

# Fragments of Absence:

## *Stories of Life and Migration*

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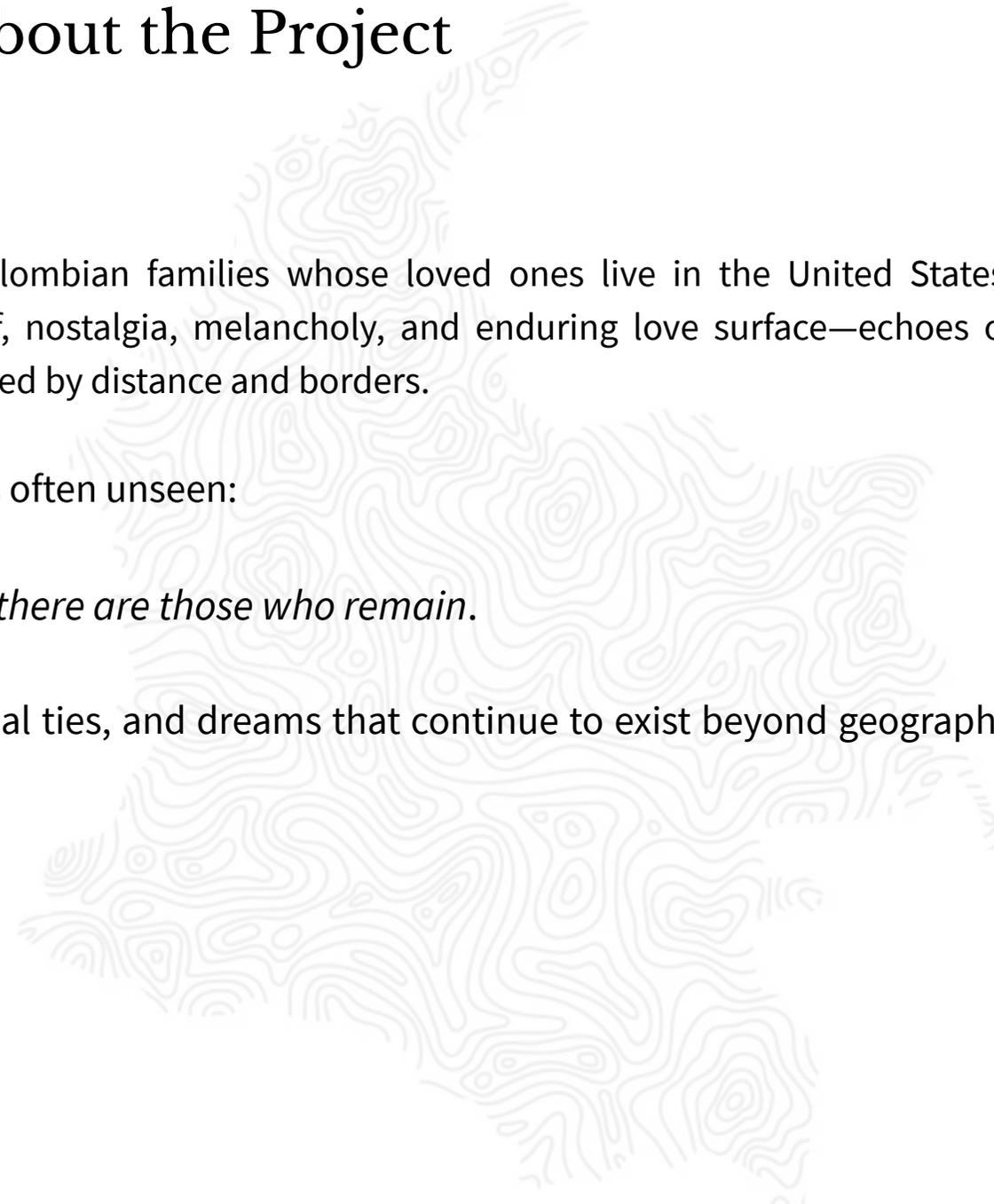
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center

Colombia

2025

*This work begins with those who remain.*

# About the Project



This project gathers the voices of Colombian families whose loved ones live in the United States. Through their stories, feelings of grief, nostalgia, melancholy, and enduring love surface—echoes of what it means to live with a family shaped by distance and borders.

The work invites reflection on what is often unseen:

*Behind every person who migrates, there are those who remain.*

Lives sustained by memory, emotional ties, and dreams that continue to exist beyond geography and separation.



*This is how I see her:*

*she stitched her little wings back together  
and began again in another country, far  
from everything that once held her in  
place.*

*And it hurts — of course it hurts...leaving  
your children, grandchildren, family... yet  
she is there, fighting for what, deep inside,  
is a dream.*

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Karen



*She always calls me Elena—only she  
does that—and when I hear my name  
in her voice, it's as if for a moment...*

*she's back here again.*

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Gloria Elena



*I have not seen my brother or my nieces for four or five years. The last time we spoke, he said:*

*“I’m really leaving for good,” and we cried, knowing it would be many years before we saw each other again.*

*During his first Christmas away, he sent me this photo of my nieces and this watch. It is the best gift in the world—not because of the gift itself, but because it passed through his hands.*

*That is why I keep it, protect it, and love it.*

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Natalia



*“Mancha, take good care of my daughter.”*

*That was the only thing he said to me  
before leaving, his eyes filled with tears.*

*The first thing he missed was his  
daughter’s fifteenth birthday. And now,  
this year, she will graduate—and he will  
miss that too.*

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Marcela



*My parents fled the violence of the armed conflict in the 1950s.*

*They arrived to Quimbaya to work as day laborers on coffee farms. And little by little, they saved until they were able to buy a small farm of their own.*

*At that time, work in the countryside was barely enough to survive, so my siblings migrated in the 1990s.*

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Alberto



*In my case, I have dedicated myself to selling the coffee from the family farm.*

*“Frutos de mis viejos” was born as a legacy from our parents.*

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Alberto



*The most sacred thing my sister has here in Colombia is her dog.*

*A dog she's had since he was a puppy; he was always like her child, the one who went everywhere with her.*

*She always says to him, "My Romeíto, my son, how is my baby?"*

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Jessica



*This is the only photo I have  
with my mother.*

*Maybe the experience is  
different for everyone—right?*

*The one who leaves says, “Oh,  
but it’s been so hard for me.”*

*But the one who stays also  
suffers, because they’re left  
alone, orphaned.*

*I feel like I was left an  
orphan...*

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Isabel



*My daughter came home at 5 a.m. and said to me,  
“Mom, the time has come... I’m leaving...  
and I don’t know when we’ll see each other again.”*

*And it’s so hard, because migrating means risking  
your life.*

*It means, essentially, leaving your family—leaving  
everything behind: abandoning what you’ve built,  
your friends, your family, and living with the  
awareness that you’re leaving, that you may not  
return soon, and that during that time you will lose  
loved ones, you will lose so much.*

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Sandra



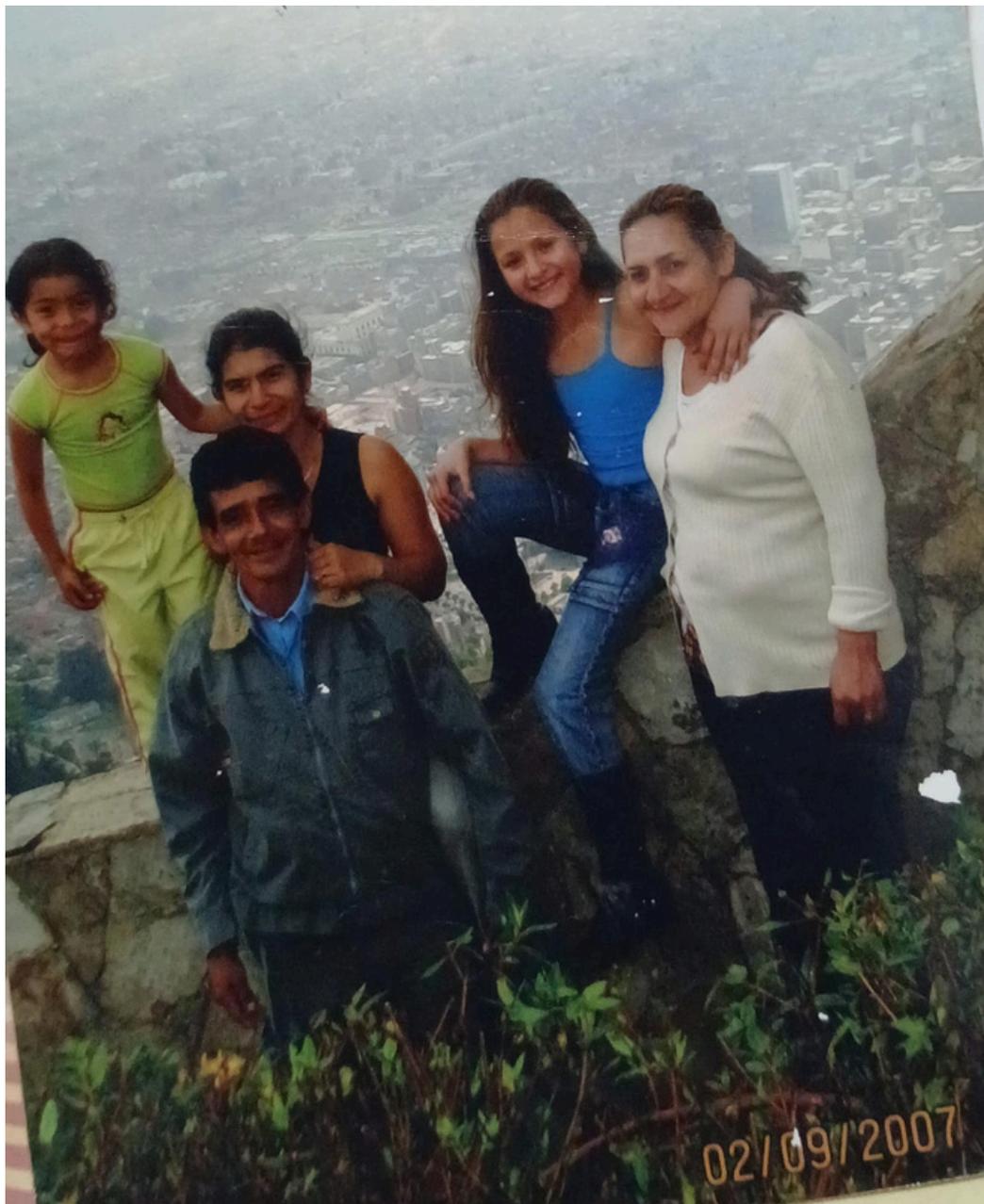
*When I left, my daughter was one year old and my son was seven months old.*

*I worked in restaurants or wherever I could, but many times it wasn't even enough to buy milk — that's why I migrated.*

*I was deported after 12 years, and it was very difficult. My daughter was around 12 and my son 11, but they no longer saw me as their mother.*

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Paola



*My niece left seeking Colombian asylum after being a victim of the armed conflict.*

*She had to serve the guerrilla on several occasions when they were operating in those mountains.*

*Nothing ever happened to them, but they grew up watching the guerrilla come to the farm with rifles and everything that came with it.*

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Jenny



*There isn't a Colombian who  
doesn't long to return to their  
country,*

*to that place that was their source  
of life when they were a child or  
young,*

*because, in one way or another,*

*this country is a paradise.*

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Jorge



*While I was away, I received the news that my mother had died.*

*It was devastating, because you never imagine that something like that will happen while you're gone.*

*So many thoughts rush through your mind. You ask yourself: Was it worth leaving? Was it worth it at all?*

*I never saw my mother again.*

*I was left with the longing to hug her one more time.*

*And when I finally returned, the only place I could go back to was her grave.*



1503  
EDUARDO PEREZ S  
ORLEY VASCO V

1494  
MARLENY ANTURI C  
JUN 29-08

1504

1495

*Some of us left.*

*Some of us stayed.*

*All of us remember.*