



Global Nonviolent Action Database

Published on *Global Nonviolent Action Database* (<https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu>)

Colombian women use sex strike to demand gangster disarmament (Huelga de Piernas Cruzadas), 2006

Time period notes: The exact dates are uncertain, but no sources indicated that the strike continued past September

September
2006

to: September
2006

Country: Colombia

Location City/State/Province: Pereira

Location Description: A small city in Western Colombia

Goals:

To disarm gangsters and encourage them to attend vocational training.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 048. Protest meetings

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 011. Records, radio, and television › radio stations played rap song conveying the demands of the strike
- 037. Singing › women release song explaining sex strike
- 057. Lysistratic nonaction › Sex strike

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 011. Records, radio, and television › radio stations played rap song conveying the demands of the strike
- 037. Singing
- 057. Lysistratic nonaction › Sex strike

Methods in 4th segment:

- 011. Records, radio, and television › radio stations played rap song conveying the demands of the strike
- 037. Singing › women release song explaining sex strike
- 057. Lysistratic nonaction › Sex strike

Methods in 5th segment:

- 011. Records, radio, and television › radio stations played rap song conveying the demands of the strike
- 037. Singing › women release song explaining sex strike
- 057. Lysistratic nonaction › Sex strike

Methods in 6th segment:

- 011. Records, radio, and television › radio stations played rap song conveying the demands of the strike
- 037. Singing › women release song explaining sex strike
- 057. Lysistratic nonaction › Sex strike

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Peace

Group characterization:

- the girlfriends and partners of gangsters
- young women

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Jennifer Bayer (a spokeswoman)

Partners:

Julio César Gómez, Secretary of Security in Pereira

External allies:

Not known

Involvement of social elites:

Not known

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- women from different neighborhoods

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length: *Approximately 5-6 days*

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Male gangsters (pandilleros and pistoleros), who were interested in both keeping their weapons and continuing sexual relations with the women

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not known

Campaigner violence:

None known

Repressive Violence:

None known; some people worried that men would become aggressive or violent due to the strike, but Jennifer Bayer, a spokeswoman, assured them, "They wouldn't do that to us."

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

3 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

1 point out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

I awarded the campaign a 3 in outcome because violence decreased dramatically in the years following the strike, but I could not find information about the percentage of gangsters who voluntarily turned in their weapons. The strike did not grow or spread to other cities, but there was good representation of women in Pereira from many neighborhoods.

In early September 2006, a group of Colombian women, the partners of local gangsters, declared a sex strike. Their demand was that gang members turn in their weapons to the municipal government and agree to begin a vocational training program. The strike began during a meeting in which twenty-five women from different neighborhoods came together to oppose the violence of their partners or spouses. Said Julio Cesar Gomez, the security official in the city of Pereira's local government, "this is about changing the cultural parameters: Some women thought that men wearing fatigues and holding guns looked more attractive, and most men are members of gangs not because of financial necessity but because killing is associated with power and sexual seduction." The striking women, partners of pandilleros and pistoleros (gangsters and gunmen) worked in collaboration with Gomez and the municipal government. Pereira was considered one of Colombia's most dangerous cities; in 2005, there were 488 homicides in the city, along with a per capita rate of 97 murders per 100,000 residents, twice the national average. Pereira is a small city, with only around 300,000 residents.

"We want them to know that violence is not sexy," said Jennifer Bayer, 18, the girlfriend of a gang member. She and at least two-dozen other women (some reports say up to 100 women participated) promised to continue the sex strike until their demands were met. They benefitted from much public support – one month earlier, on 18 August, 140,000 people had voted in favor of disarming the civilians – which also extended to air time on the radio.

On September 11, the women released a rap song that was widely played on radio stations all over the city, with the chorus, "Como mujer, mucho valemos / que no nos deslumbre, un hombre violento / porque con ellos, mucho perdemos. / Yo elijo cómo, dónde, cuándo me entrego. / Todas unidas lo lograremos / contra los violentos, las piernas cerremos. / Paro sexual, / paro sexual" ("as women, we have much worth / a violent man will not dazzle us / because with them, we all lose. / I will chose how, where, when I surrender. / All together, we will win / against the violent ones, with our legs crossed. / Stop sex work, / stop sex

work!"

While none of the news articles mention an end date for the strike, the results were very clear. The Guardian reports, by "2010 the city's murder rate saw the steepest decline in Colombia, down by 26.5%." Columnists attribute this rapid decline to the action of these women years earlier.

Research Notes

Influences:

(1) Like many sex strikes, this one was influenced by *Lysistrata*, the Aristophanes play in which Greek women refuse to have sex with their husbands in protest of the Peloponnesian war. (2) This strike influenced another sex strike in Colombia in 2011 (see Colombians use sex strike to get highway repaired (*Huelga de piernas cruzadas*), 2011).

Sources:

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A project of Swarthmore College, including Peace and Conflict Studies, the Peace Collection, and the Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility.

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Source URL (retrieved on 09/15/2019 - 12:05): <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/colombian-women-use-sex-strike-demand-gangster-disarmament-huelga-de-piernas-cruzadas-2006>

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[1] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/mainly-or-initiated-women>

[2] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/included-innovative-organizational-formscommunication-forms>