

Marc W. Chernick

by **Matthew Carnes, SJ**, and **Erick Langer**, Georgetown University

Dr. Marc Chernick passed away suddenly on April 18, 2018, in Cali, Colombia, while participating in a conference on the implementation of the Colombian peace accords. A scholar of peace processes, human rights, conflict resolution, and security issues, he was an expert on the Andes, and in particular, Colombia. Through his writing, teaching, and work with communities in Colombia, he formed a generation of thinkers and practitioners on peacebuilding.

Marc's commitment to the peace process in Colombia started in 1980. That year, just as the M-19 guerrilla group laid siege to the Embassy of the Dominican Republic in Bogotá, he arrived in the country to pursue his postgraduate studies. Over the ensuing decades, he went on to become a tireless champion of the peace process in Colombia, faithfully dedicating his energies to the negotiations as both scholar and contributor. Crowning that effort, one of his greatest delights was to see the peace accords signed and put into motion in 2017. He despaired at the failed plebiscite, but rejoiced when the Colombian Congress passed a revised measure. His long-standing resolve from the negotiations led him to believe that peace was, and is, indeed possible, and in 2017 he retired from Georgetown University to pursue that process full-time.

Marc was a true scholar-practitioner, balancing two vocations in a way that many aspire to achieve but rarely attain. He was an avid researcher and writer, especially as an analyst of the long road of peace negotiations in Colombia. He was an unabashed partisan for peace, and he took part in rallies and organized workshops to call for cease-fires, justice, and respect for human rights. He particularly loved teaching, savoring the opportunity to see others learn, grow, and find their own vocations. His students, as well as community leaders he worked

with on bringing peace to Colombia, can be found carrying out his legacies in that South American country and elsewhere.

At Georgetown University, he was a professor of the practice of conflict resolution and human rights in the Department of Government and the Walsh School of Foreign Service, and he was a constant champion of Latin American studies.

He started out as an adjunct professor at Georgetown in 1996, rising up to serve as director of the MA program in Latin American Studies from 2009 to 2013, and as director of the Center for Latin American Studies from 2013 to 2016. In 2016, he received Georgetown University's Gold Vicennial Medal for his 20 years of service, and in 2017 was recognized with emeritus status in his role as full professor of the practice of conflict resolution and human rights. Beyond Georgetown, he was also a professor at the Universidad de los Andes, and the founder and director of the Georgetown-Los Andes Program on Conflict Resolution and Human Rights at the Universidad de Los Andes, Bogotá. Marc held a PhD in Political Science from Columbia University.

In the words of his students, Marc encouraged his students "to suspect and dispute conventional narratives and the interests that undergird them," and to "treat political science as more than theory and as a subject matter involving real people." Many speak of how Marc's influence extended well beyond the classroom, and how they plan to honor his memory with the same passion and spirit he lived his life.

His publications include a book, *Acuerdo posible: Solución negociada al conflicto armado colombiano* (2008), and several articles and book collaborations, including "The FARC at the Negotiating Table" in *Colombia: Building Peace in a Time of War* (United States Institute of Peace,

2008); "The Defeat of Sendero Luminoso in Peru" and "The FARC-EP: From Liberal Guerrillas to Marxist Rebels to Post-Cold War Insurgents" in *Terror, Insurgency, and the State: Ending Protracted Conflicts* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); "Colombia: Does Injustice Cause Violence?" in *What Justice? Whose Justice? Fighting for Fairness in Latin America* (University of California Press, 2003); and "Negotiating Peace amid Multiple Forms of Violence: The Protracted Search for a Settlement to the Armed Conflicts in Colombia" in *Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America* (1999).

Marc is survived by the legions of students he mentored, colleagues he inspired across the hemisphere, and his loving family. A tribute to Marc can be read at the Georgetown Global Engagement webpage: <https://global.georgetown.edu/features/in-memory-of-dr-marc-chernick>. //

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