



The voices of those forgotten

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During my degree, I completed a fieldwork project in Colombia; researching sexual violence amongst women, and the support and counselling services they received by community churches, specifically within the Caribbean Coast. The project took place in Monteria and Barranquilla, and I interviewed a total of 17 women, supported by pastors and trained psychologists in their recovery; post traumatic events. The aim was to understand the quality of support, how much it truly helped them and to gain a better understanding in the background of these women and the gross impact sexual violence had on their lives.

I heard a variety of stories, ones that I found particularly hard to digest and forget, during my time in Colombia and returning back to England. Their voices are with me always, describing the atrocities that armed groups inflicted upon them and the strength it has taken to continue with their lives. They were each, strong and

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beautiful women, that provided great insight into the capability of the human mind to overcome adversity. During my time in Colombia, I had the opportunity to travel around from North to South and truly fell in love with it's rich culture, the beauty of each city and the kindness exhibited by everyone I met.

As a coping mechanism, during the final day of the interviews after a series of emotional and tiresome days, I was finding it hard to sleep. I had the voices of each woman I had met, rushing through my mind and no way of understanding it. So, I began to write. It is called "The Voices of Those Forgotten", as their stories were one's the world have rarely heard before- but carry equal importance in highlighting the atrocities that happen to women all over the world. They require recognition, support and greater understanding.

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My story does not reach your international waters

Your news feeds

And media headlines

I am part of a forgotten nation

Hidden by the beauty of this land

Recognised as a traveller's hotspot

I am much more than a lonely planet

Tread carefully

Through the trenches of my broken heart

Mother Nature made this country rich and fertile

Yet forgot the very mothers that nurture this land

She spread seeds of vegetation that grew into fountains of trees

Lay sand for the Caribbean Sea to settle

And mountains for the world to see

Every inch more diverse than the next, a country with the beauties of an entire continent

Your passion, vibrancy and music shine through.

Then, when you stop
To listen to the voices of those forgotten
You hear stories you cannot comprehend
Hidden under the glossy surface of the South American sun

We are the women that have been beaten
Burdened by the violence of men
Your war gave us shells, built walls where they should not be
Hardened our minds
Suppressed thoughts that were made to be free
Your evil made an evil in me
As you tortured and blinded all I could see
You silenced my rights
To fuel your fights
Stole my children to make generations unworthy
To manipulate minds and make soldiers of our youth
Rid them of a truth
That would liberate our land,
To serve your own hand

In a war
So immature
Unsure
Of what you're truly fighting for

You turned a mother's heart into a coffin of her child
She was exiled
From the home, the very shelter that built your bones
Now you men, reply thank you mother
With the beating of your drum
Overflowing with rum
To numb
The voices of the women they should of become.