



Citizens' Media against Armed Conflict

Disrupting Violence in Colombia

Clemencia Rodríguez

Citizens' media countering armed conflict and rebuilding community in Colombia

Clemencia Rodríguez is professor of communication at the University of Oklahoma.

For two years, Clemencia Rodríguez did fieldwork in regions of Colombia where leftist guerrillas, right-wing paramilitary groups, the army, and drug traffickers made their presence felt in the lives of unarmed civilians. Here, Rodríguez tells the story of the ways in which people living in the shadow of these armed intruders use community radio, television, video, digital photography, and the Internet to shield their communities from armed violence's negative impacts.

Citizens' media are most effective, Rodríguez posits, when they understand communication as performance rather than simply as persuasion or the transmission of information. Grassroots media that are deeply embedded in the communities they serve and responsive to local needs strengthen the ability of community members to productively react to violent incursions. Rodríguez demonstrates how citizens' media privilege aspects of community life not hijacked by violence, providing people with the tools and the platform to forge lives for themselves and

their families that are not entirely colonized by armed conflict and its effects.

Ultimately, Rodríguez shows that unarmed civilian communities that have been cornered by armed conflict can use community media to repair torn social fabrics, reconstruct eroded bonds, reclaim public spaces, resolve conflict, and sow the seeds of peace and stability.

\$17.50 ~~\$25.00~~ paper ISBN 978-0-8166-6584-6
\$52.50 ~~\$75.00~~ cloth ISBN 978-0-8166-6583-9
 336 pages • 20 b&w photos • November 2011



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