

# GERALDINE

ALEJANDRA PÉREZ TORRES & CATALINA VÁSQUEZ SALAZAR



Proofreader: Gary Crabb

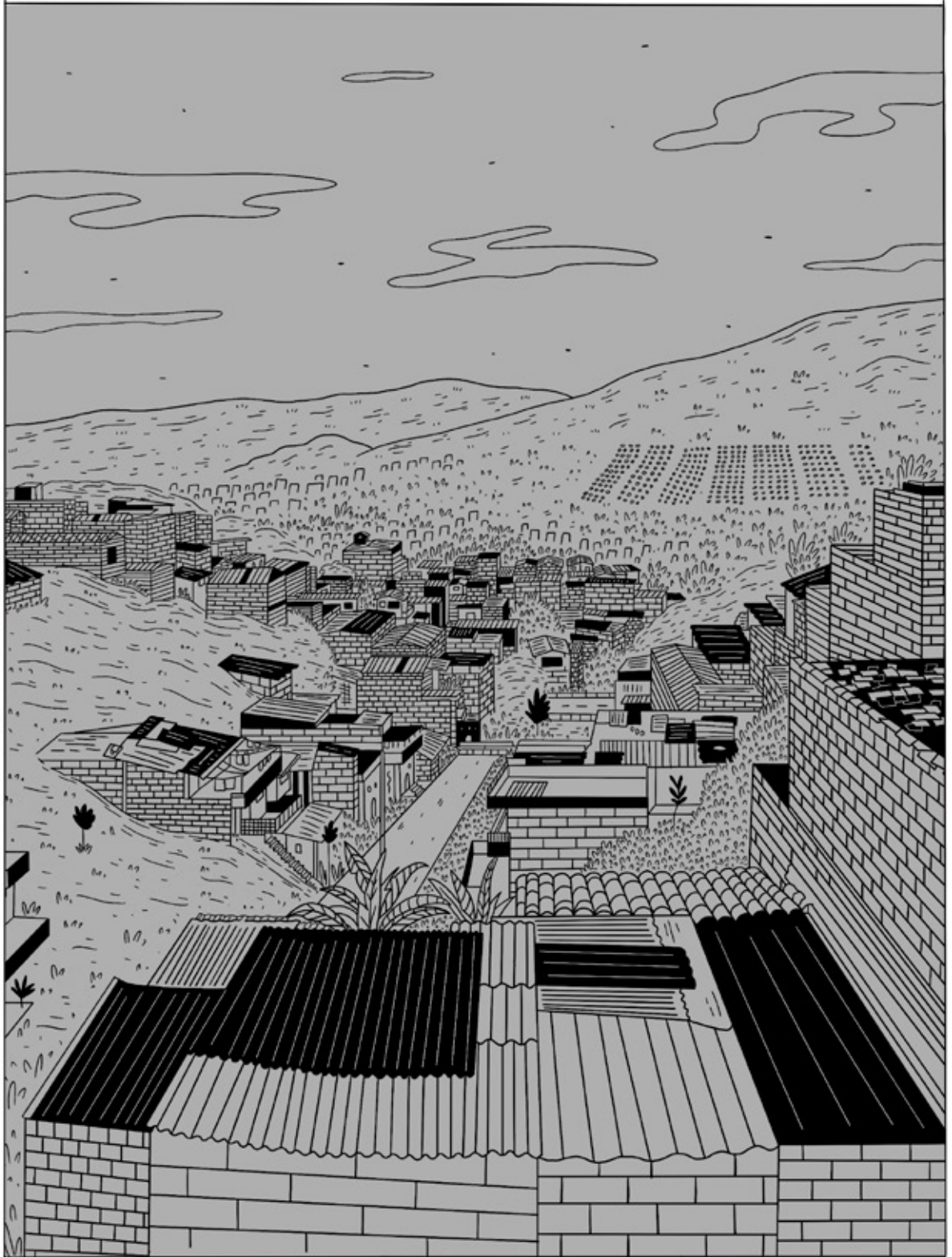
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Geraldine of Alejandra Pérez Torres and Catalina Vásquez Salazar was developed as part of Movements and Moments – Feminists Generations, an initiative of Goethe-Institut. The project aims to make visible Indigenous feminist activisms and protagonists from the Global South by relating their life stories in the highly accessible format of comics.



**GOETHE  
INSTITUT**

HERE EVERYTHING GREW LIKE WEEDS





THE HOUSES GRADUALLY CRYPT INTO THE CREVICES OF THE MOUNTAIN, AND TOGETHER, ONE ON TOP OF THE OTHER, THEY GAVE RISE TO THIS NEIGHBORHOOD THAT IS NOW MY HOME IN MEDELLIN



EL POPULAR WAS FORMED IN THE NORTHEASTERN PART OF THE CITY WITH THE ARRIVAL OF MANY PEOPLE

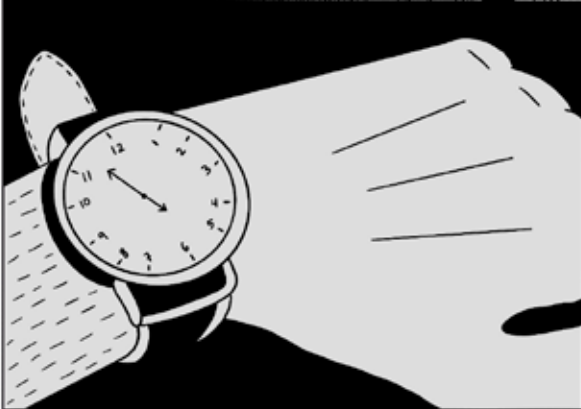
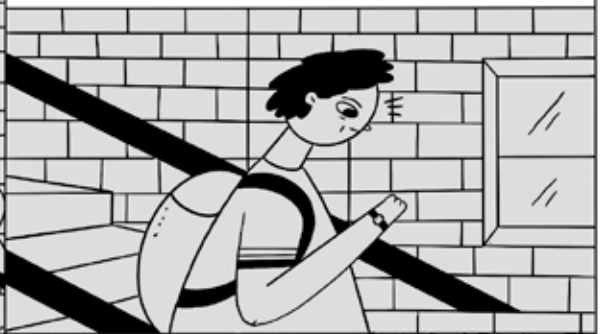




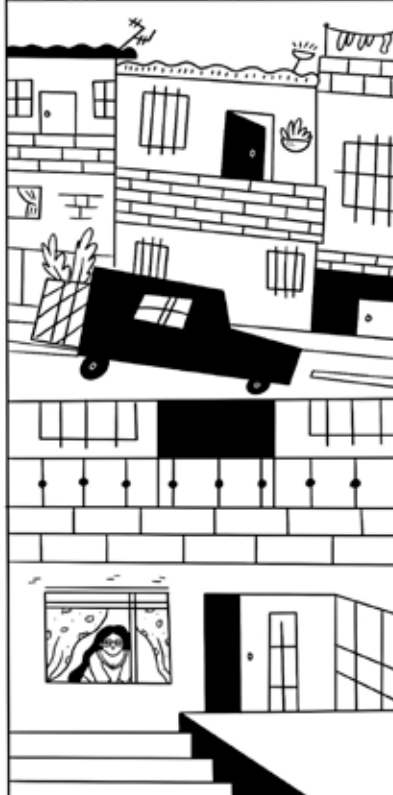
MOSTLY PEASANTS FLEEING VIOLENCE



OR COMING TO THE CITY WITH THE PROMISE OF A BETTER LIFE



THE MOUNTAIN WAS FILLED WITH IMPROVISED DWELLINGS AND THE STREETS WITH WORKERS WHO, UNABLE TO PAY THE HIGH RENTAL COSTS OF OTHER AREAS OF THE CITY, BEGAN TO BUILD THEIR OWN AT LOW COST.

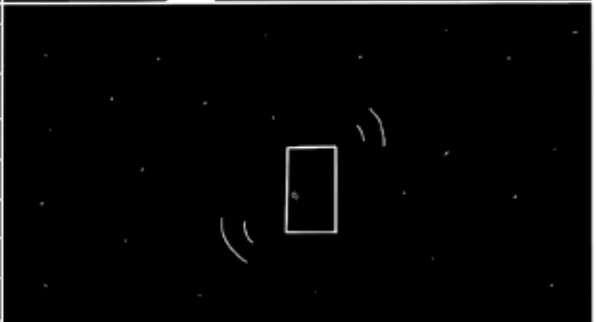
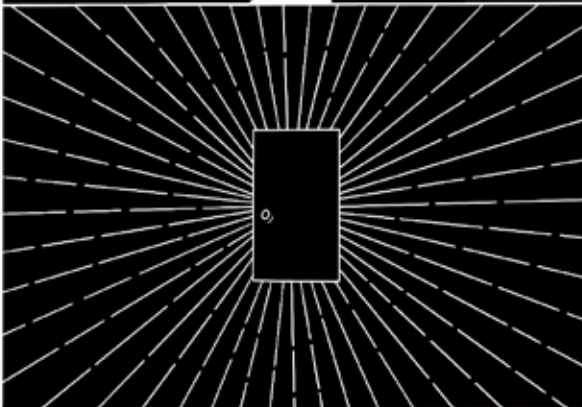
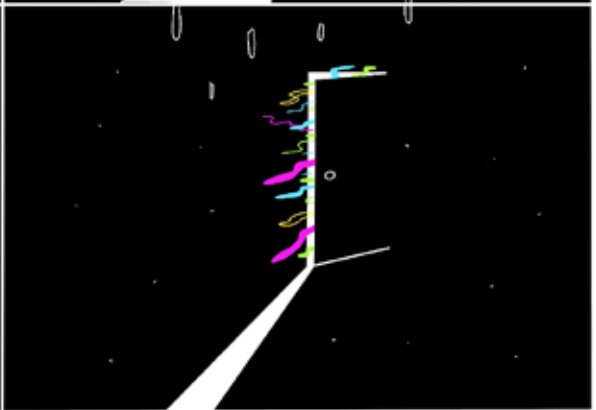
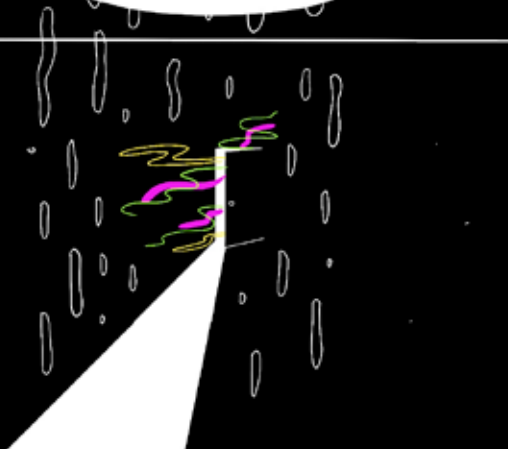


FOR A LONG TIME I HAD TO RUN AWAY



I HAD TO FORGET ABOUT WHO REALLY I WAS

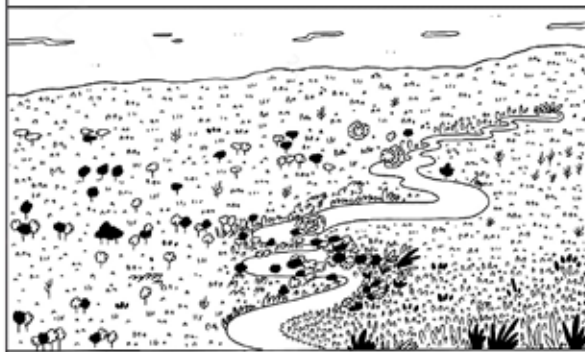
WHEN I WAS A KID, I ALWAYS FELT SOMEONE INSIDE ME SCREAMING...



BUT HER SCREAMS FADED AWAY, THEY LOST STRENGTH AND COULD NOT BE HEARD



I GREW UP IN THE INDIGENOUS RESERVE<sup>1</sup> OF DOJURA, MORE THAN 300KM OF MEDELLIN



IT IS LOCATED IN THE ENTIRE REGION OF URBÁ, A FERTILE TERRITORY WHERE EVERYTHING SPRINGS FROM THE EARTH WITH GREAT EASE.



1. THROUGH THE CONCEPT OF RESERVE, THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZES AND GRANTS INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES THE RIGHT TO OWN A TERRITORY AND TO ORGANIZE THEMSELVES WITHIN IT AUTONOMOUSLY ACCORDING TO THEIR WORLDVIEWS AND BELIEFS. THIS IS A RIGHT ACHIEVED ONLY 30 YEARS AGO IN THE 1991 POLITICAL CONSTITUTION



THERE, DURING ALL MY CHILDHOOD AND PART OF MY YOUTH, I HAD TO LIVE AS SOMEONE ELSE.



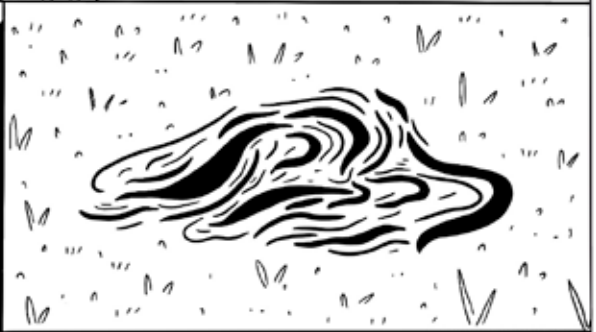
THAT OTHER PERSON WHO, ALTHOUGH SHE WAS A STRANGER TO ME, WAS THE ONE EVERYONE RECOGNIZED IN MY COMMUNITY.



I FELT A CONSTANT SENSE OF INADEQUACY BECAUSE EVEN THOUGH OTHER THINGS ATTRACTED ME AND CAUGHT MY ATTENTION



I HAD TO GO LIVING AS EXPECTED



AND IT WAS TOO HEAVY A BURDEN FOR MY YOUNG AGE



I GREW OLDER AND THE RESPONSIBILITIES BECAME GREATER. NOW THAT I WAS OLDER, I HAD TO DO WHAT ALL THOSE WHO LOOKED LIKE ME DID: WORK IN THE FIELDS



BUT THE DAYS OF WORK WERE GETTING HEAVY



THE LONG DAYS IN THE SUN WERE BURNING MY BODY AND MY HEART



IT PAINED ME TO KNOW THAT EVEN THOUGH THAT WASN'T WHAT I WANTED FOR MYSELF, I HAD TO KEEP DOING IT.



I USED WHAT I EARNED TO SECRETLY BUY MYSELF THINGS THAT I FELT HELPED ME CONNECT MORE WITH MYSELF.



I LIKED TO DREAM OF BEING THE WOMAN OF MY DREAMS





BUT MY DREAMS FADED AS I LISTENED TO THOSE AROUND ME MURMURING ABOUT MY CHANGES AND DESIRES

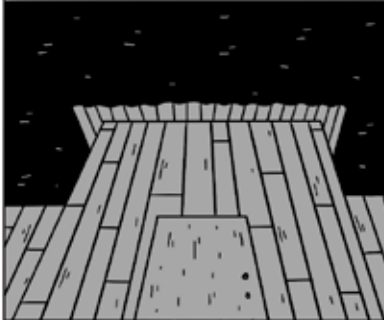
I FELT WATCHED AND REJECTED. NOT ONLY BY MY FAMILY, BUT ALSO BY THE INTIMIDATION OF OTHER PEOPLE OUTSIDE MY INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY...





AROUND THAT TIME KAPUNIA<sup>2</sup> MEN CAME TO MY COMMUNITY. THEY CAME WITH THEIR WEAPONS AND THEIR VIOLENCE TO SOW FEAR AMONG US.

THEIR INTENTION WAS TO STRIP US OF OUR INDIGENOUS TERRITORY SO THAT THE DARK POWERS COULD USE IT TO THEIR ADVANTAGE. THEY WANTED TO CONTROL EVERYTHING, AND ANY MANIFESTATION THAT WAS OUT OF THE 'NORMAL' WAS THREATENED.



THE NIGHT WAS THEIR ALLY. THEY MOVED STEALTHILY THROUGH THE SHADOWS AND WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECTED IT, THEY WERE BY YOUR SIDE.



JUST LIKE WHAT HAPPENED TO ME THAT NIGHT...



WE DON'T WANT FAGS HERE. GET LOST BECAUSE WE DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU HERE AGAIN

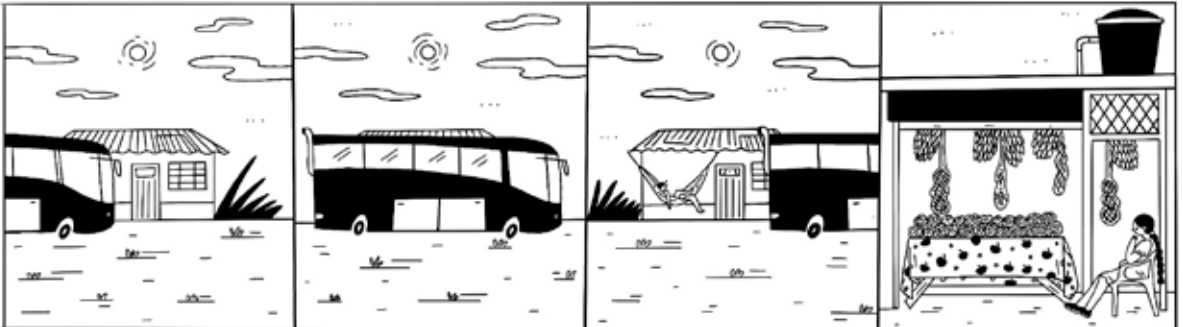


THIS MESSAGE WAS THE STRONGEST CONFIRMATION THAT MY HOME WAS NO LONGER MY HOME.

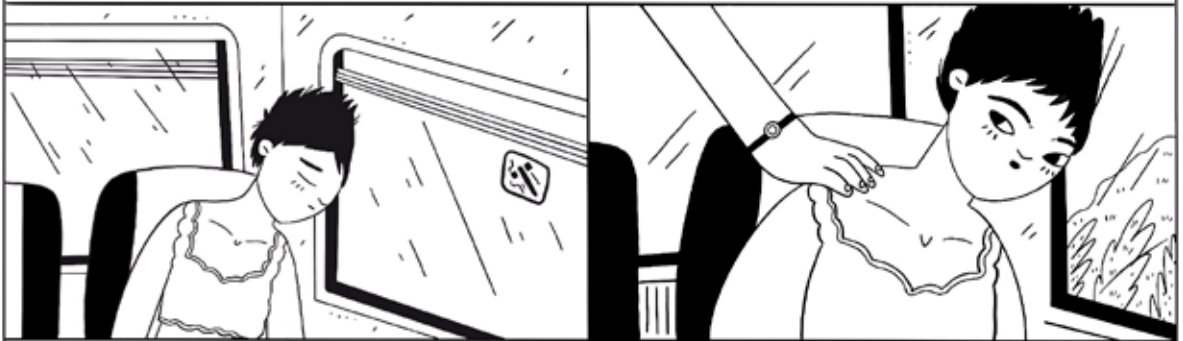
IT WAS TIME FOR ME TO LEAVE AND RUN AWAY FROM DOJURA.



2. WORD IN EMBERÁ USED TO REFER TO PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT INDIGENOUS.



I WISH I COULD HAVE ENJOYED THE SCENERY, THE MOUNTAINS, THE RIVERS AND THE PEOPLE THAT APPEARED ON THE LONG ROAD THAT TOOK ME TO MEDELLIN



I CURLED UP IN THE SEAT SO AS NOT TO FEEL SO LONELY

AND IT WAS INEVITABLE NOT TO END UP CRYING THINKING ABOUT ALL THAT I WAS LEAVING BEHIND



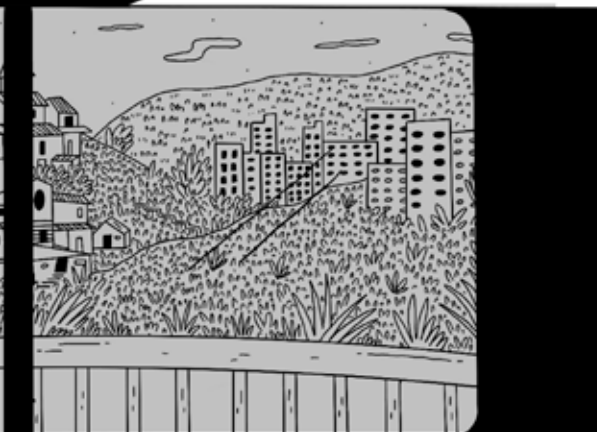
CAN I HELP YOU WITH ANYTHING

I'M GOING TO MEDELLIN, BUT I'VE NEVER BEEN THERE

WELL, I'M GOING TO MEDELLIN TOO: I CAN GUIDE YOU A LITTLE BIT. DON'T WORRY



IT WAS THE FIRST TIME SOMEONE SPOKE TO ME WITH SUCH KINDNESS

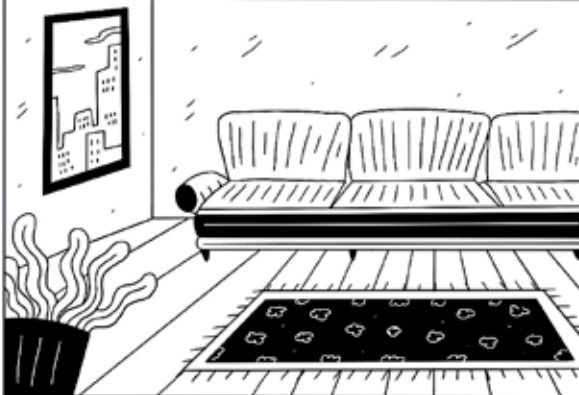


I COULDN'T STOP LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW AND SEEING THOSE GIANT MOUNTAINS FULL OF LITTLE LIGHTS. I THOUGHT THEY WERE BEAUTIFUL AND AT THE SAME TIME THEY FILLED ME WITH FEAR, THEY MADE ME FEEL SMALL IN THE MIDDLE OF SUCH A BIG CITY.





I STAYED FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS IN THE HOUSE OF THIS KIND STRANGER WHO LATER BECAME MY FRIEND



IT WAS A TOTALLY NEW AND STRANGE PLACE FOR ME, SO DIFFERENT FROM MY PARENTS' HUT IN DOJURA



HE LIVED THERE WITH HIS MOTHER, A WOMAN WHO TOOK ME IN AND SHARED HER TABLE WITH ME...



A FEW DAYS AFTER BEING IN HER HOUSE, SHE TOOK ME TO A VERY EYE OPENING PLACE FOR ME...







I STARTED TO GO TO THIS PLACE. IT BECAME A HOME WHERE I FELT SURROUNDED BY BROTHERS AND SISTERS



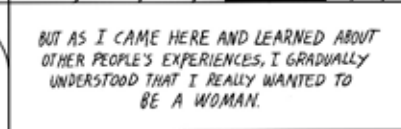
THERE I UNDERSTOOD HOW DIVERSE THE GENDER SPECTRUM IS



I REALIZED THAT I NEEDED WORDS TO NAME WHAT I WAS. I WAS ALWAYS DEFINED BY POINTING FINGERS AND MOCKERY.



FOR A LONG TIME I WAS ALSO CONFUSED, BECAUSE I THOUGHT THAT MY TASTE FOR THE FEMININE AND MY ATTRACTION TO HETEROSEXUAL MEN MADE ME A GAY MAN



BUT AS I CAME HERE AND LEARNED ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES, I GRADUALLY UNDERSTOOD THAT I REALLY WANTED TO BE A WOMAN.



HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN MEDELLIN?

I'VE BEEN HERE FOR ALMOST TWO MONTHS



AND HAVE YOU ALREADY STARTED WITH THE HORMONES?

HORMONES? WHAT DO YOU MEAN? I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT...



THEY'RE PILLS THAT HELP US BECOME WHO WE REALLY WANT TO BE

HERE WE HAVE BEEN GUIDED ABOUT THE PROCESSES TO START TAKING THEM, IF YOU WANT WE CAN HELP YOU TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT TO BE GUIDED TOO, WOULD YOU LIKE TO?

YES...



I DIDN'T HAVE TO SHAVE SO OFTEN ANYMORE  
AND MY VOICE WAS GETTING SOFTER

STARTING TO TAKE THE PILLS WAS QUITE A  
JOURNEY... MY BODY BEGAN TO CHANGE IN WAYS  
I DIDN'T THINK WERE POSSIBLE.



AND MY HAIR, IT WAS TIME TO LET  
IT GROW WITHOUT REMORSE



I'AM GERALDINE!



AT THAT MOMENT I DECIDED THAT I NO LONGER WANTED TO RUN AWAY. I WANTED  
TO FACE THE WORLD WHILE BEING ME. THE WOMAN I HAD ALWAYS BEEN...







THE LAST STEP TO RETURN HOME WAS TO CONFRONT THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES. I NEEDED THEIR SUPPORT AND PROTECTION...



I TOOK A PATH THAT WAS QUITE UNKNOWN TO ME... I HAD TO DEMAND AND MAKE MYSELF HEARD. NOT ONLY FOR ME, BUT THE OTHER TRANS GIRLS WHO MIGHT NEED IT...



THEY TOOK SO MANY WEEKS TO RESPOND, AT ONE POINT I THOUGHT THEY NEVER WOULD... A WALL CALENDAR FROM WHICH PAGES ARE BEING TORN OFF AND LET IN THE WIND

BUT THE ANSWER CAME...



BY THIS LETTER THE RIGHTS OF THE LGBT/ POPULATION WITHIN THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY IN



THE DOJURA INDIGENOUS RESERVATION ARE HEREBY RECOGNIZED...

AND THAT MEANT IT WAS TIME TO GO BACK



MOM, SEE YOU SOON!





I WAS SO AFRAID OF GOING BACK AND BEING SINGLED OUT AGAIN, BUT I WAS SURE I NEEDED TO MAKE THIS TRIP...



WELCOME DAUGHTER



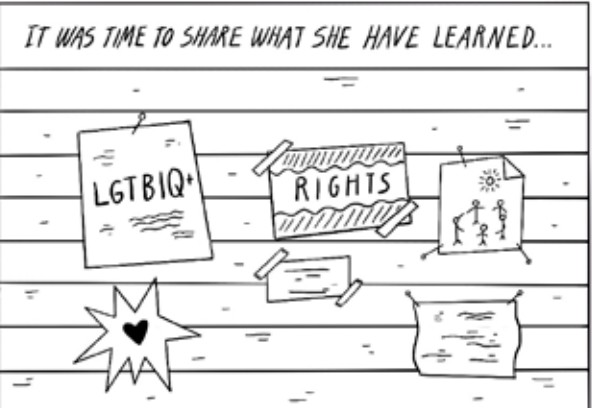
THANK YOU MOM!



MY MOM'S HUG MADE ME FEEL AT HOME



COMING BACK TO DOJURA WAS MORE THAN COMING BACK TO MY MOM'S HOUSE. IT WAS ALSO ABOUT TELLING MY STORY, ABOUT SPEAKING UP FOR THE RIGHTS OF THOSE LIKE ME.



IT WAS TIME TO SHARE WHAT SHE HAVE LEARNED...



I WAS HAPPY TO DO THIS SO WHAT EVERYONE IN MY COMMUNITY WOULD RECOGNIZE THAT WE ARE ALL DIVERSE AND HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXIST



RETURNING TO DOJURA WAS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO FIND MYSELF AGAIN, NO LONGER OUT OF FEAR, BUT RATHER IN CELEBRATION OF BEING GERALDINE, THE WOMAN I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN.

RETURNING TO  
DOJURA WAS  
NECESSARY IN ORDER  
TO FIND MYSELF  
AGAIN, BUT NOT FROM  
A POSITION OF FEAR  
BUT FROM A POSITION  
OF CELEBRATION AS  
GERALDINE, THE WOMAN  
THAT I ALWAYS  
HAVE BEEN.

THE END.