic citizenship was when the Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE, or National Administrative Department of Statistics) chose the CRIC to conduct a census of the indigenous communities in the Cauca. The DANE financed the census, which took place in 1972. The national government was adopting a contradictory stance toward the mobilization of the indigenous communities. On the one hand, the police and army arrested several CRIC members after the first conference; on the other hand, indirectly the state had financed this first meeting, as it was the National Institute of Agrarian Reform that had provided the funds for FRESAGRO to organize the conference. The state was essentially establishing the parameters of the mobilization by punishing those who deviated from the parameters. The contradictory actions can be explained in part by the fact that the state is not monolithic but made up of different branches. The armed forces and the police, for instance, were completely different from DANE. However, this contradictory attitude also stemmed from distinct policies: the state was prepared to support indigenous communities that stressed the ethnic component of their agenda, but it actively repressed any organization that it perceived as class based and subversive. This selective legitimization supported the formation of ethnic citizenship.

17. On the importance of nonindigenous intellectuals, see Rappaport (2005).

The census provided the CRIC with the perfect opportunity to disseminate its message among all the indigenous communities in the Cauca (Avirama 1998). During the day, the members of the CRIC would perform the census, going from village to village, and they would make an unofficial nighttime appointment with the entire community of each town (Avirama 1998). During these meetings, the coordinators of the census urged communities to keep fighting to maintain the resguardos and to stop the titling of their land (titling signified the privatization of land). In some cases, these coordinators also informed indigenous communities that landowners were in fact illegally occupying resguardo land that should be restored to the communities. Marcos Avirama (1998) stated, "Buscamos que la gente entendiera la importancia de los resguardos." The emphasis was always on the restoration of collective land ownership. Without the state's financing of the trips of the census coordinators, it would have been difficult for CRIC to spread its message as effectively as it did. Some of the coordinators were indigenous, such as Marcos Avirama, later a CRIC president, but some were not, such as Luis Ángel Monroy, an Afro-Colombian.

This dissemination of CRIC's message was particularly timely because during these years INCORA was offering to buy certain areas of the Cauca and to redistribute the land in individual plots to indigenous families. Some indigenous people were interested in the offer. The nightly meetings where, in Avirama's (1998) words, the census organizers sought to make people understand the importance of arguing for the maintenance of their resguardos, came at a crucial time in the planning and implementation of agrarian reform. The recovery and maintenance of the resguardos entailed more than just collective landholding. It also meant a return to political structures that were created during the colonial period of Colombian history. So the *cabildo*, or council, had to become an important tool in the mobilization of indigenous people, as legally this was the political structure that governed over the land of the resguardo and its people. The CRIC coordinators' travels through the Cauca to "raise consciousness" among the rank and file about the importance of the resguardo and the cabildo ensured that collective landholding and the cabildo would be viewed as possible effective mechanisms to obtain political representation and land.

THIRD CRIC MEETING

The third meeting of CRIC took place in Silvia, Cauca, on July 15 and 16, 1973 (*Unidad Indígena* 1976; see also CRIC n.d.). This meeting was a public one and was highly publicized, unlike the second conference, which took place in secret. It also differed from the first one, which had been very embryonic in terms of separating from the left. This third meeting

is important because, by then, much of the discourse and practices of the CRIC had crystallized. At that same assembly, the first national meeting of indigenous organizations took place; indigenous representatives from Tolima, Caldas, Nariño, and Putumayo attended (*Unidad Indígena* 1976, 2). Several hundred indigenous peasants from Tierradentro walked all the way to Silvia, in the center of Cauca, right next to the capital. The authorities of Tierradentro had erected roadblocks in an attempt to prevent the indigenous peasants from attending the event. The indigenous communities, which were ferociously repressed by the area's Catholic missionaries and landowners, successfully defied authorities and marched together, carrying flags that proclaimed their ethnic identity and resolve to resist (J. Avirama 1998). This was a remarkable turnaround because Tierradentro's indigenous people had endured some of the worst economic and social conditions (Bonilla 1998; Sevilla Casas 1986).

What did this public meeting of the CRIC signify? From then on, as both Avirama brothers pointed out, the indigenous communities and their leaders took on the leadership roles and the founding nonindigenous members became advisers. The cultural change and formation of consciousness was accompanied by the growing effectiveness of the CRIC. From 1971 to 1974, twenty-eight peaceful demonstrations took place (CRIC n.d. [1979]). The recovery of land also increased as a result of the marches and legal suits to reclaim *resguardos*. In addition, the indigenous councils were reconstructed and re-created in Caldono, La Aurora, Los Quingos (Morales), La Cilia (Miranda), Medianaranja and Santa Elena (Corinto), and Huellas (Caloto) (CRIC n.d. [1979]). By 1974, *terraje* had been virtually eliminated in the Cauca (CRIC n.d. [1979]).

These remarkable gains were achieved through a radical shift in the discourse and practices of citizenship. For indigenous communities who had traditionally voted and participated actively in both the conservative and liberal parties, this mode of practicing citizenship was largely over. Instead, joining a political association that brought people together around an ethnic identity was the order of the day. The indigenous people of the Cauca voted with their feet and with the political marches that put them on public display. They all came out—men, women, and children—to walk with flags and with a uniform message of CRIC's seven points, inspired by an indigenous leader who had fought for an almost-identical agenda. This mode of participation allowed for the entire community to take part in the practice of citizenship, whereas before the 1950s (when Colombian women obtained the vote), the practice of citizenship by bearing arms, fighting for one or the other party, or voting was restricted to men.

Another important element of constructing this new mode of citizenship was to return to pre-republican and/or colonial methods of political representation while radically altering them. The indigenous communities argued that their right to land lay in pre-republican Colombia and in

the institutions of *resguardos* and *cabildos* that the Spanish Crown had instituted. This reaching back to a pre-republican mode of political participation allowed the indigenous communities to represent their rights as timeless and as an integral part of their culture. Left out of this narrative of citizenship was that many of the indigenous councils of the Cauca had become beholden to the local elites and to the municipal authorities (Jairo 1998; Troyan 2002). Since the turn of the twentieth century, the elections of the council members had to be approved by the nonindigenous mayor or priest of the municipality where the community was located. In practice, this meant that the councils were not always responsive to the community's needs and instead were pressured into accommodating local politicians. The use of the existing legal framework allowed them to mobilize legally and to press claims on the basis of ethnicity, thus gaining the partial support of the nation-state. The genius of CRIC was to conserve the institutions, which had a solid legal basis, and yet radically alter them by ensuring that corrupt councils were replaced and that the members of the council were responsive to the community rather than to the local nonindigenous politicians.

The press, as always a key method in disseminating this new vision of citizenship, also played an important role in affirming the rights of indigenous communities. Sympathizers such as Bonilla wrote articles in the leading Colombian newspapers about the marches and how the exploited and repressed citizens of Colombia confronted the police and the army unarmed. Marcos Avirama stated that the leaders of CRIC (himself included) strategically placed older women, pregnant women, and children in the first row of marches, hoping to prevent the police from physically stopping the marches. Although this had no effect on the police, as they beat anyone, man, woman, or child, photographs of older women and children being attacked by the police helped to generate support for the indigenous cause. Thus, a narrative of citizenship was born at that very moment. The nonindigenous advisers became less important in reality but, just as important, they faded from the national consciousness of what constituted a Colombian indigenous movement. The partisan ties that had existed and that had to a certain degree allowed for the founding of the indigenous grassroots organization also faded from public consciousness, and the indigenous communities appeared in the imagined nation as emerging unified and untainted by the bonds of partisan affiliation.

During this same period, Manuel Quintín Lame was proclaimed as a founding hero of the indigenous resistance and was presented to the public as one who was remembered and celebrated. Eventually this representation became reality as the indigenous organizers of CRIC brought Lame's story to indigenous communities and as some indigenous people read his book. A perfect example of this process is Lorenzo Muelas's discovery of Quintín Lame's work.

FORMATION OF A SELF-DEFENSE ARMY: MOVIMIENTO ARMADO QUINTÍN LAME

Violence had accompanied the gains in land and political recognition for the indigenous movement in the Cauca. In 1974, Gustavo Mejía was assassinated in Corinto, and it was widely understood that the landowners in northern Cauca had instigated his murder. Mejía's killing was the beginning of the unleashing of a wave of violence from the landowners of northern Cauca and from some branches of the state that lasted until the mid-1980s.¹⁸

The kidnapping of Eric Leupin, a Dutch consul, in Cali in 1975 worsened this repression. This kidnapping was attributed to FARC. The police began to intervene in all the areas where land was being recovered in northern Cauca. Northern Cauca is and was much more conflictive than other areas of the Cauca because its local elite had economic and political clout. In response to the growing organization of the indigenous communities, the landowners formed the Consejo Regional de Agricultura del Cauca (CRAC, or Regional Council of Agriculture of Cauca). The CRAC invited Cornelio Reyes, the minister of the interior, to the Cauca. Shortly after this meeting, attacks attributed to paid assassins intensified in the northern part of Cauca in Toribio, Caldon, Jambalo, and even in the center of the Cauca, which was usually quieter. In 1975, the following indigenous people were assassinated: Marco Aníbal Melenge, Ángel Mestizo, Manuel Dagua, Avelino Ramos; there were also two assassination attempts on CRIC's president Marcos Avirama.

The increasingly dire situation of CRIC's leaders and members convinced Pablo Tattay (a CRIC cofounder) and others to create a self-defense army, as the state was not fulfilling its most elementary duty of providing safety to its citizens.¹⁹ Tattay's first concern was to stop the assassinations that were destroying CRIC leadership of the northern Cauca.²⁰

Pablo Tattay, of Hungarian descent, was a key founder of MAQL (Jairo 1998). He had arrived in the Cauca in September 1969 after studying engineering at the University of Antioquia, where he had become involved with radical Christian groups (Tattay 1999). His sympathy with radical Christianity was cemented by his time in Belgium at the University of Louvain, a hotbed of liberation theology. Tattay started working in the north of the Cauca as a consultant for INCORA. There he became involved with the organization of the indigenous communities (Jairo 1998; Tattay 1999).

18. The information about the situation in northern Cauca comes from CRIC n.d. [1979].

19. As an organization, CRIC was never affiliated or directly connected with MAQL, though some CRIC members and advisers joined MAQL.

20. The information about the formation of the Quintín Lame came from Pablo Tattay (1999).

The formation of a self-defense army started in 1977 (Tattay 1999). Tattay and others needed weapons and training for this self-defense army. They decided not to approach FARC for help, as FARC was known to impose its ideology on allies and the army wanted to preserve its autonomy. Tattay got in touch with a group within the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN, or National Liberation Army) that was known as *Corriente Socialista Renovadora* (Renewing Socialist Thought). This group was less militaristic than others and more interested in political and social change, according to Tattay. Military training started during Holy Week of 1977. The group that provided the training had a good relationship with another guerrilla group, the *Movimiento del 19 de Abril* (M-19, or April 19th Movement).

The *Corriente Socialista Renovadora* dissolved and the M-19 took over the provision of support and training to self-defense groups dedicated to helping the indigenous movement. Tattay (1999) stated, "En general el M-19 se manejó bien. Ellos siempre fueron muy respetuosos con las comunidades. Se ponían al servicio de las comunidades, no eran como la FARC." Unfortunately for the emerging self-defense army, the M-19 carried out a spectacular action that involved stealing weapons from an army battalion via a tunnel. Furious at the public humiliation, the armed forces responded by arresting anyone with leftist connections. The army arrested a whole group of CRIC members (whether or not they were involved with the self-defense groups) and some of its advisers.

All those arrested were tortured. The army charged CRIC advisers and members as being members of an illegal organization, the M-19. Tattay insisted that they had not been members of the M-19, but it was true that a relationship existed. Most of the people arrested in 1979 were released from jail in 1981 because of either lack of evidence or political amnesty. The experience of jail and torture, far from discouraging the arrested members of CRIC from defending themselves, seemed to have had the opposite effect. The people I interviewed who were arrested and tortured felt that their experience proved that the state operated illegitimately and that armed resistance to protect one's life was justified in those circumstances (Avirama 1998; Bolaños 1999).

However, the self-defense army that evolved into a guerrilla army became public only in January 1985. The MAQL went public shortly after the assassination of a local indigenous Catholic priest, Álvaro Ulcué, in November 1984. It carried out a traditional guerrilla action, attacking the local police barracks of Santander del Quilichao. Why the long silence about this self-defense army, and why the announcement of the guerrilla army on this date? Ricardo Peñaranda (1999, 76) attributes MAQL's decision to go public to the increased state repression in the mid-1980s and to MAQL's desire to let other guerrilla armies know that the indigenous movement wished to remain autonomous from other guerrilla movements.

One of the reasons was obviously to avoid further state repression but another, I think, equally important one was to legitimize the armed actions of this self-defense army. By controlling its "discovery," the guerrilla movement could control its first initial portrayal. The self-defense army did not take the name of Quintín Lame by chance. By calling itself the Movimiento Armado de Quintín Lame it took a publicly indigenous character even though some members were not indigenous. The coordinator of the first mobile unit of the guerrilla army was Luis Ángel Monroy, an Afro-Colombian, who had been savagely tortured by the army. The act of going from self-defense units to a mobile one is an important one militarily and strategically. The act of mobility allows the guerrilla unit to carry out strategic attacks rather than to just react. Monroy had a long trajectory of accompanying the indigenous movement; he had been one of the first census coordinators in CRIC's early days. By claiming an indigenous character (most members were apparently indigenous but some leadership was not), MAQL also claimed an identity separate from that of other guerrilla armies. Harking back to the armed resistance of the Quintín Lame movement minimized the subversive nature of MAQL: the armed struggle was not about the lower classes or ordinary citizens responding to the threat of violence; rather, it was the resurgence of a pre-republican and age-old tradition of indigenous people. In the context of a polarized political system and the still-existing competition between communist and capitalist ideology, the ethnic character of the armed movement was crucial to its legitimization.

The self-identification of MAQL as a guerrilla army that had no intention of taking over the state and that drew its roots from earlier indigenous resistance shaped the relationship not only between the Colombian public and MAQL but also between the indigenous communities and the armed movement. Much of MAQL's activity was *ajusticiamiento*, or executing and killing paid assassins or whoever was responsible for killing members of CRIC or of indigenous communities (Tattay 1999). The MAQL also ensured basic law and order within the communities by punishing cattle rustling and other crimes. Another unforeseen role was eventually to provide protection from FARC to indigenous leaders and communities, especially in northwestern Cauca. The FARC distrusted CRIC and its ethnic movement and sought to violently repress leaders who expressed their independence of thought and action (Jairo 1998). In 1990, MAQL demobilized and played a key role in the constituent assembly that eventually enacted the Constitution of 1991 that enshrined indigenous rights.

The success of MAQL and the legitimacy it enjoyed, and to a certain degree still enjoys in the historical memory, came from its responsiveness to the communities but also from its ethnic discourse. When MAQL members gave up their weapons en masse in public, they stated that they wanted all their weapons to be melted down and transformed into a statue

of Lame to be placed in Bogotá (Unidad Álvaro Ulcué 1991). The representatives of the state agreed. The symbolic meaning of this gesture could not be clearer: MAQL members saw their actions as part of a historical continuum of indigenous resistance. However, many people from different walks of life and ethnic and social groups participated in MAQL even if the majority of the fighters were indigenous. What is interesting as well is that the state upheld this narrative of MAQL as an ethnic self-defense movement. So while the state knew perfectly well that some members of MAQL were not indigenous and that it had collaborated with the M-19, it chose not to point out the discrepancies at the time. This is because a certain branch of the state hoped to legitimize itself by showing that it would negotiate with a self-defense movement and that it was respectful of ethnic groups. Endorsing MAQL's self-representation also allowed the state not to address issues of social class and the issue of tremendous inequality of land tenure throughout Colombia. Moreover, the state wanted to gain allies in a region where it clearly was not in control. As is often the case, the state did not foresee some of its consequences and the challenges to the status quo that this new type of citizenship could raise.

CONCLUSION

The ethnic indigenous discourse in Colombia revealed itself to be immensely powerful and has transformed the department of Cauca. The lands that belonged to the indigenous *resguardos* in the colonial era have been recovered. A real agrarian reform took place in this department. The structures of political power were also changed because indigenous politicians shaped policies not only at the council level but also at the department level. The people of Cauca even elected an indigenous governor, Floro Tunubala, in 2000. However, this discourse and ethnic practices have their limitations. They do not allow for a full acknowledgment and celebration of how other ethnic and social groups participated in the construction of this indigenous movement. In the course of representing the indigenous movement as a purely indigenous one and not a multicultural one, the Afro-Colombian and mestizo peasants who participated in many of the land recoveries were gradually set aside once the class discourse became less important. This representation was forced on the indigenous movement in that the state, and in particular the army, brutally repressed any attempt at class-wide solidarity and the national state encouraged the formation of indigenous ethnic identity. In other words, CRIC did not have much choice in terms of trying to survive politically and physically but to represent itself solely as an ethnic movement.

The second limitation is that indigenous organizations, in particular CRIC, have not been able to discuss openly and freely how they con-

fronted the issue of violence. This is, of course, extremely difficult in the current political context of the Uribe government, where even human rights groups are tainted with the label of being subversives. However, the shadow of violence on indigenous leaders and their communities still very much exists. The creation of the peaceful guards who brandish the *bastón* (stick) representing their ethnic and symbolic identity can do only so much. This is especially true in terms of the paramilitaries, many of whom do not share the conception that indigenous people have a special place in the Colombian nation.²¹ The state in the 1980s and early 1990s, weakened by its fight with the guerrillas, had its own reasons to negotiate willingly with the indigenous communities and MAQL. A tradition of indigenismo since the 1930s (Troyan 2007) within the central state considered the indigenous communities as deserving special recognition, but the opportunity to neutralize one sector of the peasantry and its allies was also attractive.

By elaborating this new discourse of citizenship that linked the indigenous citizen to a pre-republican past and to an ethnic armed movement of the 1910s, the indigenous movement was able to avoid the subversive label and to achieve the recovery of land in a nonthreatening way for the Colombian state. Other peasant communities have adopted the indigenous way of building a movement and have attempted to create new symbols, but these symbols and practices are often less effective because these other nonindigenous groups do not occupy a special place in the Colombian imaginary. Furthermore, the Colombian state has tried to limit the legitimization of ethnic politics to indigenous groups. Although new legislation was passed in favor of Afro-Colombian groups in the aftermath of the Constitution of 1991, the political will of the government to implement it has been limited.

The CRIC emerged at a specific historical moment in the decade after La Violencia had officially ended and when citizenship based on partisan affiliation offered few to no opportunities to change the local economic and political structures of power. The organizations of the left at first presented an agenda and practices that were attractive to most indigenous peasants who wanted land and a more equitable distribution of resources. However, the splintering of the left into factions that attacked one another viciously and the emergence of the FARC guerrilla army, which was dogmatic and that sought to impose its point of views unilaterally, soon made this option less attractive.

In addition, the nation-state, which had its own agenda, encouraged the formation of ethnic identity, seeing it as a way to diffuse and undermine the class discourse in the context of the cold war. The state did not act

21. On the racial ordering of Colombia, see Wade (1993).

in a cohesive and unified manner but rather its different branches operated seemingly at cross-purposes. Employees of INCORA, DANE, and the Division of Indigenous Affairs sought to help indigenous communities that they perceived as at risk. The international discourse of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s emerging from organizations such as the United Nations that privileged indigenous peoples over the ordinary peasant also played a role in prodding the Colombian state to legitimize claims based on ethnic identity. After 1973, when ANUC was essentially shut down, the Colombian state sought to delegitimize the organizations that sought a restructuring of power on the basis of the notion that land was concentrated in the hands of a few elites and that it should be redistributed to all. Furthermore, the Colombian state was not in a position to bargain with elites with significant economic power. Although it could and did buy out many landowners in central Cauca in response to the pressure of indigenous sit-ins, it was at first unable and unwilling to force the elites of northern Cauca to accede to an agrarian reform (Cortes 2004). By the 1980s, the indigenous movement had acquired enough political and cultural strength to force the issue and managed to overcome the resistance of some elites. However, the continuing violence in northwestern Cauca and the reappearance of police and army barracks in indigenous territory occurred partly because of the FARC's continuing operations jeopardized indigenous communities again. The indigenous communities have responded with large marches, have notified human rights organizations, and have brought out the indigenous guards armed with their ceremonial canes.

Although the indigenous communities through CRIC and other organizations have achieved a democratization of Colombian society by gaining political representation in all of Colombia's political institutions and by implementing agrarian reform in the Cauca, the nation-state has yet to recognize the claims of all Colombian peasants as valid. Until the Colombian state legitimizes the demands of all peasants and opens up the discussion to the larger society, violence in Colombia's rural areas will endure. While the Colombian state opened a restricted political space for peasants with claims based on ethnic identity, it has ignored the claims of those who are simply hungry, without land, and aggressed by armed factions of both the right and the left. Intellectuals who have understandably celebrated the indigenous movement as a resurgence and a direct continuation of age-old ethnic politics predating Colombian independence have unwittingly helped the state to focus solely on indigenous communities' claims based on ethnic identity. It is of utmost importance to Colombia and to the indigenous communities who live in rural Colombia for indigenous and nonindigenous intellectuals who play a key role in the legitimization of these communities' demands to focus on the wider demands of the indigenous movement to transform Colombian rural society.

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