

Woodrow Wilson Center-*Washington Post* Fellowship for Latin American Journalists

Call for Applications

The Washington Post and the Woodrow Wilson Center are pleased to announce the continuation of their program in support of print and online investigative journalists from Latin American and Caribbean nations. This three-week fellowship is an immersive experience which affords participants the opportunity to experience *in situ* a world-class newsroom and the political culture of Washington while conducting research on an issue of local, national, or regional importance in Latin America and the Caribbean or in their relationship with the United States. This year, four journalists from the region will have this unique opportunity to conduct their research with the benefit of mentorship from top investigative and political reporters – and other information, resources, and expertise – from *The Washington Post* as they develop new sources of information and enter into direct contact with public and private institutions.

This year's fellowship builds upon the program's successes over the last three years. Since the program's inception, journalists from Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela have been awarded fellowships. Working from the newsroom of *The Washington Post*, the reporters have written articles that have been published by the journalists' domestic media as well as by *The Post* and the Wilson Center on their respective websites.

We are pleased to invite applications from Latin America and the Caribbean for the 2011 fellowship competition. The fellowship will extend from October 31, 2011 through November 18, 2011. The three-week fellowship includes travel and lodging, plus a weekly living-expense stipend. Fellows will be given a desk in the newsroom of *The Washington Post*; access to the newspaper's research and database resources, reporters, editors, and research staff; and the mentorship of a *Washington Post* reporter. The convening institutions will develop a small number of structured activities during the journalists' stay to give them exposure to newsworthy issues and key actors in the policy community. It is a requirement that the employer of the grantee keep him or her on payroll during the period of the fellowship.

A successful proposal will demonstrate originality and seek to break new ground on issues of local, national, or regional importance in Latin America and the Caribbean or in their relationship with the United States. Fellows are expected to produce completed works for publication in the fellow's media and in their native language. An example of a highly successful proposal can be found beginning on page three. The article resulting from this proposal, submitted by 2009 Fellow Diana Durán Núñez, was published in Spanish in [El Espectador](#), in English on [washingtonpost.com](#), and won the 2010 Inter American Press Association Inter-American Relations Award for Excellence in Journalism.

Requirements for applicants:

- Be employed by a print (daily and weekly newspapers and magazines) or online news media organization (no blogs) that regularly publishes news material and that is owned and operated independent of any government, industry, institution, association, or lobbying organization;
- Be a bona fide reporter. Freelance reporters are eligible provided that: a) they have a stable relationship with a news organization that meets the criteria established in the bullet above and b) their main source of earned income comes from their work in journalism;
- A minimum of 4 years of journalism experience; and
- A strong knowledge of the English language.

Applicants should submit:

- A single proposal not to exceed 800 words, in English, describing their project. The proposal should outline specific questions and/or topics for the article(s) to be researched during the fellowship;
- A résumé, in English;
- Not more than three samples of published work. Samples should be submitted in their original language and individually must not exceed 1,200 words;
- Two letters of recommendation, one of which must be from a current editor, to be submitted in the recommender's preferred language. Letters may be submitted electronically or by mail but must be sent directly by the recommender, not by the applicant. Electronic submissions should include the applicant's full name in the subject line;
- A cover sheet with applicant's full name, phone numbers, e-mail, and current position.

Complete applications only should be sent to: journalism@wilsoncenter.org in Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF format or by mail to the address below so that they arrive by **Friday, August 12, 2011**. We ask that all materials except letters of recommendation be sent as a single file in the following order: cover sheet, résumé, proposal, and work samples (no links). *Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.* A selection committee drawn from the convening institutions, along with two external experts, will select the most qualified applicants. A phone interview will be conducted in English with the finalists during the week of August 29, 2011. The four fellows selected will be announced by Friday, September 9, 2011.

Any questions may be directed to journalism@wilsoncenter.org.

Address for Applications:

WWC-Washington Post Journalism Fellowship
c/o Latin American Program
Woodrow Wilson Center
1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20004-3027

Telephone: 202-691-4030

journalism@wilsoncenter.org

Sample Proposal

Diana Durán Núñez, 2009

Theme: DRUG TRAFFICKING AND THE CONFLICT IN COLOMBIA

Lead for article: The US has been fighting drug trafficking for almost four decades; in the same period, the conflict in Colombia has been active. The backbone of this conflict, which had communist roots, is undoubtedly drug trafficking. Extradition, one of the first tools used by both governments to fight this illegal business, has become an obstacle in the search for the truth about this war which affects both countries.

Proposal

The communist battle of the 60s and the differences highlighted by the cold war left as its legacy in Colombia two guerilla groups: the FARC and the ELN. It is a fact that both groups, especially the FARC, have survived so far only because of drug trafficking. Illegal plantations, guarded or cultivated by these same guerrillas, began to appear, and through this lucrative industry their war machine grew stronger.

Later, during the 80s, the paramilitary groups appeared, not just as a response to the barbaric guerrillas, but as a project to promote drug trafficking, also by way of war. It is known, for example, that peasant self-defense groups in the mid-Magdalena region were supported by the infamous drug kingpins Pablo Escobar and Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha: the self-defense groups searching to defend themselves from the violence of the guerrillas, the druglords looking to protect their illegal business, also from the guerrillas.

From the resentment towards the huge power obtained by Pablo Escobar grew “Los Pepes” (Wanted by Pablo Escobar), a cartel lead by the brothers Fidel, Vicente and Carlos Castaño, active promoters of paramilitarianism in Colombia who also argued the legitimacy of their actions as a defense against guerrilla violence. Known henceforth as the AUC (United Self-defense groups of Colombia) they began demobilization talks with the government in 2003.

In reality, this peace process ended up a farce, as various drug traffickers such as Miguel Ángel and Victor Manuel Mejía Múnera (the latter killed in 2008), Carlos Mario Jiménez Naranjo and Juan Carlos Sierra posed as leaders of the AUC and laid down their arms. Despite this, the authorities kept track of their illegal activities, and in May 2008, along with twelve other paramilitary commanders, they were extradited to the United States.

The north of “Valle”, in the south west of Colombia, is another zone where this perverse alliance between drug trafficking and war can be observed. In this region, one of the country’s most powerful and bloodthirsty cartels was born: the “Cartel del Norte del Valle”, led by men such as Diego Montoya, Juan Carlos Ramírez Abadía, Víctor Patiño Fómeque and Luis Hernando Gómez Bustamante; all extradited to the United States. Some, such as Montoya, fed off the paramilitary machine, as much to maintain the marginalization of the guerrilla war as to strengthen their smuggling routes.

Since the ratification of the extradition treaty in 1997, a large number of Colombians have been sent to the US to pay for their crimes under that country’s justice system. The Uribe

administration alone speaks of 838 extraditions between 2002 and the present day. Kingpins as important as the brothers Miguel and Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela and Pastor Perafán, as well as those already mentioned, are part of this diverse group which unites the war against drug trafficking and the irregular Colombian war.

However, despite the effectiveness of extradition as a weapon against drug trafficking, it has also become a kind of obstacle in the search for the truth. Every one of the individuals mentioned – and many more who have also had to confront the American justice system – possess privileged information, as exceptional witnesses of this Colombian conflict.

It is with this issue in mind that I would like to take advantage of this fellowship. The United States is a country that, through drug trafficking issues, has been bound to the Colombian conflict for a long time. Being in Washington would give me the opportunity to explore public or declassified documents that exist on this theme.

Being in Washington would also allow me to discover information (still ignored in Colombia) gained from these druglords that could help to piece together the puzzle that is the war in Colombia. To speak with sources who have access to the judiciary system, such as magistrates and attorneys, who could have first hand information on some of these extradited persons, protagonists of our conflict, would also be a great opportunity.

Of course, this task would be impossible without the support of the staff at the Washington Post, who would be able to facilitate this work through bringing journalists into dialogue with the legal system whose employees could contribute valuable information, and who would be able to help us to gain access documents relevant to the proposed projects, which perhaps in our countries of origin would be almost impossible to obtain.