

Response to A (Feminist) Farewell to Arms: The Impact of the Peace Process with FARC-EP on Colombian Feminism

by Eric Finkelberg

In her article *A (Feminist) Farewell to Arms: The Impact of the Peace Process with FARC-EP on Colombian Feminism*, Lina M. Céspedes-Báez discusses whether the Colombian peace agreement of 2016 and its implementation have altered the mainstream account of the gender-based dimensions of the conflict between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (FARC-EP). Céspedes-Báez begins her article by providing an excellent summary of the Colombian internal-conflict and the part that *letradas* took in shaping the dialogue surrounding gender and gender-based violence during the conflict and Colombian society more generally. Céspedes-Báez argues that the gender-based dimension of the peace agreement tracks the view of the *letradas*, or the mainstream Colombian women’s rights movement. Specifically, the gender-based dimension of the agreement tracks the *letradas*’ narrative of women as victims of sexual violence that is exacerbated in time of conflict. However, Céspedes-Báez highlights that a distinct voice was lacking in the peace agreement and negotiations, that of *farianas*. *Farianas* are FARC women combatants who participated in the Colombian conflict.

Céspedes-Báez argues that this lack of a *fariana* voice in the peace conversations and agreement can be explained by the fact that *farianas* did not have a specific feminist agenda during the peace conversations. It would be interesting to note how the peace negotiations and the agreement itself may have differed had the *farianas*’ feminist agenda been realized before the negotiations. Specifically, how would have the resistance of *farianas* to the identification of women in conflict as victims as opposed to the *letradas*’ narrative focus of women as victims affect the peace process and the resulting peace agreement? Would this have led to different gender-based issues being highlighted in the negotiations and the agreement? Or would have the mainstream *letrada* narrative overpowered *fariana* feminism? Céspedes-Báez states that the *farianas*’ feminism has the power to become “a valid voice to counteract the hegemony of *letradas*’ feminism and force them to grapple with social and economic issues more seriously.” She poses a very interesting question about how and if the *letrada* narrative will adapt now that there is a competing feminist narrative in Colombia? What is especially interesting is Céspedes-Báez’s argument that *letradas* could use *fariana* feminism to re-work and re-create their agenda to fit into post-conflict Colombia.

Overall, the article presents an interesting look at feminism in Colombia and how it might develop post-peace agreement. It is exciting to think of how the *letrada* narrative might change given that it is now being confronted with a different form of feminism. It is especially interesting that this “new” feminism, *fariana* feminism, takes on completely different perspectives on the relationships between men and women. For example, women and men are co-combatant in the *fariana* narrative, not victims and predators, respectively. However, as stated by Céspedes-Báez, it is still too early to tell the extent the peace process will have on gender-based issues in Colombia, and how the *fariana* feminism might change the narrative of mainstream feminism in Colombia.