

Human Rights Groups Protest Colombia Exhibit at Union Station

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WASHINGTON - People who live and work in D.C. might have noticed large heart statues popping up around the city. They're meant to promote tourism in the South American country of Colombia -- but some people say they're not promoting the truth.

There's nothing unusual about a protest in Washington but there's now one that's directed at an exhibit involving 47 hearts that have been erected around the city. The seven largest are on display inside Union Station.

The heart statues showcase the diversity of Colombia. The campaign is designed to change hearts and minds and to show that Colombia should no longer be defined as violent and drug infested.

The exhibit, which is funded partially by the Colombian government, features the positive aspects of the nation -- with the hope of increasing investment and tourism to the area.

"[They're there] to tell the world that Colombia has more to offer. [It shows] that we have music, that we have tons of people, that we have diversity, that we have theaters, that we have culture..." said Maria Lacouture, the exhibit director.

Protesters ABC 7 News spoke with Tuesday said the exhibit is not inaccurate -- but it's incomplete. They say it's disingenuous to portray Colombia as a peaceful land.

"The groups I work with, we've been organizing people to visit Colombia to look into situations of injustice -- violation of basic human rights which has not been adequately addressed by the government of the United States in its policies," said Charlie Roberts of the Colombia Human Rights Committee.

The exhibit ends in D.C. Sept. 15 and then moves on to New York City.