

TRANSCRIPT:

Displaced But Not Defeated

a BYkids film
THEIR WORLD THEIR FILMS



Man 1: If I begin to tell what happened to me I will feel like crying. Those are things that I carry inside.

Man 2: I'm almost 85 years old. And this country, ever since I can remember, I've never seen it in peace.

María Ceballos: Because of the violence my father was killed. Because of the violence I was exiled to a place that I don't know.

[Captions]: Colombia's civil war has lasted for more than 40 years, fueled in large part by the drug trade. Fighting between the army, paramilitary guerrilla groups and drug cartels has forced almost 4 million people from their homes. Colombia now has the largest displaced population in the world. María's story is one of many.

María and other women: I used to live happily with my whole family raising animals and growing potatoes. One day something unexpected happened when the paramilitary men came in. Many people fled, others couldn't. Next day the guerrilla fighters arrived. War began, a true war where many people ended up in the cemetery.

María: My name is María Ceballos. I am 16 years old. I was born in a place called Iscuandé, Nariño, Colombia. Nariño's landscape can be described as very beautiful. There you didn't worry about starving, you didn't worry about getting work because you worked for yourself. It was very easy to live with others there... but at the same time, very difficult. Why? Because of the guerrillas, you were afraid of getting killed. Afraid that something could happen to your family there.

My family moved to Cali here in the Aguablanca district because there were too many problems, too many conflicts. The reason we came to Aguablanca is because they killed my dad so we had to move. Because of the violence, they took away my opportunity to be with him. The neighborhood where I live now is a neighborhood where many other displaced people also live. It has delinquency, it has gangs. It's difficult to have friends where I live. The only ones that I trust are my mom and my siblings.

Well, this is my house. Here I live with 13 people. This is the living room. I'm showing a bit of my family.

Faysuri: Show me, I'm the prettiest one.

María: My two sisters.

Faysuri: My name is Faysuri, the prettiest.

María: What are you doing?

Faysuri: I'm doing Mayira's hair because she looks ugly so she needs it.

María: What's your name?

Luz Mayira: Luz Mayira.

María: She is my sister in law.

Mayira: I'm doing laundry because I have a lot of dirty clothes. Very dirty.

María: How many weeks until the baby?

Mayira: Around four weeks.

Yolanda: This is the kitchen. I'm making an omelet.

María: How many eggs?

Yolanda: 5 Eggs.

María: Are five eggs enough for 13 people?

Yolanda: Yes.

María: I live with my mom, Yolanda, with my brother Fidel, and my brother German. I live with many of my nephews. In total, I live with a lot of people.

This is my room. It is not that big or pretty. This is the place where I sleep, where I find relief from my feelings. This stuffed animal, he is my guardian angel. He is like that person they took from me. He's like my dad.

I moved from Nariño to Aguablanca when I was little so it is not very clear to me.

Tell me a little bit about the displacement.

Yolanda: You were too little... Now you know a little bit more but I haven't told you everything.

María: So tell it.

Yolanda: At home with my husband, we didn't have problems. We were careful because there were groups that came in... The guerrillas, paramilitary and ELN. Because we were afraid, we lived carefully. We didn't want problems because we knew the consequences. But one day at the farm a neighbor crossed our boundary line. That started an argument. At that moment the guerrillas were there so they came down to check that boundary. My husband was right. They fixed it. The guerrillas set up the boundary again and it was left that way. So for us everything seemed all right. Until one day, somebody came down in the morning asking for my husband

and they took him up river. I was calm, I thought there was no problem. But at 6 pm, my brother-in-law came over. He said, "Yolanda, get dressed up. We are going upland." As soon as he told me that, I was already feeling my heart. I managed and went. When I got there, he had already been prepared for the burial. They already had him in the church. I was at the church all night. The burial was the next day. I'm telling you, that was a very terrible day. A day that I don't know why I am telling the story because my head was crazy... It went blank. At 8pm that night, my brother-in-law said, "You must leave." And I said, "Without money, without anything, how can I leave?" I was in no condition to go out because I was... You can't imagine how I was at that moment.

Faysuri: When the time came for us to leave in a hurry everybody was saying, "Go to Cali. Go to Cali."

María: How did you feel?

Faysuri: At that moment, the emotions were too many. I can't even describe how much I was feeling. On one hand, since you're little it seems really cool because you are coming to know Cali... since it was so famous. On the other hand, it was very sad because you knew that you were leaving everything... very sad.

María: My feelings were of happiness because I was traveling, which I never had. I thought that I would arrive here and then go back to see my dad because my mom had lied to us and told us that my dad remained over there working. But as months passed by, one year passed I said, "Mom, when are we going to see my dad?" When she finally told us that he was dead and that we couldn't go back, then my feelings changed from happiness to sadness. From joy to hatred. A girl shouldn't feel hatred.

Yolanda: There is too much violence and they don't want to understand it.

María: This is the church where we celebrate "Thursday of Peace." My mom comes here. Here at "Thursday of Peace" displaced people go through orientation. You can see there are a lot of displaced people in need and here they help us.

Pastor: I want to ask the people that are here for the first time to come up so we can greet them.

Woman 1: I come from Nariño, displaced because of armed groups.

Crowd: Welcome.

Woman 2: I come displaced from Barbacoa.

Man 3: I came to cali as a displaced person.

Pastor: Let's give them a round of applause.

María: I wanted to know more, and by asking questions they tell me their points of view, what they think about displacement.

How do you feel?

Man 2: The discrimination that I have noticed here in Cali is that the elderly are considered worthless. I have experienced it various times. One time a girl said to me, "You old man don't talk to me." An odd thing that leaves you crazy and depressed.

Man 1: I lived around three armed groups... Paramilitary, guerrilla, and the army. If the army sees you talking to the guerrillas, they say, "This guy is a guerrilla fighter." If the paramilitary sees you talking to the army they say, "This one is a member of the army. We need to look for a way of getting rid of him." Before I came they killed one of my brothers, they killed one of my uncles, those are things that I wouldn't even want to tell.

Yolanda: "Thursday of Peace" has served me well because now I laugh, I am able to talk because when someone brought up this topic, the tears wouldn't stop.

María: When I came to Cali, I had to move several times. Imagine you get used to a place, you spend several months or a few days there and then you have to move to another place that you don't know. So, it's difficult. I'd ask myself, how long are we going to be moving from one place to another to another? I lived in illegal settlements for eight, nine years.

What is an illegal settlement?

Yolanda: If you didn't have a place to stay or the means to pay rent then you came, looked for plastic, and set up a ranch house. We put some wooden boards on the ground and there I would sleep with my children.

María: I knew that it could catch fire anytime or a knife could cut through and my life was at risk, my brother's and my mom's. Moving from a house to a shack and furthermore in an illegal settlement with a lot of people that you don't know, so many different people, black, white, Indian, from everywhere, and not having friends... It is very difficult.

Yolanda: There were only two bathrooms for 750 souls. There were people who spent whole weeks without washing because they didn't get their chance. To go to the bathroom, there was a big line all day.

María: I felt bad, sad because imagine I couldn't find myself. Enduring the cold, enduring hunger without being in a safe place.

Yolanda: That illegal settlement became a cave, a hideout. There were rapings and everything. A lot of bad things. The police came on two occasions to get rid of us. You were becoming violent because the situation was terrible. There was nowhere else to go. You didn't have any more hope. So, that has been my struggle. That has been my effort and all of my suffering here in town, to take care of my family.

María: I learned from my family's story so many tales that my mom had never told me. After interviewing her I realized that I have asked her these things so many times and she has never let it out. I admire her a lot because imagine pushing her kids forward without the help of her husband or even working. Not every mother can do that. Being mother and father at the same time means having a lot of courage. How do I think that my mom does everything? The truth is, I don't know. I think maybe it's her positive attitude. She thinks that each day we can change

and become someone in our lives, so that motivates her. I like to talk to her. I like that she gives me advice because as a teenager you always want to have your mother's advice.

Do you like to dance?

Yolanda: To me? I have danced all my life.

María: I enjoy spending time with my mom.

How do you dance?

Yolanda: Like this!

María: Show us a little bit of Choque. Do it with your partner.

Why is dance important to us?

Faysuri: To have fun and to Choque with your partner.

Family Member: So we can de-stress.

María: Who is the best dancer in the house?

Family: Me!

No, it's me!

Me!

Yolanda: The best dancer in the house is María.

Family Member: That's a lie. It's me.

María: You have this on... it's a party and everyone dances.

When we are sad this makes us happy. We put on music to have fun.

Children: It's a party.

María: This is dance, this is who we are, this is how my family is and together we have a lot of fun and joy.

What does it feel like... How do you feel in the neighborhood?

Fidel: I barely go outside because things might get dangerous all of a sudden and I could get hurt. Perhaps there is a stray bullet and it may hit me.

María: Tell us what happened on the bus.

Fidel: We were driving by the tented area. Someone in the bus was annoying someone from the tents. Then they threw a rock and because she didn't close the window she was hit by the rock.

Maria: Where did the rock hit you?

Girl Cousin: Here.

María: How did you feel?

Girl Cousin: I felt scared because when I felt the stone I began to cry.

Fidel: I became nervous... She's my cousin. Thinking that getting hit like that, it could have killed her.

María: Here I wait for the bus at 5:58 am. At 6:44 am we go into the classroom. This school teaches from preschool through high school, which is 11th grade.

What do you want to be when you grow up?

Classmate 1: A doctor.

María: Why?

Classmate 1: Because I want to help my family.

María: Go ahead.

Classmate 2: I want to manage all the corporations in Colombia and control many corporations outside of Colombia.

Classmate 3: Me! I want to be a great soccer player to get my mom out of here because there is too much violence.

María: There was a time that I stopped studying. During that time I was kind of remembering my dad... so sadness got me, my self-esteem decreased. I didn't want to study anymore. One day, I hadn't done the homework. I hadn't eaten and the teacher asked me what had happened. I told him my story and he gave me advice. And I'm never going to forget it. He told me that no matter how many obstacles I might have I should never turn back. Always forward, that I should never give up, never cease to dream. And that day I thought about it and I started to cry because one teacher that didn't know you, that doesn't know about your life, is able to give you such beautiful advice.

In the 5th grade when I told you about my problems, how did you feel I was?

Carlos: Initially, you were a girl in need of someone to lead her, to guide her a little bit and my first task consisted of trying to make her aware, to show her the value of studying and the importance of sharing with us here.

María: Carlos has been my support... he was like the father I never had.

Carlos: I always considered you a daughter and every time I gave you advice I was thinking that I was giving advice to a daughter.

María: What fatherly advice would you give me?

Carlos: I've always had one piece of advice for you... Work hard in your life, put effort into the

things that you want, don't stop being the person you are because you're an excellent person. You have a great moral sense. I will be paying close attention to your academic and personal progress because I will always want the best for you.

María: I greet him every day and I don't get tired of thanking him because he opened my eyes. He inspired me and told me that my dreams need to be made a reality, whatever the cost may be. And that's what I am doing.

What am I doing? I am writing a song. Every time I get home from school I do something. I like to always be busy with something so that sadness doesn't linger. The things that I like to do are dancing, composing songs—theater. Through the theater, I can get my feelings off my chest, whether happiness, whether sadness.

Here we are at the theater. I come here every week with my mom, sister and friends who are also displaced.

[Dancing and Clapping]

After the warm up we begin rehearsing the plays that are about displacement. What we are going to rehearse now is the play, "Nobody Can Take Away What We Have Inside". It's about how we got to the illegal settlements... how the trip was from Nariño to here, Cali.

Yolanda: I left my house, everything I had, Lord! And now I arrived to this town...

María: Through the theater I can do a lot of things. I can express my feelings... and I learn to hold my head high to increase my self-esteem. That's why I like it.

I have many dreams. First of all, to finish my studies. Then attend college. Being successful myself and able to push my family forward and helping other people. Five years from now I want to be... A professional who speaks English fluently. And being a person who is acknowledged because that's my dream, to be someone acknowledged. If I were somebody more important, someone really in command in Colombia, I would make changes no matter what. If I could change something at this moment, it would be the war. So like everybody says, I want peace for Colombia. It is everybody's wish.

I hope that people, when they see this film they think about what displacement is, how Colombia is. I want them to keep in mind how displaced people live. How displaced people struggle to push forward. And that they may learn many stories... Like mine.

[Credits roll]