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THE BULLETPEN

ABSTRACT

For more than 50 years Colombia has been immersed in an endless war. In 2016, a peace treaty between FARC guerrilla and the government was underway. In the middle of the political debate, we needed the media, and the world to be on our side and start talking about the good things that would come with the peace. This challenge led to the creative outcome of McCann Colombia, the case “Bulletpen”.

KEYWORDS

Bulletpen; McCann; education; peace

OBJECTIVES

Peace is the starting point to a developed and more educated society. But sometimes people just see peace as the absence of conflict. Clearing the road for a durable future, a real peace agreement requires much more than the good intentions of the sides in conflict. It requires creating traction and a fertile environment, which is where our idea came into play. Shifting a very political conversation that was limited to if the treaty was right or wrong for the country to a conversation around what education we could accomplish in a country in peace.

It was pivotal to have Colombians take a glance at what peace could achieve in order to have some type of tolerance towards a very complicated, long and political process. The only way we could do this was by making them not look at all the pain and sorrow of the last 50 years, but look forward and have a glimpse of hope.

THE STRATEGY BEHIND IT

For the first time in more than five decades, the Education budget was larger than the Military one. Therefore, it was the perfect excuse to create a unique symbol to show the country, the media, and the world that what we had in front of us was a once in a lifetime opportunity to transform the country, to evolve and to advance as a society. However transformation is not easy to show, especially if we face a 50-year-old conflict that has shown us only one way of living. We had to bring transformation to the table, make it possible, make it real, put transformation in the hands of people that could actually change things, places, communities and the future.

So we decided to transform elements of war into an education tool: real bullets, fired in war, were turned into pens that could be used by journalists, writers and influencers to rewrite a history of war and violence into a history of education and progress.

CREATIVE WORK

Bullet casks were transformed into pens (Figure 1), and given by the Ministry of Education, as a by direct mail, to 500 journalists, writers and influencers. Not only in Colombia but also through the region and the world.



Figure 1: The Bulletpen
Source: McCann Colombia

THE BULLETPEN EFFECT

After the media adopted The Bulletpen as the most important symbol of the transformation of Colombia, the President took notice. During his tour around the world seeking political and economic support, The Bulletpen was his tool in every meeting with heads of state and religious leaders like Pope Francis, President Francois Hollande and Prime Minister Theresa May amongst others. The Bulletpen was more than a symbol at these meetings. It was a glimpse into the future of a country that, with the right support, could achieve a great change not just for the country itself, but for the continent and for the world. The President of Colombia was photographed giving The Bulletpen to every important leader around the world and this was shared on every media outlet around the globe as a symbol of a country with purpose and the drive to make it real.

When the final negotiations ended, the President wanted to show the world that their support had been crucial in ending the most long-standing civil war of the continent. That is why he demanded that the final peace agreement, the one that he took over to the UN, was signed live and broadcasted around the world with The Bulletpen (Figures 2, 3 and 4). After a referendum some adjustments had to be made on the document so a second signing ceremony was needed in the Colon Theater in Bogota, Colombia and again, the president demanded that the second agreement should be signed with The Bulletpen.



Figure 2: The President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, offers the Bulletpen to veteran FARC leader and Commander, Timoléon Jiménez (Timochenko)
Source: McCann Colombia



Figure 3: The Peace Treaty signed with the Bulletpen
Source: McCann Colombia

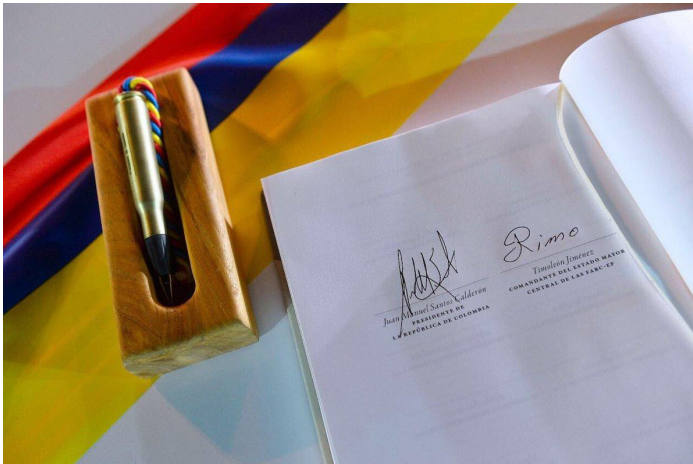


Figure 4: The Peace Treaty signed with the Bulletpen
Source: McCann Colombia

OTHER FACTORS THAT HELPED THE BULLETPEN EFFECT IN COLOMBIA

After more than 50 years of war in Colombia, getting to a peace agreement was not an easy task, but not only because of the very polarized postures of the government and the guerrilla, the political climate in the country was very polarized as well. The trail of pain and harm that the guerrilla had left behind after 50 years is very hard to cope with. The government was completely aware of that fact and needed complete support from the international community, but not just a pat on the back support, hard money

support in most cases and spiritual support as well. But as we all know getting hard money from developed countries is not an easy task, a lot of diplomacy and commitment is required and the Colombian government did their research on that front. However, final meetings were needed to transform very good-hearted intentions into tangible support. The Bulletpen played an important part in these high-level meetings. It was not only a symbol of what the President was aiming to achieve, it was the symbol of what the resources were going to be put towards: education. The words engraved in The Bulletpen showed a hard commitment: “bullets marked our past, education will write our future”. Over 100 million dollars were collected over this peace tour from countries like France, England and the US to support the on going peace process in Colombia. In 2016 there were about 450 Colombian soldiers in military hospitals injured as a result of the war, some of them deadly injured. One year later, March 2017, the number of injured soldiers in military hospitals was zero. A number we aim to preserve. Zero is not a very coveted number in an effectiveness case, but in this case we are very proud of it.

HOW DID THE BULLETPEN WORK FOR THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION?

The Bulletpen caught the attention of global media (Figures 5, 6 and 7) and this gave more visibility to the peace process, focusing the conversation and the arguments on what the peace could bring to the country and to the world through education.

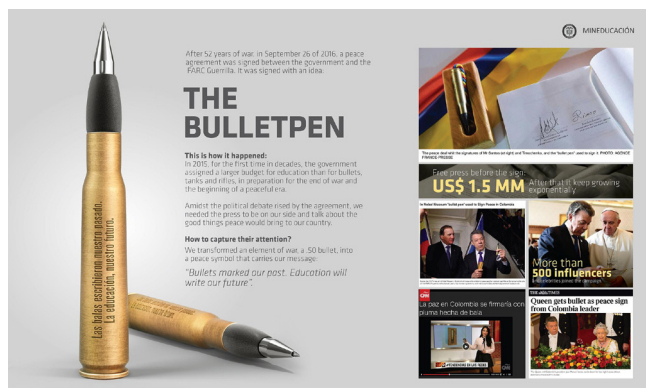


Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

Figures 5, 6 and 7: The Bulletpen got the attention of the world.
Screenshots of the Colombian Ministry of Education webpage
Source: McCann Colombia

In Nobel Museum 'bullet pen' used to Sign Peace in Colombia



Bogota, Dec 12 (Prensa Latina) Nobel Museum in Stockholm will treasure the emblem of peace used by president Juan Manuel Santos during the talks with the FARC-EP guerrilla and the ballpen used to sign the main agreements, confirmed today the Casa de Nariño (government headquarters).

Figure 8: The Bulletpen is now part of the Nobel Museum, as a symbol of peace.
Source: McCann Colombia

The Bulletpen was the symbol of compromise that was given to world leaders in exchange for their economical or political support. The Bulletpen gained more than 1.5 million \$US dollars in free press through the whole process. It became the symbol that the President of Colombia used to show

the world the direction that the country was heading. President Santos was asked by the Nobel committee to think of something that could stay in the Nobel Museum after he received the Nobel Peace Prize. He chose The Bulletpen. From now on The Bulletpen will remain a permanent resident of the Nobel Museum as one of the biggest supporters and advocates of the historic peace process in Colombia (Figure 8). After a very complicated process there are a lot of things still to be done so we can preserve peace in a country with huge social inequalities, but the first stone was crucial. Now people are more willing to see how this peace process evolves, and the best part is that it is going forward without the sound of rifles firing.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AN IDEA

When the peace process started the conversation was only between war and peace, only about how long-time guerrilla leaders will stand justice and trials, about if we as Colombians should forgive and forget. About a very wounded country that was debating with itself how to cope with so much damage done over the last half century. Creativity was able to turn the conversation around to make people focus on what matters, to bring people together at least on one common point: what can peace bring to the country. Creativity had the power to overcome a tough referendum and make people think in a different way. There is a common saying: “if you only see nails you think like a hammer”. So instead of nails we made people see the future through education: creativity to bring people together. Today, reminding ourselves that there is not one single soldier injured in our military hospitals, coming from an average of around 450 per month in 2016, we believe that the role we played in this very large orchestra was worth it.

Citación:

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