

# Colleen Alena O'Brien

---

Universität des Saarlandes  
Sprachwissenschaft und Sprachtechnologie  
Campus A2 2, Raum 2.18  
66123 Saarbrücken  
Germany

Email: [colleenalena@gmail.com](mailto:colleenalena@gmail.com)  
Website: [www.colleenalena.com](http://www.colleenalena.com)

## ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

---

<b>Universität des Saarlandes</b> Postdoctoral Researcher, Sprachwissenschaft und Sprachtechnologie	Dec 2022–Present
<b>Friedrich Schiller Universität Jena</b> Postdoctoral Fellow, Jena Center for Reconciliation Studies	Dec 2021–Dec 2022
<b>University of Miami</b> Lecturer, Department of Anthropology	Jan 2022–Dec 2022
<b>Friedrich-Alexander Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg</b> Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Romance Languages and Cultures	Aug 2020–Aug 2021
<b>Fulbright Program</b> Fulbright Fellow, Indonesia	Nov 2019–Apr 2020
<b>Freie Universität Berlin</b> Postdoctoral Fellow, Institute for Latin American Studies	Dec 2018–Aug 2019

## AFFILIATIONS

---

<b>University of Hawai'i at Mānoa</b> Adjunct Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics	Aug 2021–Present
<b>Universidad Libre, Bogotá</b> Visiting Researcher, Faculty of Law	Jan 2015–Dec 2017

## EDUCATION

---

<b>University of Hawai'i at Mānoa</b> Ph.D. in Linguistics	Dec 2018
M.A. in Linguistics	May 2013
<b>University of Miami</b> B.A. in Anthropology & Classics (Phi Beta Kappa)	May 2010

## FIELDS OF INTEREST

---

Language use and attitudes among speakers of Indigenous languages.  
Political discourse  
Ethnographic filmmaking as a tool for peacebuilding.  
Anthropological approaches to studying transitional justice.

## **MONOGRAPHS**

---

A grammatical description of Kamsá, a language isolate of Colombia (2018). PhD Dissertation. University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. PhD advisor: Lyle Campbell.

## **PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES**

---

“Why join an armed group? Guerrillas’ narratives of recruitment in Colombia.” Forthcoming. *Conflict and Society*. Manuscript under revision, accepted pending revision.

Imagining collective reincorporation: The FARC and DDR in Colombia. *International Journal of Transitional Justice*. Forthcoming.

A typological sketch of Kamsá, a language isolate of Colombia (2021). *Forma y Función*. Vol 34; no 2.

Assessing Cost-effectiveness in Reintegrating Ex-combatants in Colombia (2021). *Research in Economic Anthropology*, Vol. 41.

## **BOOK CHAPTERS**

---

Ethnographic filmmaking for understanding peacebuilding: A multi-sited and multi-modal approach. Forthcoming. In *Experiments in Worldly Ethnography*. Edited by Melissa Nolas, Christos Varvantakis, and Rachael Stryker. Routledge.

Exploring the uses of multilingual dictionaries among the Safaleba in Ghana and the Gorontalo in Indonesia (2023). With Ari Sherris. In *Teaching and learning Resources for endangered languages*. Edited by R. Valijarvi and L. Kahn. Brill.

Conversations about violence during fieldwork (2023). In *The Entanglements of Ethnographic Fieldwork in a Violent World*. Edited by Linda Green, Erella Grassiani, and Nerina Weiss. Routledge.

Narratives on Indigenous victimhood: Challenges of Indigenous data sovereignty in Colombia’s transitional setting. With Gustavo Rojas-Páez (2020). In *Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Policy*. Edited by Maggie Walter, et al. Routledge.

The challenges of Kamsá language revitalization in Colombia (2019). In *Rejecting marginalized status: Educational projects and curricula pushing back against language endangerment*. Edited by Ari Sherris and Susan Penfield. Multilingual Matters.

## **ARTICLES UNDER REVIEW**

---

“We did not feel defeated: Imaginaries of ex-guerrillas in postaccord Colombia.” Manuscript under revision.

“Language Contact at the Andean-Amazonian Crossroads: Phonological and Lexical Borrowing.” With Erin Hannahan and Felipe Sandoval. Manuscript under review.

“Peace cannot cost us our lives: Narratives of security and discourse surrounding violence.” Manuscript under review.

“Formulating questions: Lessons from ethnographic filmmaking.” Manuscript under review.

## **MANUSCRIPTS IN PREPARATION**

---

Between noun class and classifier: Kamsá. With Leidy Sandoval, manuscript currently in preparation.

Exploring the asymmetries of symmetrical voice: Gorontalo as a transitional language. With Ibu Novi Usu, manuscript currently in preparation, paper presented as SEALS.

Language contact in Kamsá. With Erin Hannahan and Felipe Sandoval Correa, manuscript currently in preparation, paper presented at SLE conference.

Analyzing political discourse of rebels: collective identity and the us-them dichotomy, manuscript currently in preparation.

Gorontalo language and identity. With Sri Dewi Jayanti Biahimo, manuscript currently in preparation.

Conflict temporalities within Colombia’s transitional justice scenario: Indigenous agency in Cauca. With Gustavo Rojas-Páez, manuscript currently in preparation.

Local ghosts: contradictions between Indigenous “heathen” traditions and modern religion.

Ethnographic filmmaking for reconciliation research and peacebuilding.

## **OTHER PUBLICATIONS**

---

Color salience, color term evolution, and the issue of relatedness. With Caleb Everett (2020). In *The Evolution of Language: Proceedings of the 13th International Conference (Evolang13)*. Edited by Andrea Ravignani, et al. Nijmegen: The Evolution of Language Conferences.

The case of og: Focusing arguments in Western Subanon (2016). 20th Annual LLL Graduate Student Conference Proceedings University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.

Are Philippine languages ergative? Evidence from Western Subanon (2016). Working Papers in Linguistics. University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.

## **CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

---

Voice alternations in Gorontalo (2023). Paper presented at APLL (Austronesian and Papuan Languages and Linguistics Conference), Olomouc, Czechia.

Indigenous language activism and social justice in Colombia (2023). With Gustavo Rojas Páez. Paper presented at AMAZONICAS IX. Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá, Colombia, June 5-9, 2023

Language contact in Kamsá (2022). With Felipe Sandoval Correa. Paper presented at SLE conference. Bucharest. 24-27 August 2023.

Exploring the asymmetries of symmetrical voice: The case of Gorontalo. With Novi Usu (2022). Paper presented at Meeting of Southeast Asian Linguistics Society. Honolulu, Hawai'i.

Gorontalo and Safaliba languages and literacies: Indigenous meaning making and practice. With Ari Sherris (2022). American Association for Applied Linguistics Annual Conference, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Conflict temporalities and Indigenous victimhood narratives within Colombia's transition justice scenario. With Gustavo Rojas-Páez (2020). Zentrumstage2020: (Re)thinking Time and Temporalities in Peace and Conflict. University of Marburg. 29–31 October 2020.

Exploring the uses of multilingual dictionaries among the Safaliba in Ghana and the Gorontalo in Indonesia. With Ari Sherris (2020). Paper presented at Annual Conference of Foundation for Endangered Languages. 23–25 September 2020.

Voice systems of Western Austronesian languages: Emerging evidence from Indonesia (2020). Paper presented at Conference for Indonesian Languages and Linguistics. Atma Jaya University, Jakarta, Indonesia. 16–18 February 2020.

Language endangerment and revitalization in Colombia: New political challenges (2019). Paper presented at The Ninth Cambridge Conference on Language Endangerment. University of Cambridge. 02 July 2019.

Transformation of the ETCRs: (Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación) in Colombia and the implications for peace (2019). Paper presented at Colombian Days. Jena, Germany. 27–28 May 2019.

Between noun class and classifier: The case of Kamsá (2019). Paper presented at Noun Categorization: From Grammar to Communicative Interaction. Lyon, France. 18–19 April 2019.

In search of practical peacebuilding strategies for a changing Colombia (2019). Paper presented at the Society for Applied Anthropology meeting. Portland, OR, USA. 19–23 March 2019.

Retos de reintegración de las FARC: una perspectiva del cine etnográfico (2018). Paper presented at Entendiendo a los grupos excombatientes: Metodologías alternativas para la investigación del conflicto armado colombiano. Workshop held at: Lateinamerikanisches Institut FU Berlin. 19 December 2018.

Speaker perceptions of language change: Contact and endangerment of Camsá (2017). Paper presented at the Seventh Cambridge Conference on Language Endangerment. University of Cambridge. 04 July 2017.

The mysterious case of =em: Grammaticalization of a serial verb construction in Fataluku. With Yuko Otsuka (2017). Paper presented at APLL 9 (Austronesian and Papuan Languages and Linguistics Conference). Paris, France. 21–23 June 2017.

No to peace: Contextualizing the Colombian conflict (2017). Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology. Santa Fe, NM, USA. March 2017.

Creating relevant curricula for endangered languages in Colombia (2016). Paper presented at the Sixth Cambridge Conference on Language Endangerment. University of Cambridge. July 6, 2016

At the crossroads of language death: Displacement, language loss, and identity in Colombia (2016). Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology, Vancouver, BC, Canada. March 2016.

What we say and what we mean: Technical and aesthetic considerations of street slang. With Bryan Page (2015). Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology. Pittsburgh, PA, USA. March 2015.

Constructing the existential construction: L2ers and bilinguals in English (2014). Paper presented at the annual meeting of GURT (Georgetown University Roundtable). Washington, DC, USA. March 2014.

## **INVITED TALKS**

---

Invited plenary speaker. International Peace Research Association conference. “Reconciliation and ethnographic filmmaking.” Trinidad. May 17-21, 2023.

Invited speaker for talk accompanying film screening at Laboratoire d'ethnologie et de sociologie comparative, Paris. Title of talk: “The impact of civil war on Indigenous communities and their languages in Colombia.” Film: *Strangers to Peace*. Paris Nanterre University. September 30, 2022.

Invited speaker for Fulbright Panel Discussion “Indigenous Languages: Endangerment and Documentation” hosted by AMINEF and Centre for Endangered Languages Documentation (CELD), Faculty of Literature and Culture, Universitas Papua in Manokwari, West Papua. February 21, 2020

Special guest for Research Dialogue “Reconciliation and Memory: Transnational, Academic and Artistic Inquiries”. Biblioteca Museo Carlos Lleras Restrepo, Bogotá. February 28, 2019.

Invited talks accompanying film screening of *Strangers to Peace* at the following universities: Universidad de los Andes, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, ETH Zurich, University of Bayreuth, University of Leipzig, and University of Jena.

From FARC to FARC: Discourse of transformation in Colombia’s political environment. Poster presented at the American Anthropological Association. Washington, DC, USA. November 30, 2017.

## **SCHOLARSHIPS, GRANTS, AND AWARDS**

---

CAORC-NEH Senior Research Fellowship. August 2021–July 2022.

Firebird Foundation. “Documentation of traditional ecological knowledge and oral history of the Gorontalo people of Sulawesi”, November 2019–July 2020.

Milt Lauenstein Research Initiative on Cost-Effectiveness and Peacebuilding, 2018.

International Peace Research Association Foundation. “Strangers to Peace: Investigating the Reintegration of FARC Combatants through Ethnographic Filmmaking”, 2018.

Bilinski Dissertation Fellowship, August–December, 2018.

American Association of University Women Fellowship, “A grammatical description of Kamsá, a language isolate of Colombia”, August 2017– July 2018.

Foundation for Endangered Languages Grant, 2017.

Bilinski Dissertation Fellowship, January 2017.

Lewis and Clark Exploration Grant, 2016.

University of Hawai‘i Graduate Student Organization Grant, 2016.

Bilinski Research Award, 2014.

Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS) grant for studying the Miskitu language, 2013.

Gilman International Scholarship, 2009.

## **TEACHING**

---

Typology of the World’s Languages: Morphosyntax  
Universität des Saarlandes. April 2023–July 2023.

Anthropology 230: Sounds of the World’s Languages.  
University of Miami. January 2022–May 2022.

Anthropology 204: Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology.  
University of Miami. January 2022–Dec 2022.

Languages and Cultures of the Andes  
Friedrich Alexander Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg. October 2020–April 2021.

Linguistics 102: An Introduction to the Study of Language  
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. January 2016–May 2016.

Classics 123: Greek and Latin Elements of English  
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. January 2013–May 2013.

Classics 122: Greek and Roman Mythology (Teaching Assistant)  
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. August 2011–May, 2014; August 2015–May 2016.

English as a Second Language & SAT (Tutor)  
Elite School, Honolulu, Hawai‘i. August 2011–May 2015.

English as a Second Language (Teacher)  
Inlingua Language School, Miami, Florida. May 2010–August 2011.

## **MA STUDENT SUPERVISION**

---

Thesis: Peace, politics, and mass media in Colombia. Friedrich-Alexander Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg.

## **FILMMAKING**

---

Producer, *Strangers to Peace*. Feature-length documentary. Logline: In Colombia, after fifty-two years of civil war, three guerrilla soldiers attempt to return to a society that views them as terrorists. Premiered at Miami Film Festival, March 2022. Shown at 18 film festivals worldwide. Available on streaming platforms including YouTube, Amazon, iTunes, Apple TV, Google Play, and VUDU. Website: [www.strangerstopeace.com](http://www.strangerstopeace.com).

Received the following awards:

One World Festival (Prague):	Václav Havel Jury Award
Miami Film Festival:	Documentary Achievement Award Runner-Up
New York Latino Film Festival:	NYWIFT Award for Excellence in Documentary Directing
Sherman Oaks Film Festival:	Grand Jury Award for Best Documentary

## **PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**

---

Chair of organizing committee (with Davide Tacchini): International Association of Reconciliation Studies annual conference (2024). Assisi, Italy.

Chair of organizing committee (with Maximillian Schell): International Association of Reconciliation Studies annual conference (2023). Kibuye, Rwanda.

Organizer: “Colombia Day” at Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena (2023). Germany.

Founding & current editor (with Davide Tacchini): *Journal of Reconciliation Studies* (2023)

Reviewer: *International Journal of Transitional Justice* (2021, 2022)

Reviewer: *Diálogos de Saberes* (2021)

Organizing committee member: International Conference for Language Documentation and Conservation (2012–2013). Honolulu, Hawai‘i.

## **LANGUAGES**

---

English: Native

Spanish: Fluent

Classical Greek and Latin: Reading

Indonesian: Conversational

Languages studied: Czech, Kamsá, Miskitu, Subanon, Fataluku, Gorontalo

## **REFERENCES**

---

Lyle Campbell

Dept of Linguistics, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa  
569 Moore Hall, 1890 East-West Road  
Honolulu, HI 96822  
Phone: +1-808-956-8602  
Email: lylecamp@hawaii.edu

Robert Littman  
Department of Classics, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa  
491 Moore Hall, 1890 East-West Rd  
Honolulu, HI 96822  
Phone: +1-808-956-4173  
Email: littman@hawaii.edu

Caleb Everett  
Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs  
Ashe Building Room 227  
1252 Memorial Drive  
Coral Gables, FL 33146  
Phone: +1-305-284-2535  
Email: caleb@miami.edu

William O’Grady  
Department of Linguistics, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa  
569 Moore Hall, 1890 East-West Road  
Honolulu, HI 96822  
Phone: +1-808-956-3228  
Email: ogrady@hawaii.edu