

Dear Friends and Family:

I miss you all and I do know that I have abandoned you. Time here is has a different wave length. This letter is to relate to you what has happened. Through describing my experience here in Colombia, which as know, is about the complications of life natural to living in this land, the epicenter of much energetic movement.

I HOPE YOU MIGHT VISUALISE A BIT ABOUT THE AROMA OF THIS COUNTRY.

Life here has many opportunities for action and creation or the illusion of them. At this very moment I am taking a short vacation near Raquira, (this was in January) the potters' town I always talked to you about. I had been wanting to come to my friend's house since I arrived in Colombia two years ago and had not been able to do it. To best describe the beauty of this place (Raquira) I would say that had I been to Ireland. I could compare this pasture land to it, if we could combine such an image with an idea of soft fruit-bearing tropics. Very close by there are desserts, huge mountains that host sacred unpolluted lakes, stone fences, quiet imagery. We even have a tourist town, a relic from the colonial times, Villa de Leiva, with its hosts of crazy city dwellers escaping from Bogotá. I could compare it with the dry lands of Andalucía, with olives and all. It has all of that. That is why I love it here so much. Colombia has such a variation of micro-ecological niches; this is just one of them which has always attracted me, mainly because of the potters' town and its artisans.

You all know well enough that situation in the country, is quite hysterical, both in the real sense and as a sardonic laugh. But here I am. People ask me how I survive here in Colombia. My reply is as usual, I live as you all live everywhere. I go to my job, teach, come back home etc., etc.. I am able to do it because I refuse to fuel any of the craziness that goes around me. I do not read the news, or watch TV, but reality is unavoidable. The very inefficient services might face you any day with no telephone, water or light. Any day you might encounter bumper-to-bumper frozen chains of cars stuck in traffic, be in the midst of a drive-by shooting, another strike, or you bank might be closed by the workers etc., etc..

I do know that the country is in upheaval and it is dangerous, but I only give life in me to the positive things that are occurring. And there are plenty. Everywhere there are grassroots organizations for a myriad of purposes, growing like weeds. All the social sickness is awakening people from all economic levels and conditions. Although the rigid class structures are maintained, there is a consciousness about the need to get involved and be-live the reconstruction of the country. For example I am involved in creating a network of goods and services in which there is no money involved, in the creation of a co-op-studio for artists of different disciplines, in the creation of a project to teach ceramics to young people more that at risk (this was just approved and financed by a corporation of wealthy neighbors, but we can't start until they find the resources), a program with quick results, so that the youngsters will start producing clay objects for immediate consumption.

I also participate and support the continuation of the group Yuak+ in Bogota, supporting all their projects. With them, in Raquira, about 3 hours from here, in a communal land owned by several friends, we are involved in creating a vegetable garden. Unfortunately everything now is dead frozen due to the lack of cash flow. It is not only me, many of us are devoted to do us much as we can.

The one note of relief is that everything occurs in Spanish and my mind tires less. Although I greatly miss English and its succinctness. Coming back truly took this two years of adjusting. The city, compared to San Francisco is dirty and overcrowded, friends seamed and sometimes still feel like strangers. Thankfully I have found a few new friends that are in a similar situations as mine. We call each other the "returnees" the ones who have returned. These are people that have lived in places like New Zealand New York, Belgium, Russia, etc, and have returned to the country.

But if you could look at me,(In January) I am in a perfectly lovable peasant house, a couple of peasant neighbors, whom I had known for years, (who feed me). There are absolutely no dangers, I can be here by myself in perfect isolation, safety and peace (except from my neighbor, a peasant women that brings me milk and eggs everyday, and chats with me for a while, I see no one.) I have reconnected with this community which I love and feel loved as well. Here a lot of things can develop. I somehow feel that the boss at "Il Fornaio" was right. When he was firing me he said that I was better off in some mountain doing my art.

So my life is full, but there are moments in which the image of one of you comes to mind and I feel nostalgia of life in the Bay Area. I miss the most is the internationally of food in the Bay Area, its farmers markets, shitakies, spices, Indian-Mexican-Japanese-Greek foods, and the ocean and many more things. It is a funny thought, it is as when I lived there, I had to close the compartment for Colombia in my daily life, now I do so with the ten years I lived there.

All of you would be interested in the cultural life of Bogotá. It is plentiful. A lot of manifestations, activities, a lively cultural life. I do not participate in it, though as much as I would like, I have not much time. It is interesting to see how many members of the oligarchy and upper and middle class have gone to study abroad to so many places; to Europe, Asia, etc, so one gets whiffs of winds from all over and the interaction of knowledge is generative. But as usual the fascination that the Colombian upper classes with stratification is almost fetishist and is the major impediment for the peace process and the growth of the population. The majority of the upper class -many anyhow live abroad. Many educated people are striving but plenty of strains in the culture are so backward and against change and education that change is hard to create. In the arts a lot is happening. A lot of very interesting things, creative and provocative but a lot of copy from the First World agenda, not to my liking. There are a bits of money from contests and grants, and I am getting to know more about them.

Back to Bogota.....Yes! I live in my old house, but believe me I would love to move to a different place. Why?? I don't know, it has so much history and makes me believe I am in a back-to-the-future type of situation.

One must be alert in this city. Once you reach the high plateau of the Sabana, passing through the area of the brick makers, with its ever firing hells and smoke, you enter into the cold air of the Andes Highlands. As you approach the city, tension and... why not.....fear creeps up. We are not a war monger nation. Bogota used to be called the Athens of the America's. Even now in it, there are more than thirty institutions of higher learning. But yes... the struggle is not to be colonized by fear, not to be immersed into the invisible jail of media control, so you can be alert to not to fear your peer survivors in this boat world. Not to allow the difference or distance from the other scare you into devilizing him or her, these are the constructs for war, the main bone of the structure of the war's construct.

I Promised myself to go to the last Almodavar's movie: "All about my mother". I need it. I am already nostalgic for Raquira, but rest and plenty of fresh air and sun has given me energy to keep pushing the boat.

Regarding my art, I was finally able to start doing it, I participated in a collective show: "Mujeres en escena por la Paz", "Women in the scene for peace." I built a big mama in white cement, with broken mirrors for a face and parabolic belly and broken glass for her gorgeous dress. Its structure is of a material, similar to rebar but thinner. For those who suggested that I would find industrially premade slabs of cement, there are no such things, and many other materials that I became used to working with while there, are none existing, so I have had to start investigating new options. Anyhow I was very pleased with "Shejina" as it became to be called, or "the spirit of the feminine", a goddess-type in an attitude of giving. I am also starting little by little production of other objects. More art work could be happening but as I told you before a lot pulls me away in many directions. I believe that a form of art that is necessary here is the creation of new forms of resolving issues, and relations.

Before I finish I would like to promote an option for those who are interested in the healing practices. Some of the 'Knowers-sages' of the Amazon are very well versed in medicinal plants and their own healing practices. A workshop could be held in Bogota, or here in Raquira, or in the Amazon according to the situation. Or in the States, since we are interested in travelling trough the states offering the ritual of conversation at schools or universities, churches, etc. If any of you is interested, could give us information for such a tour, **OR IF YOU COULD SPREAD THE WORD AND /or REQUIRE MORE INFORMATION**, let me know. Also, if you have designs of coming here, and require some support (not economic, because the whole country is in bankruptcy) from a University or an entity, I could also help, with enough time. On a personal level, we are also interested in travelling for a while, to earn some money, Henry, and Rodolfo, a Uitopto and a Mestizo, excellent builders of indigenous dwellings of various kinds, as well as excellent workers in construction. Henry is a good carpenter, plumber etc.

Please don't do as I do, write to me once in a while, don't leave me hungry so long. All of you are invited to visit, although it is dangerous in some areas, you do not need to go there, and Colombian people are such loving people, it is so unjust what the mass media does to us. It is true that there are massacres, but , it comes from the powers-that-be, aligned with the world's war machinery and the economics of the new world order of the corporations. People here are working hard to keep abreast of it all. If you do come I will guide you or even go with you to places.

Here is a place to give, scarcely to be nourished, one has to escape becoming nourishment with 'berrquera', "cojones" and fight not to be depleted in a blink of the eye. There is one thing that feeds me finally and it is the relationship with the Uitotos and their ancestral knowledge, which I have found to be very similar to what little I have known of traditional kabalistic thought.

That is why I must make room somehow to travel. We have dreamed of traveling , helping translate and communicate this profound knowledge. Friends I love you, so I wish that grants, jobs or the like, come my way so I can visit you, I wish the same for you. If you know of any short jobs that I could get involved with while over there, this could be another way for me to travel. For all of those who don't know, Francisca stayed in San Francisco and is doing fine, a full grown student with many intellectual pursuits. I wish you the best in the next year, century and millennium, moreover, I wish that life will dream its plentifulness through you.

Love,

Hana