

**CRISTINA BAUTISTA:
THIS LANDS BLEEDING FLIGHT**

With gratitude to the Bautista Taquinás family and to the Nasa Women's Movement Weaving Thought -Hilando Pensamiento-.

Script: Vilma Rocío Almendra Quiguanás, Pueblos en Camino

Drawings and text revision for children: Violeta Kiwe Rozental Almendra

Cover drawing based on a mural from Universidad del Valle, in Honour of Cristina Bautista.

Minor finishing of drawings: Vilma Rocío Almendra Quiguanás

Design and Layout: Derly Constanza Cuetia Dagua, Pueblos en Camino.

Traduction: Nathalie Lozano Neira, Francisco Gómez y Manuel Rozental.



Tejiendo Autonomías entre Pueblos y Procesos



Violeta kiwe y Vilma Rocío



The Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca – CRIC, was born in the Indigenous territory of Tacueyó almost 50 years ago. This ancestral territory has been marked by the resistance and autonomy footprints of the Nasa People in what is called Colombia. Today, organized crime from around the planet, now including drug traffickers (mostly “creep” marijuana in the last 10 years), continue to strip us from our common goods beginning by life itself. The struggle of our people has been wounded as much by peace as by war.





Cristina Bautista Taquinás was born on November 12, 1989, in El Culebrero, Tacueyó, Toribío, Cauca. Dioselina Taquinás and Uriel Bautista welcomed Cristina, their first daughter, in her grandmother's home with the assistance of a doula. She was born in the heart of a Christian family.







Her brother Eduar and her sisters Deyanira, Viviana and Amalfi arrived later. Like other kids, she enjoyed her childhood in spite of her family's poverty.







From a very young age, she carried her brother on her back while her sister held her hand to the Casa Hogar (community daycare).







Even though she only owned one change of clothes, she was very accomplished and committed at school. While in 4th grade she was asked to bring half a pound of rice to school, since they didn't have it, she dropped out. As a little girl, she used to teach her brother and sister to work and help support themselves with the sale of popcorn and paddy cakes.







At the age of 12 she went to work as a maid in the town of Corinto. Within a year she had learned to make skirts and dresses in the sewing machine. With the money saved from the sales of these, she asked her father to buy her a sewing machine. She made clothes for her mother and her sisters.







But because she dreamed of getting a bigger sewing machine, at the age of 13 she went to Cali to work as a housemaid. Where she worked, one day, her boss tried to rape her. Thanks to the help of a friend, she managed to escape and find a job elsewhere in the city.







She worked caring for elderly women. Some loved her like a daughter, others treated her very badly. When she managed to save a million pesos (US \$300), her mother encouraged her to buy the sewing machine, but instead, she sent that money for her family to buy a calf. She never went back home. She remained in Cali working to support her family.







Eventually, she worked caring for an elderly woman who supported her to study. She passed the admission exam for 5th grade and kept on studying. Finally, she graduated from the Santa Librada School, invited her mother and father to the graduation ceremony and told them that she wanted to go on to a university.





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She was admitted to the university in Cali and worked selling fruits while studying. She did well and learned a lot in the fruit stand. Eventually she bought it. With a growing clientele and the savings from her sales, she managed to bring her sister to help her make and sell cholao (shaved ice dessert).







A man, jealous of her fruit stand success threatened and called the police against her. The police arrived, destroyed her stand and confiscated everything she had gathered with much effort and dedication. This injustice saddened to a point where she neglected her university studies.

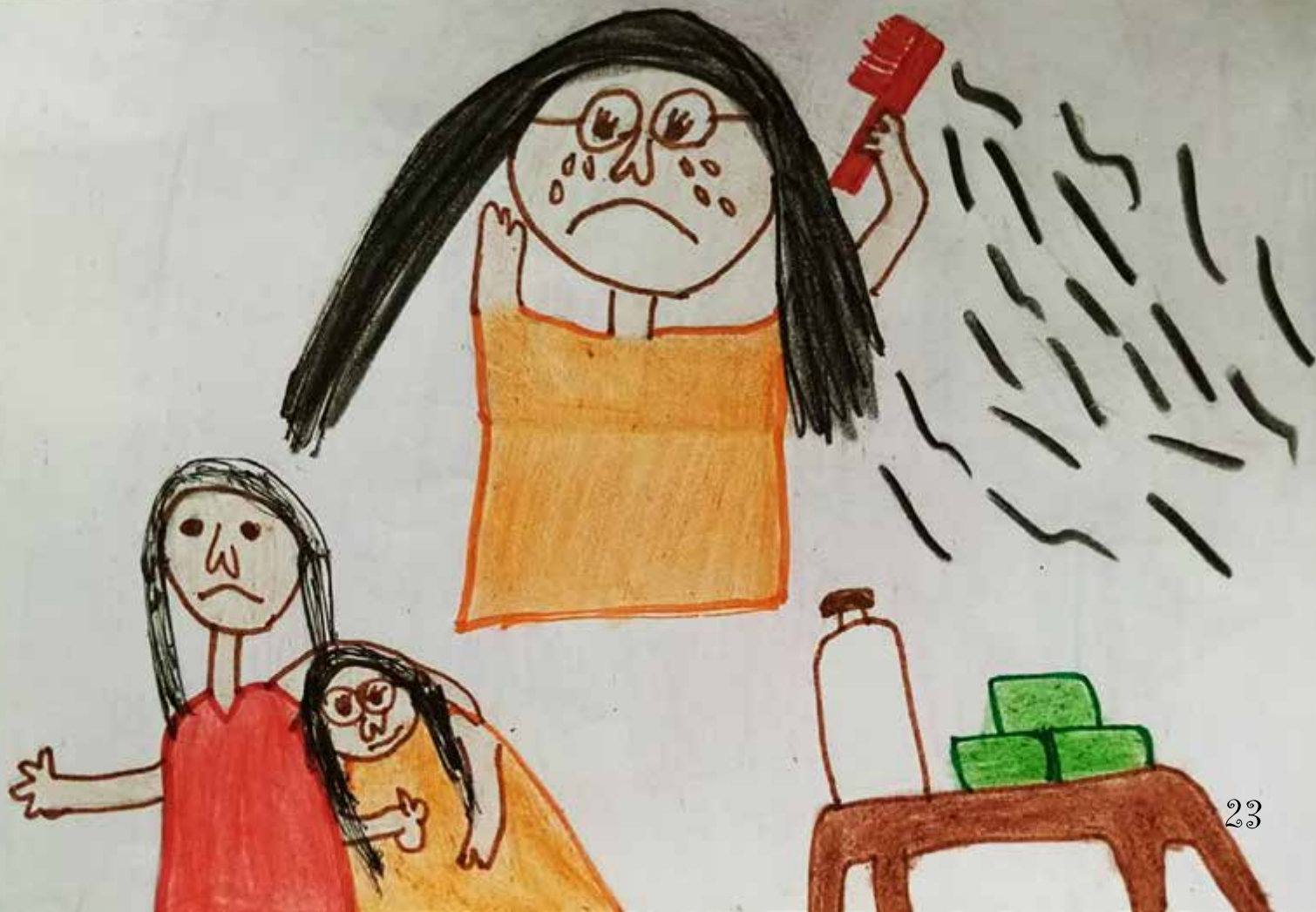






Her father asked her to abandon her education and return home. She refused. She found a job but was starving in hunger from poverty to a point where her hair fell off from malnutrition and she began to lose her memory. Her mother visited her whenever she could and brought her milk and cheese to help her out.







In time, her university studies improved. She focused her interest on the victims of the armed conflict and on violence against women. With a lot of effort, she graduated as a social worker from the Universidad del Valle. She obtained a scholarship to study human rights in Spain.







She was committed to give birth to an indigenous Nasa woman lead organization and to fight for the protection of life in communities. She never saw herself married, with children or stuck inside a house. Her dream was to travel. Once she took her mother and father to visit the Colombian Caribbean cities of Santa Marta, Barranquilla and Cartagena.







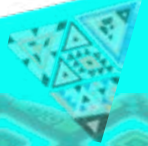
She was deeply concerned about the fact that Toribío occupied the second place as the most violent town against women in Colombia. She was committed to change this; to achieve justice. Consequently, she engaged in different initiatives where she could exchange with other women. She always sought her own means to take part in these activities.







She listened to the communities and helped revive the Nasa women's movement "**Hilando Pensamiento**" -Weaving our Thoughts-, with extensive youth participation. "I have walked the territory and there are things that are not said for fear of being pointed out. I want for all women to organize, unite and be heard, to be guaranteed their rights. There is too much pain".







Because of her unconditional work and attentive listening to women, she was asked to be a candidate for the Neehwe'sx -traditional authority- position.

The day of the community election, given the high vote count obtained, she was elected to one of the 6 Indigenous authorities -Chiefs- positions of the Tacueyó Nasa indigenous Council.







As an authority she stood out for her humility and commitment towards the community. For example, she accompanied the Indigenous guard, supported various youth to overcome drug addiction, struggled with women for their right to justice, self-esteem and motivation to organize themselves.







A macho-based leadership rejected her for her Christian faith, for her being a woman, for her soft and gentle manner of speaking and for her firmness in the defense of life and in demanding opportunities and rights for all women. Others challenged her because she denounced the complicity with the production of crops for illicit use as these are the main source of violence against the communities. Once she was told: “Throw away that stick (staff of authority) that you do not understand”.







She stood firmly by the collective mandates and consequently, against crops for illicit use, armed actors and male chauvinism. She cried over every assassinated indigenous guard, every assault, any mockery, and all expressions of hatred and all forms of threats. Whenever someone was assassinated and sown back to Mother Earth, her words and the coherent brave actions that followed remain an enduring call for freedom: “If we talk, they kill us. If we do not talk, they also kill us. So: iwe talk!”.







A death threat was issued against the authorities committed to protect the ancestral territories and Mother Earth. On October 28, 2019, a pick-up truck prowled around the Council's (Cabildo) house. At 10:30 pm this vehicle rushed through the check point; shots being fired from it. No one was injured. Cristina wanted to avoid any more killings. She put her own life on the line to protect that of others.







On October 29, Cristina, together with the Indigenous guards, chased after armed men, members of organized armed groups that impose violence on these territories. In an ambush, she was massacred together with Asdrúbal Cayapu, Eliodoro Finscucue, Jose Gerardo Soto and James Wilfredo Soto. Her sacrifice and our struggle live on and will never be silenced.







Those of us who met her were deeply moved by her smile that flourished in the direst of situations.

“We are all indigenous guards, yes! but only when in action”

“Women are essential. Our cosmovision mandates as much. We only have to make it happen.”

Cristina Bautista Taquinás (November 12, 1989 – October 29, 2019)





"If we talk, they kill us. If we do not talk, they also kill us. So: iwe talk!"