

**NARRATING EDUCATION OF NEW INDIGENOUS/LATINO
TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITIES IN THE SOUTH:
MIGRATION, LIFE, AND ITS EFFECTS ON SCHOOLING**

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty
of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the School of Education

Chapel Hill
2006

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ABSTRACT

Margarita Machado-Casas. Narrating Education of New Indigenous/Latino Transnational Communities in the South: Migration, Life, and its Effects on Schooling
(Under the direction of George W. Noblit)

Over the past 20 years the United States has experienced an influx of newly arriving immigrants. Furthermore, pre-emerging gatewayⁱ states like North Carolina have seen Latino population growth in excess of 200% in metropolitan areas such as Charlotte and Raleigh-Durham. In fact, North Carolina has the fastest growing Latino population in the entire country.

This study uses personal narratives to explore immigration patterns to North Carolina and the migration experience of Indigenous/Latino families, as well as, how immigrant communities are affected and produced by border crossings. In addition, this study also examines the effects of both migration patterns and experiences on schooling in North Carolina. The study follows a narration trajectory from participants' life experiences in countries of origin, during migration, as newly arrived immigrants, and life as an immigrant in North Carolina. Ethnographic methods such as personal narratives were used to collect detailed information about participants and their lives. The three largest and fastest growing immigrant populations found in this study were from Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador.

ⁱ Pre-emerging gateways-are places that "had very small immigrant populations in the 1980 but experienced sudden very rapid growth in the 1990s." (p. 7)

All study participants had diverse language and cultural experiences representing over 17 Indigenous languages (other than Spanish) and five Indigenous groups. Further, study findings illustrate obstacles experienced by participants and their children (many who are U.S. born citizens) within schools. Lastly, the findings explore the birth of new transnational Indigenous/Latino communities of the South and considerations for the future of schooling in North Carolina and the American South.

DEDICATION

Este ha sido un proceso de crecimiento increíble, el cual me ha hecho apreciar a los que me rodean más que nunca. Por lo tanto me gustaría dedicarles esta tesis doctoral primero a mis padres José Machado Dávila, Y Lina Machado Bacon los cuales me han apoyado siempre. A mi padre por tomar la iniciativa de migrar no solo una vez pero dos veces. Ahora ya de grande me doy cuenta de lo difícil que tuvo que haber sido comenzar una vida nueva en un país extraño. A mi madre por su apoyo en la casa, y por ser tan fuerte. Por darnos valor cuando cruzábamos la frontera. Yo se que tu estabas mas preocupada que los tres de nosotros, pero pudiste darnos la fuerza y seguridad que tanto necesitábamos en ese instante. Mamá, tu nos has mantenido juntos. Además, gracias a mi padre y a mi madre por ser segundos padres para mi hija. Por su apoyo con el cuidado de Natassia es que yo estoy aquí. Ustedes han creído en mi desde le comienzo y han sido el mejor ejemplo de fuerza y amor que he tenido en mi vida. Ustedes han sido el viento que empuja mis alas. Gracias a ustedes, hoy en día soy quien soy, por las decisiones tan difíciles que tuvieron que tomar. Estaré eternamente agradecida.

A los dos grandes amores de mi vida Lauro y Natassia. A Lauro por ser el mejor marido del mundo. Por quererme incondicionalmente y por aguantarme todos estos años. Yo se que este ha sido un difícil para ti, ya que muchas veces te has tenido que quedar solo con la niña. Has tenido que ser madre y padre muchas veces y lo has hecho sin reproches y siempre apoyándome. Estaré eternamente agradecida a Dios porque te puso en mi camino. También

debo admitir que esta también es tu tesis ya que tú eres la persona que me ha ayudado más que nadie en este proceso, tú has revisado la tesis, ayudado a transcribir, me has cuidado y te lo agradezco. Lauro esto es tan mió como tuyo. Te amo, y un millón de gracias! A mi niña Natassia mi chuki, chiki. Tú eres los mejor que tengo en la vida. Por su cariño, apoyo, sonrisa, y entendimiento durante todos estos anos. Natassia, I hope you understand and know that mommy is doing this so that you can have a better future. And so that you can use the institutionalized priviledge given by you by being born in this country to help others who do not have the same opportunities. You are the sunshine that brightens my day, the music that makes my spirit rejoice, you gave meaning to my life and I love you! Ustedes me han llenado mi vida de alegría, amor, y esperanza. Los amo a los dos. . To my siblings Elias and Grace. Thank you for your being there for me. For your help, and for putting up with me for all these years. I love you both.

A mis abuelos por todos sus consejos, sus pláticas, y sus anécdotas. A Papá Antonio el cual siempre ha estado conmigo en espíritu. A Mamá Pilun, gracias por ser siempre tan fuerte, y por darme todos sus consejos y más que todos por vivir con su ejemplo. Usted es el tronco de la familia Machado. Papá Charlie you are the best grandfather anyone could hope for. Your love for your family has taught me a huge lesson. FAMILY COMES FIRST. As you told me one day...At the end of the day, life is about family. Para abuela Margarita, gracias por todos sus consejos, apoyo, y empuje. La amo. To my cousin (sister) Mildred, the sisterhood we have shared all these years I know will be there for ever. I love you very much. To tio Marlon, while growing up you really made my growing up years fun and filled with adventures. You have been a very important person in my life and I thank God for that. I love you! To both Mildred and tío Marlon, I know we will always will be “Los tres chiflados”, we

have a strong bond that will always hold us together. To my uncle Hugo and tía Aida, you two are wonderful examples of love of family. Thank you for always making your home our home. To tío Juan Carlos and tía Connie, you both are so much fun. Thank you for welcoming me to your home in Panama. I learned so much from you both. I love you both dearly! Para tío Harold y tía Isabel, a los dos los admiro mucho, gracias por todo lo que hacen en nuestra ausencia y gracias por sus consejos. Los quiero mucho. A mi tía Pepa, lo quiero mucho por su fuerza interna y externa. Gracias por todo lo que hace por todos nosotros. La quiero mucho. A tío Iván, gracias por ser tan bondadoso, con usted yo pude aprender a ser mejor persona y a no juzgar. Lo quiero mucho tío. Usted ha hecho una impresión tan grande en mí. To tío Payo and tia Karen, you are both so much fun and loving to me. Thank you for making me feel at home everytime. I love you both. To Shaira, Karen, and Payito, I love you three very much. To Yaoska, and Carlos Alberto, I'm proud that you both have accomplished so much and I know you will accomplish much more. Love you! To tío Nestor and tía Ivania, gracias por su apoyo. Especialmente a mi tía Ivania que siempre nos mantiene alegre.

To my family in Nicaragua who I love very much especially my cousins Tony (my brother), Jorge, Julio, Niria, and Jose (my brother) I love and miss you all very much. Aunque la distancia nos separe ustedes están siempre conmigo. To the rest of the family Machado and Bacon who is in Nicaragua. I love you dearly.

Para mi familia en Panamá, Jenny, Wendy, Carin, tía Marlene, Anayansi, Tamara, Susette, Angie, Aitza, y en honor a mi tía Ismenia que acaba de fallecer y a mi tío Titi, abuela Chonga, tío Carlos y todos los que ya no están físicamente con nosotros. Los amo todos.

Panamá fueron los mejores años de mi niñez y fue un honor poder haberlos compartido con ustedes. También al resto de la familia Panameña que quiero tanto. Los amo.

A mis primos, Lina, Corin, Haroldito, Rosalie, Hugo, Gene, Leanne, Raisa, Nestercito, Jenny, Sibil, Kian, Farima, Mike, and Alvinsito. I love all of you; you have made my life fun! You are the future of our family; it is your responsibility to transcend us. To my good friend Sujein, you know I love you dearly. To my friends Sara and Toni, you both are wonderful and I love you. And to the rest of the family that I did not mention I love you so very much, family has shaped my life and without family I could not live. Que viva nuestra familia!

To George Noblit, I love you. You have been an inspiration to me, and you have been the biggest example of caring, love, and unselfishness. I love you so much. You are a huge part of my life and I will always be thankful for all that you do. To Enrique Murillo, thank you for believing in me, you saw my desire and you helped me achieve it. I will be for ever thankful. To Barbara Flores, you have been wonderful to me and you have helped me grow so much. I love you! To Dwight, thank you for helping so much. Your compassion has been one of the most amazing lesson I have learned while at Chapel Hill. To Mary Stone Handley, you are so strong and I love to be around you. I love your soul and spirituality. Thank you Mary. To my compadre Luis and his wife Rosa, y los niños, los quiero mucho. To Monica Garcia, I love you so much. Gracias por tu amistad. To Donna Coleman, and June O'connor, thank you for being such great teachers. To Dina Castro, gracias por su amistad, y por todo lo que me ha enseñado y por lo que me falta de aprender. To all my students and coworkers in Banning, California. You amazing teachers!

Finalmente a mi gente inmigrante que lucha por salir adelante. Sin ellos no hubiera podido hacer esta tesis. Especialmente le agradezco a Alicia, Marcos, Carlos, Alma, y Virginia. Gracias por ser tan maravillosos. Los quiero mucho. A mi raza de inmigrantes. Adelante mi gente que este país no es nada sin nosotros. ¡Esto es en su honor! ¡Si se puede mi gente!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During this process, I have had the pleasure of having met wonderful individuals that have been key in my life. I would like to first acknowledge Dr. George Noblit, Enrique Murillo, Barbara Flores, Dwight Roges, and Mary Stone Handley for all their support and for providing me with guidance. I'm honored that you all agreed to serve as my committee members as my coyotes during this process. I would also like to acknowledge the Research Triangle Schools Partnership for providing me with funding for my research during these past three years. Moreover, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of my sisters, my mujeres who have been a key component, a vital necessity in my personal and academic growth. I would like to specially thank Silvia Bettez—you and I had a rough time the first year as we were the ONLY two Latinas in our cohort. I thank you for all your support that year, you are a kind hermana and I love you for that! I would also like to acknowledge and thank Kristal Moore for ALL of your help during this process for helping me put my defense DVD together, for proofreading my dissertation, for helping me with my poster presentation, and for being who you are. Kris, you are an amazing human being who will achieve

greatness in all that you do. Thank you my sister! Keren Zuniga for taking me on our many shopping escapes, for your friendship, your kindness, and for being my professional partner—I say we make a FABULOUS TEAM! To my sister, Monica Garcia for all that you do for me. I love you dearly. To Daniella Cook, for all those conversations, and coffee drinks you are one of a kind! Daniella and Howard thank you for all those long conversations and for your support. To Michelle Jay, Rita Joyner (Sista Soul), Janet Lopez, Elizabeth Powers, and Monifa Green, for all your support, for our walks, talks, conversations, and drinks we shared. I love you, and I'm honored that our paths crossed. A special thanks to Pan Riggs for all of your help during the process. You have been wonderful!

To Alica, Marcos, Alma, Carlos, Wendy Pineda, Dani Martinez-Moore, Rosemarie Gulla and all others who were essential for this study. I thank you for your commitment and love. Lastly, this is to all immigrants from all over the world who live under the shadows of illegality and who transcend barriers daily. This is for you!

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A Conversation among Latino Parents

A: Yes, I think it's important to know our rights as parents. We need to learn for our children.

B: You are right! Half the time we don't even know what we are doing or what we are signing.

C: The other day I got a note home in English. I did not know what it said. My 7-year-old told me I had to sign it. I said, "Yeah, I need to know what it says." I called the school and they could not help me. Two days later, I got another letter, with a highlighted space for my signature. So, I called the school again and they kept saying, "I don't speak Spanish...Look for English please." I understood that much. After all, I did take one initial English class. So I did not sign it! About two weeks later I went to pick up my son after school and he was sitting on the curb by himself. He said that everyone had gone on a field trip and he did not have permission so he had to stay behind in the principal's office all day. They said they called me but I did not hear the phone and I had been

home all day. I was so mad, humiliated, and sad for my baby who did not get to go on the field trip with his class.

D: That's nothing, the day I went to sign my child up, they gave me all these papers, which I did not understand. They had a white lady who spoke a bit of Spanish. She asked where I was from and I said Mexico. She asked if I was married, and I said, "No." She asked if I had papers and I said, "No." She asked for a social security number and I don't have one. She asked for my child's social security number. I have two daughters. My daughter who was born here had one, my other daughter did not have one. She told me that only my citizen daughter could attend school. The other one had no rights here. She said, "You expect us to pay for your mistake."

A: That must be that lady down at registration. The one person in the whole office who knows a little bit of Spanish. She is so racist! When I went there, she made fun of me when I

said I had only studied to second grade. She said "Con Razon" (*No wonder*). I told her I did not want to talk to her and she said, then you help yourself! I had no choice but to sit there and put up with the humiliation. That's why I'm here to learn my rights!

B: Something like that happened to me, but with my daughter's teacher. She sent grades home in English with a note in Spanish saying that my daughter was going to repeat the year. The whole year... AYY! I went to all the meetings; she would sit there and smile at me. She would tell the translator that my daughter was doing fine. A little below because of the language but nothing to worry about...AY...I asked her so many times if I could help with anything at all. She would say; "She just needs to do her homework." So, I would come home from work with a dictionary in hand and help her with her homework. I could kind of help her with English but I was totally lost in math. I only know how to add and subtract. I don't know

how to divide. My town only had school until third grade. So that is all I learned!

[Looked down, teary eyed]

I wanted to keep going to school but we were too poor. My parents could not afford materials. I had to work at a very young age...AAHH! This is why one day my daughter had homework; it was a math word problem. I did not know what was being said. "Soy bruta." (I'm dumb!) I sent it back blank with a note in Spanish explaining that I tried but I only know how to add and subtract.

[Began to cry]

When my daughter came home she said that the teacher kept her in during lunch because she did not do her homework. My daughter told her that I tried and the teacher said in front of the whole class that I could not help her because I only knew how to add and subtract.

My daughter was devastated. That's why I quit my job and began coming here to learn English *[Wept more]* to be smart...

A: People just don't understand what we have to go through. If we had had the opportunities there

that we have here, I don't think we would be here.

D: That's for sure! I left everything to come here. I left Mexico pregnant. I wanted my second child to be born here. I did not want to have another daughter bound to poverty in Mexico. My husband used to beat me, torture me, and psychologically hurt me. I did not want to subject my daughters to that life. So I left one night while he was out drinking. I had saved some money I had earned by ironing clothes. I had a whole \$40 that I was able to save in a year. I packed food and left. Before leaving I called a neighbor who had crossed to the United States years before, and who had offered help. I called her to get directions and told her I would be there. I crossed the river about two weeks later. I think people felt sorry for me. I was so hungry, dirty, and pregnant. Once I crossed, I hitchhiked to Houston. I showed up at my friend's house and she said I could only stay there for the night. Somebody had called her husband to tell him that I had left my husband. She hid me in the garage that night. Brought me food and money to leave. She also gave me the phone number of a friend here in North Carolina. The next day I

was on a bus on my way to Carolina with my girls... I was real scared when they asked me for papers at the registration office...I don't know what I would do if I got deported back...I don't know what my life would be like...I don't have much, but I have a job, a trailer home that I'm renting to buy, and my daughters have food and peace. I refuse to go back!

[A tear ran down her cheek.]

C: "Ese jodido Rio Grande" (That darn Rio Grande)...hum... That Rio—it's my best friend and my worst enemy!

A: Yes, it can really leave a scar!

C: The first time I crossed the Rio Grande, it went okay. I had to cross over because in El Salvador we were dying of hunger. My mother was sick and I had to do something. I'm educated though. My mother used to wash clothes to pay for my education. I lived in a pretty rural town, and I was the only one in the whole town who at that time had gone to college. My mother wanted me to get ahead, to do better than her...

The day I graduated as a teacher the entire town got together to throw me a party. I was offered a job in the town and I decided to stay because it was just my mom and I. I began to work but I earned so little. I started to wash clothes like my mom. It was humiliating having to borrow money, knock on my student's home to pick up clothes...
Yeah...believe in education I would tell them. I wonder if they actually believed me. After all, I was washing their clothes!

A: It is hard in our countries. It seems that no matter how much education you have, the situation is so bad that one can't really get out of the hole!

C: Yes, I was in a hole! My mother began to work again. I was so embarrassed. My mom was now picking up clothes in my students' homes. I went to the city in hopes of finding another job. A better paying one. My friend heard of a group of people going to the states. So, I decided to join them.

D: You had to cross many borders. "*Muchas lineas*" [Many lines].

C: In El Salvador they asked if I was going on

vacation and I said, "Yes." They let me go...

In Honduras...[*Put her head down and cries*]

Well, they asked for more and...I gave it to them, I let them rape me. It was four guard men. It was that or death...

At the line between Guatemala and Mexico I was a mess—barefoot and dirty. We were hiding in the back of a truck. They found us and we all ran. That was the last time I saw my friend and the other people I was with...I wonder what happened to them? I walked all the way to the border.

I ate trash; I even let someone rape me in exchange for a bath [*Wept*]

A: [*Sighs!*] Ahh!

C: I finally crossed over after four months. When I got to the states I had nowhere to go. I was hungry and dirty. A man offered me a mango. I was so hungry! I asked, "What do you want for it?" He said, "Nothing." I ate the mango—Yuck!

Till this day I cannot eat mango! He asked if I wanted work and I immediately asked him if he wanted me as a prostitute, and he said, "No, you just look needy." I work in the tobacco fields of North Carolina...and that's how I ended up here.

I fell in love, and had two daughters.

A: Some of us definitely have it better than others. My experience was not that bad. I feel lucky.

C: How did you cross?

A: I borrowed a birth certificate and crossed through the line. They asked me where I was from, I gave the address in the certificate and they let me go. That's how I got here!

B: That simple? You were lucky!

A: I know! But the problems I encountered were here. When I got here I was put on a farming camp. I was working from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. with a half hour break in between. I was so sick from the change of weather. I was getting paid forty cents per basket. It was horrible! I was able to escape the camp. I still owe the boss money for the crossing. I earned so little that I had not started repaying him. When I ran away after two years of work I still owed him about \$4,000. I worked all sorts of jobs until I met my husband. We both worked and we were finally able to rent our own apartment. And slowly we kept getting ahead. Until my husband

lost his job. By this time I was pregnant.

I had my son in Duke Hospital. We were so poor we would buy a bag of chips a day and split it. When my son was born we did not even have money to pay for parking. My husband would wait until the lot closed and the gates open. He would then go home.

We asked for help at Duke and they did not offer any help. I did not even have diapers...

Those were hard times!

D: And your son was born here, huh?

B: I can't believe they would do that to a citizen of this country!

A: That did not matter! We were illegal and that's how my child was treated.

C: I know exactly how you feel—my story is not over yet.

B: There is more? *Que mas?* (What else?)
Woman, you need a cleaning. Somebody gave you a bad eye.

C: No kidding! It was more like BAD EYES!

[ALL LAUGH]

C: When my youngest daughter was two years old

my mom got sick. I called the neighbors and they said she was real critical. I had not seen my mom since I left El Salvador. I had to go! My mother was alone. She had my financial, and moral support, but I was not there...I was the invisible daughter! I could not leave the girls here so I took them with me. We flew to El Salvador.

[Tightens her "puño" (fist)]

When I saw my mother it seemed as if I was looking at a baby. She was so little, fragile, and weak. Her long black hair had turned white! When we saw each other we hugged for what seemed like a lifetime... My mother died smiling at me two days later. I was devastated, but happy that I had seen her and she got to see her granddaughters.

Uhhss! [sigh]

B: *Que Triste!* (That's so sad!) It is so hard to be an immigrant. We leave fighting for our family when at the same time losing valuable time with them.

C: Well we flew to Mexico. You know I did not have papers. I asked several people to cross the girls over. They had their birth certificates and

passports. But nobody wanted to.

A: Nowadays people are so scared!

C: I don't know what it was, but I got my girls ready to and we began our travels to El Rio Grande.

A: With the girls?

C: Yes, I had no choice. I took a car who dropped us off saying they were going to come back to get us.

But nobody came. I was in the middle of nowhere alone with a five- and a two-year-old. My stuff stayed in the van, so I had no food.

The first day we ate a cactus. I found a car seat while walking and I place the youngest there. I made a small leaf bed for the oldest. The second day they were both sick from their stomach but I still did not have food so we had cactus again. The third day the girls were hungry and my oldest...

[Wept]

I was so desperate. I saw how my daughters who were citizens were suffering because I did not have papers. I was going crazy...

My oldest started asking desperately, "Mommy, I'm hungry. I want to eat. Mommy, I'm hungry. Mommy, can you please give me some food?"

Mommy, why can't we go

home? We have food there....” I lost it!
[Wept heavily]
I turned around and yelled,
“Damn it! I don’t have any food. Don’t you get it?” I hate myself for that. My daughter put her little head down, and then I ran to her and asked her for forgiveness. I then asked her to take a walk with me. I prayed during that walk.... And by the grace of God, I found a backpack with snacks and two sweaters.

The next day, I crossed with a group that I saw go by.

B: Wow! What is the purpose of our children being a citizen?

ALL: Was it worth the sacrifice, the pain, the loss?

C: It does not matter! Our children will be treated differently because of us.

A: They are paying the price!

D: Yes, they might be running when we are now, but in just about 10 years, they will be able to vote...and that will be the difference. They will have a voice, unlike us. They will have eagle wings—American eagle wings.

ALL: And they will be flying over us to watch us! They don’t forget! And may not forgive!

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

I wrote this conversation to highlight some of the key themes of this dissertation, and to share the experiences of those immigrants I have been working with. They are stories of migration, suffering, hardship, resilience, and transcendent hope. They are the stories of immigrants who cross border daily in search of a better life; they are untold stories of silent heroes who have contributed to the history of United States for decades. They are the stories of people who do the backbreaking work of the economy, but because they fear deportation, are exploited by employers. As the number of migrants continues to increase, the question arises: what will happen to future generation of Latinosⁱⁱ who are institutionally assaulted daily in schools and communities? What will happen to newly arrived immigrants who suffer daily from what I like to call “newcomer rejection”? Will we continue to ignore their stories? This dissertation is an attempt at providing space and voice to the realities faced by many immigrants in the United States. These stories are situated in a particular context—that is the “American” South.

The effect of this rapid immigration to the South has caused many misunderstandings. Latinos, Latino parents, schools, and communities are not communicating effectively.

ⁱⁱ The term Latino/a is a pan-ethnic term used to represent both foreign and U.S.-born peoples whose cultural, linguistic ancestry originated in Latin America or the Caribbean. (Banks & Banks, 2001).

Language barriers, cultural differences, different educational experiences, and fears on both sides, are all at play in the misunderstanding. Furthermore, cultural differences between parents' previous cultural experiences, and what is expected of them under the American educational system is not understood. If not addressed, this lack of dialogue will lead to the miseducation of Latino students, and a Latino population in fear.

The Latino population in North Carolina is here to stay. The question now is what will happen to new inherited generations who will not be newly arrived immigrants, but rather U.S. citizens? Hence, this research attempts to expose the personal and educational narratives of immigrant Latino parents, in the hopes that this will raise the awareness of teachers, school administrators, policy makers, and the community about the immigrant experience and its importance to the educational future of North Carolina. This presentation aims to bring voice, clarification, and understanding about the growing Latino population in North Carolina, but most importantly, awareness about the complexity and diversity of as I refer to them, "The new faces of the South." This requires an understanding of the place to where the newcomer Latinos who are part of this research come to and from. This necessitates an understanding of Mango County, North Carolina, (pseudonym) and its population.

Setting the Teakettle: Mango County

Mango public schools have experienced a dramatic increase in the number of students, particularly Latino students. There are 43 schools in Mango County : 27 elementary schools, 8 middle schools, 1 secondary school (6-12), 1 high school, 1 alternative school, and 1 hospital school, with a total of 30,889 students, according to 2003-04 school

data. A school official noted that compared with nearby counties, Mango is one of the poorest school districts. The average family income ranges from \$10,000 to \$30,000.

The racial composition of Mango public schools is the following: 56.3% African American, 29.2% White, 8.9% Hispanic/Latino, 2.9% Multiracial, 2.4% Asian, 0.3% Native American. The number of Latinos in Mango County has more than quadrupled in the last five years. This has become a enormous concern for many in Mango County. The Mango public school system has an English Language Learners (ELL) department, and each school has at least one ESL teacher. Like the schools, Mango County is a diverse county with a mixture of Whites, African Americans, and Latinos, among others. The Latino population consists mostly of Mexicans, Salvadorians, Guatemalans, and Hondurans, among others. Mango County is indeed simmering with diversity and difference.

The Public Schools of Mango County suffer from institutional denegration. To many, they are some of the worst schools in North Carolina. They are schools with mostly minority children who are seen as the “problem” (Murillo, 2002) by institutionalized agencies. This view has only been exacerbated by the permanent migration increase. It is this migration that must be understood. For the changes in the education of Latinos in the United States, one must look at the histories and perspectives on Latino education, migration, and its effects on schooling.

A Perspective on Latino Education

Migration is a worldwide phenomenon that has had important consequences for schooling in the United States. Latino migration has affected the face and composition of schools in the United States. In order to understand the increase in Latino immigration one must understand the history of the Latin American communities which send the immigrants.

In the section entitled *Latin American Immigration*, I will begin by looking at the history of the migration from Latin American countries to the United States. In the section *Mexican Immigration*, I will concentrate on the immigration of Mexicans to the United States—as Mexicans compose the largest Latino immigrant group in the country. In the section *Central American Immigration*, I will look at the immigration patterns of people from Central American countries, which together compose the second largest immigrant group in the United States and in this research study. In the section entitled *Immigration Policies*, I will examine the history of policies in the United States that has shaped the lives of immigrants in the United States.

In the section, *Research on Latino Education in the United States*, I will explore what research states about the treatment and history of Latino education in the U.S. I begin this section with an autobiographical account as a context for the experience of Latinos and education. I then proceed to explore the *Research on Latino Home Education and Schooling*. In the section *Whitestream Educational Practices on Brownstream Students*, I explore the institutionalized practices that take place in schools and that affect the schooling of Latinos.

Latin American Immigration

External and internal migration has shaped the United States into the country we see today: a country built by immigrants from all over the world. Latin American peoples have immigrated to the United States for decades. Many come searching for the myth that has symbolized the United States “*el sueño Americano*” (the American Dream). Mexico, Central America, and South America have all had high rates of migration to the United

States. For example, it is reported that about 67% of the Mexican population and 20% of the Salvadorian population have migrated to the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003).

According to Jeffery S. Passel and Robert Suro (2005):

Rather than undergoing a continuous increase in immigration levels as is commonly perceived, the United States experienced a sharp spike in immigration flows over the past decade that had a distinct beginning, middle, and end. From the 1990s through the middle of the decade, slightly more than 1.1 million migrants came to the United States every year on average. (p. i).

The Pew Hispanic Center (2005) released a report entitled, “Rise, Peak, and Decline: Trends in U.S. Immigration 1992-2004,” authored by Jeffrey S. Passel and Robert Suro which reported that: “From 1992 to 2001, the unauthorized share of immigration inflows increased and the share that was legal decreased. By the end of the period, more unauthorized migrants than authorized migrants were entering the United States” (p. iii). The proportion of those acquiring visas was not the only pattern that changed. Destinations also changed: “The shift of immigrant flows away from states with large foreign-born populations such as California and New York towards new settlement states such as North Carolina and Iowa accelerated during both the peak and the decline that followed” (p. iv).

Immigrants were migrating to new destinations, but also finding new ways of crossing the border. Cerruti & Massey (2004) discovered that “80% of migrants had used a coyote (a person who helps immigrants cross the border) on their first trip to the U.S.” (p. 29) Through the years and with the militarization of the border, immigrants have found more creative, but also more dangerous ways of crossing the border. According to Singer and Massey (1998), immigrants reported that they did not use a coyote during their first crossing. They used “guias” (guides) who were family members or friends. Others, especially after crossing the border once and getting acquainted with the terrain, migrate by themselves. This

is particularly true for some Mexican immigrants who still move back and forth from Mexico to the United States. However, this practice is decreasing due to the increased militarization of the border and tighter border patrolling. Migration has also increased due to the social networks built by immigrants already residing in the United States. It has been reported by Cerruti & Massey (2004) that the first waves were defined by patriarchal patterns and gender roles. This made men the first in their families to migrate to the U.S. (Donato & Patterson, 2004; Goldring, 1996; Pedraza, 1991; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Cerruti & Massey 2001). These men who migrated to the U.S. first would go back and forth, and then extended family members migrated, creating location-specific social networks that continued to draw other immigrants. With established social networks, the duration of border crossing trips was lessened (Kossoudji, 1992; Donato & Patterson, 2004). With increased border security, families began to move and stay in the U.S. While social networks are important factors in migration patterns, they do not stand alone as the reasons for migration (Curran & Rivero-Fuentes 2003; Fussel and Massey, Rivero-Fuentes, 2004; Wortham, Murillo & Hamman 2002). As Passel & Russo argue:

A variety of other factors also influence the number of people moving from one place to another, and these can include everything from border controls in a receiving country to agricultural support policies in a sending country. An overarching factor is the operation of family networks that link migrants to relatives left behind. These networks can greatly facilitate new migration by providing access to housing, information about work opportunities and the comfort of familiar faces in a new land. (p. 11)

All of these factors mentioned above have influenced migration patterns of immigrants, such as Mexicans, into the U.S.

Mexican Immigration

The long-standing history of Mexican immigration has been a crucial part in the development and growth of the United States. Throughout U.S. history Mexicans have contributed to many aspects of the development of this country. A large number of the immigrants also play a key role in the Mexican economy. According to The International Relations Center (IRC) report entitled “In the Crossfire: Mesoamerican Migrants Journey North” (2004), Mexicans sent \$16.6 billion back each year to Mexico (p. 1) a figure equivalent to \$45.5 million per day entering Mexico, surpassing the amount invested in Mexico by foreign corporations, tourism, and sale of oil. Yet Mexico continues to suffer from much poverty.

Mexico’s poorest continue to be poor and the rich continue to get richer, influencing the migration patterns of many Mexican immigrants who seek jobs, better lives, and economic stability. One of the major reasons for Mexican migration since the 1980s was Mexico’s industrialization and mechanization of the agricultural communities (Martin and Meidgley, 1994). This resulted in fewer jobs for skilled agricultural workers, and greater migration by Mexican citizens in order to survive. Globalization and industrialization can be blamed for the migration influx from agricultural communities in Northern Mexico. More recently, there has been a trend of migration from Indigenous communities particularly from La Sierra Puebla, Guerrero, and Chiapas. In its investigative report, The Pew Hispanic Center (2005) also reported that:

Migration from Mexico followed the same overall trends. It peaked in 1999-2000 at a level more than one third above the inflows of mid-1990s, then declined by about one quarter to 2002-2003 levels that were only slightly higher than those of the mid - 1990s. Throughout this period, the Mexican share of total migration held relatively steady at about a third of the overall flow. (p. iii)

Although there have been changes in the flows of migration to the United States from Mexico, immigration to the United States has been continuous even as immigrants have found it more difficult to enter and become legal residents of the United States.

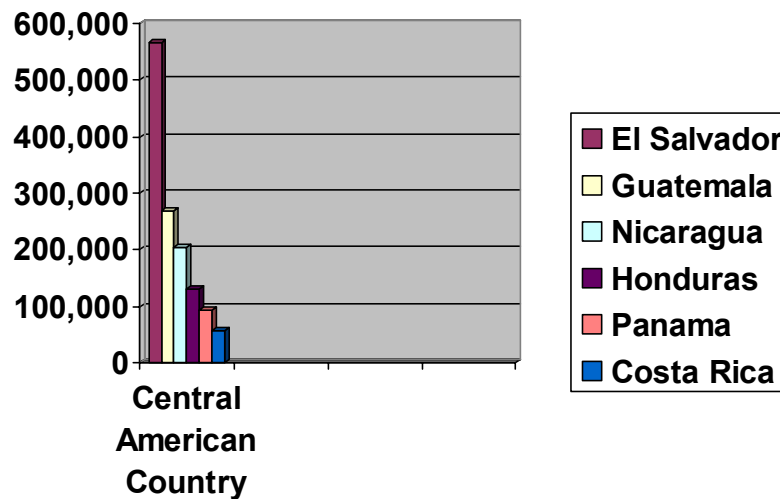
Many factors have influenced the continued migration of Mexicans into the United States. The Pew Hispanic Center (2005) points out that, in the mid 1990s: “The Mexican economy went through a severe crisis that produced a dramatic 6.2% drop in the country’s gross domestic product” (p. 11). This drop led to unemployment of many people in Mexico who were left with only the choice of migrating to “El Norteⁱⁱⁱ” to find jobs. Many researchers suggest that a bad economy is one of the main reasons people migrate to the United States (Passel & Suro, 2005; Durang & Massey, 2004; Wothman & Murillo, 2002). Cerruti & Massey (2004) argue: “The probability of illegal migration appears to be connected more strongly to changes in the Mexican political economy” (p. 28). As stated earlier, social networks with family or friends who have previously migrated is another reason why Mexicans immigrate to the United States. As economies continue to change and local immigrants settle, Mexicans and other Latin Americans will continue to arrive in the hope that a better future awaits them.

Central American Immigration

Much like Mexican peoples, Central Americans also have a long history of immigration to the United States. As Cordova and Del Pinal (2004) point out, “Central Americans have been resettling in the United States since the 1800s” (p. 2). Yet, Central American migration has been researched only sparingly.

ⁱⁱⁱ El norte means “the north” in Spanish. A phrase commonly used to describe the United States.

Figure 1.1 Central American Migration 1990 Census Report



According to the U.S. Census report, in 1990 (See Figure 1.1) there were 1,323,830 Central American immigrants in the U.S. At 565,081, El Salvador had the largest population of immigrants, 268,779 were from Guatemala, followed by 202,658 from Nicaragua, 131,066 from Honduras, 92,013 from Panama, and 57,223 from Costa Rica. Only 277,731 were U.S. citizens, and 1,046,099 were foreign born. Oscar Chacon from The Americas Program, Interhemispheric Resource Center IRC (2003), has a higher estimate. He argues that there are between 1.75 and 4 million Central Americans currently living in the United States.

These Central American immigrants are of diverse, heterogeneous origins composed of Indigenous peoples, Afro-Latinos, European descendents, and a mixture of all. However, shown in Figure 1.1, the largest Central American immigrant communities into the U.S. are from El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Honduras. This is followed by Panama, with the fewest from Costa Rica, a country considered “paradise” by many

European and United States^{iv} tourists for its safety and cleanliness. Yet, for many fellow Central Americans, Costa Rica is considered “the white” country in Central America. As a result, Costa Rica has the fewest immigrants to the United States. Nevertheless, Central America has received little attention.

Chacon and the IRC (2003) further report that Central Americans contribute about \$5.5 billion to the United States. (p. 1) Central Americans are of a large population in the United States. Furthermore, Chacon and the IRC report that there are: “close to half a million undocumented immigrants from Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador who are currently protected from deportation and receive work permits under special Temporary Protected Status (TPS) programs for those nationalities” (p. 1). Immigrants from countries such as Guatemala, Panama, and Costa Rica do not qualify for TPS. Those Central American immigrants who were able to apply for TPS are not allowed to leave the country, and if they choose to do so they will not be allowed to return to the U.S. (unless they request special permission to leave, which can be risky because their country of origin may not allow them to return to the U.S.)

According to Carlos Cordova and Jorge Del Pinal (2004), immigrants from El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala were affected by a civil war during 1980s. During this time “200,000 people were assassinated by right-wing paramilitary groups, death squads, and the armed forces in El Salvador and Guatemala” (p. 2). Cordova and Del Pinal identified three migratory patterns from Central American communities: 1) urban dwellers who choose to relocate in urban centers in the United States, 2) rural populations relocating in urban

^{iv} United States was coined by Keren Zuniga to bring the attention to the United States as a country rather than as “America” (2004). The influence of individual characteristics and parenting behaviors on adolescent academic performance. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Iowa State University.

communities, and 3) Central American rural dwellers who relocate in rural areas in the U.S. and for the most part work in agriculture.

According to Cordova and Del Pinal, the fastest growing immigrant community from Central America is the Guatemalan community, which is composed largely of Indigenous Mayans. As a matter of fact, it was been reported that 60% of the Guatemala's population is Indigenous Maya (Nora England, 1996). Cordova and Del Pinal state that prior to 1965 there were an estimated 6,000 Guatemalans in the United States. The Guatemalan population has increased drastically. It was estimated at 268,779 during the 1990 census. Yet, Cordova and Del Pinal add that the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) estimated that there were an estimated 121,000 illegal immigrants in the U.S. They add that large numbers of Mayans entered the U.S. in the early 1980s and many settled largely in metropolitan and urban areas. Yet, this migration trend could change. After the civil instability experienced in Central America, many scholars had predicted that migrant Central American communities would return home: For instance Leo Chavez (1994) thought:

Hundreds of thousands of migrants—some refugees, some illegals abroad, and some now with resident status elsewhere—will be seeking to return to their home countries [in Central America] as the strife of the 1980s gives way to genuine peace in the 1990s. (p. 57)

Unfortunately, this peace has not yet arrived, and Central American communities immigrate to the United States in larger numbers, risking lives, leaving families, and hoping to experience the “American Dream.”

The immigration experience is a common denominator for Latinos in the United States. Yet the meaning assigned to immigration is mostly unsettled. As Jorge Durand and Douglas Massey (2004) argue:

With border as a dramatic prop, immigrants become symbols in a battle of images. For some they symbolize the American Dream; for others, the loss of control in a global economy. Some see them as desperate people fleeing abject poverty and destitution in the third world, and still others spirited entrepreneurs seeking opportunity and freedom in the United States. Whereas one special interest may portray immigrants as undeserving consumers of public services and an unwanted burden on U.S. taxpayers, another will argue that they are productive workers who are essential to the nation's prosperity. (p. 1)

Migration is a complicated mechanism of hopes, aspirations, deceptions, and power that makes immigrants unique individuals racing with and against immigration policies.

Immigration Policies

Quien tiene el derecho?^v

Quien tiene el derecho a morir de hambre?

Quien tiene el derecho a ser manipulado por los que tienen poder?

Quien tiene el derecho de ser abusado?

Quien tiene el derecho de migrar?

El derecho de la vida es... Vivir.

El derecho de la vida es...luchar por ese derecho.

¡El derecho de la vida para muchos...es migrar!

By Margarita Machado-Casas (2005)

The demise of the Bracero program^{vi} in 1964 defined immigration as we know it today. Many events led the slow demise of the program including the enactment of

^v Who has the right?

Who has the right to die of hunger?

Who has to right to be manipulated by those in power?

Who has the right to be abused?

Who has the right to migrate?

The right of life is...to live.

The right of life is...to fight for that right.

The right to live for many...is to migrate! By Margarita Machado-Casas (2005).

“Operation Wetback” in the late 1950s—labor disruptions that angered the agricultural community (Calavita, 1992). According to Marcela Cerrutti and Douglas Massey (2004), after the demise of the Bracero program, amendments to the National Immigration Act sought to change quotas for Africans and Asians who had been essentially prohibited from immigration. Cerrutti and Douglas (2004) found the following:

The Hart-Celler Act abolished the discriminatory system and replaced it with a new formula under which each country in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific qualified for up to 20,000 visas per year, which were allocated according to a preference system that gave priority to relatives of U.S. citizens and resident aliens as well as to persons with skills or abilities needed in the U.S. (p. 18)

The Hart-Celler Act did not apply to quotas provided to Central America, South America, and the Western Hemisphere. Refugees and asylum seekers from countries such as Nicaragua, Cuba, Russia, Vietnam, and Cambodia were not included in the quotas and were placed in a separate category as immigrants who were granted permits to stay in the United States for humanitarian and political reasons.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) was enacted as a result of the growing number of legal and illegal immigrants entering the United States between 1964 (when the Bracero program was terminated) and the 1980s, when the United States experienced economic distress and Congress felt moved to “change” these problems by “fixing” immigration (Timmer and Williamson, 1998; Massey, 1999; Meyers, 1995). As a result, four provisions were included in the IRCA: 1) new reinforcement to patrol the Mexico-U.S. border; 2) sanctions to penalize employers hiring undocumented workers; 3) amnesty offered to long-term undocumented residents [a Latino and civil rights groups issue]; and 4) a legalization program offered to undocumented agricultural workers [an

^{vi} The Bracero program was a temporary measure to relieve wartime labor shortages in the California and Texas agricultural industry. It was initiated in 1942 and reauthorized in 1945.

agricultural community issue] (Cerrutti & Massey, 2004. p. 19). The IRCA changed immigration policy and the migration process into what we have today. It increased the budget for border patrol by 50% (Bean, Vernez, and Keely, 1989), and thereby increased the militarization of the border. This was first accomplished in Texas by operation Hold the Line and later by operation GateKeeper (Dunn, 1996). The militarization is now being promoted by the Minuteman group, a military right-wing group, and approved by many government officials (including President George W. Bush).

The 1990 Immigration Act was enacted by Congress as a way to decrease the flow of illegal and legal migration to the United States. According to Cerrutti & Massey (2004), Congress tried to control the immigration “problem” (Murillo, 2002; Trueba, 2003). Cerrutti & Massey (2004) state that Congress did so by phasing in a “flexible” cap of 675,000 immigrants per year consisting of 480,000 family-sponsored migrants, 140,000 employment-based migrants, and 55,000 “diversity” migrants (people from countries underrepresented in current flows who are selected randomly by an annual lottery)” (p. 20).

These immigration reforms have forced immigrants to find more creative ways of migrating which has made it more difficult to cross the U.S. border. It has been reported by U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (1995) that because of the proximity of Mexico to the U.S., Mexicans constitute 70% of those granted amnesty, 80% of those legalized as farm workers, and 95% of those apprehended in their attempts to cross the border. Mexicans are seen by many in power as persistent “unwanted” neighbors who require tougher immigration and legalization policies. Being Mexican makes it much more difficult to legally immigrate to the United States, as currently immigration policies allow no legal immigration of Mexicans into the United States. Some Central American countries such as

Nicaragua have the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA) and El Salvador TPS, others qualify for political asylum and refugee status, while others in South America might qualify as diversity migrants.

Recently, immigration laws and reform attempts have been aimed at young immigrants. Many of these immigrated to this country at a very young age, were schooled here, and do not have sufficient understanding of academic Spanish to succeed in their countries of origin. The proposed Dream Act^{vii} (2003) is the latest attempt at trying to provide access to higher education to children of immigrants who were raised and schooled in the United States. The Dream Act had been defeated several times in different states. For many, this is an attempt at making the U.S. less appealing by forcing undocumented children of immigrants who migrated to the U.S. at a young age and who were not able to obtain legalization because of the reforms mentioned above to migrate out of the U.S. If passed, the Dream Act will change the lives of thousands of children of immigrants who were too young to know that they were migrating, and thus, they call the United States of America “home.”

Research on Latino Education in the United States

My own experience provides a template to understand the experience of Latino education in the U.S. I am an immigrant who arrived in the United States at the age of 14. I have experienced the ways in which education has not helped minority children like myself.

One of my first school experiences in the United States was with a math teacher in 8th grade. This teacher would always ignore me, all I did in that class was color and make puzzles. For almost seven months I was in a corner of the room alone coloring while everyone else received regular Algebra assignments. I attempted to communicate to the

^{vii} The Dream Act has many supporters in Congress and across the nation but it is a heavily debated reform. It was not passed the first time and it will be reintroduced this year to Congress.

teacher and explain to her that I was capable of doing the math, and she would just smile and ignore me. As a matter of fact I had already taken Algebra back in Panama, but she would say, “No, no, you can’t do this!” I never really knew why she thought I could not do it; she never tried to test me in any way. And although she was never “mean,” she instilled in me a fear of trying, a sense of ignorance, and a feeling of not belonging. She would come in every day, smile, teach her lesson, and give students their assignments. When she was done taking care of those who “mattered,” I was then given coloring paper, puzzles, and crayons. Here I was a 14-year-old teenager who had already completed and passed a full year of Algebra II in Panama, being told that I could not be part of a class simply because I did not speak the language well. I was being denied basic education simply because of who I was and what I represented for the teacher in charge; more work, less time to spend with those students who really matter, and a waste of time. My parents would not come to the school and complain because they really did not know any better and did not have a way of communicating with the school. During this time, I felt as if I were judged for being different, for having parents who did not look, act, or speak like other parents—parents who could not communicate very well, because they did not know the language or the educational system in the United States. I felt as if I were being judged intellectually for my lack of language. My teacher assumed I was incapable of doing regular math assignments. Unfortunately this scenario is still being practiced in classrooms throughout the United States. Latino students are taken advantage of and denied basic educational rights because of who they are (Valenzuela, 1999). This phenomenon will be explored in the next section, as I explore research on Latino home education and schooling.

Research on Latino Home Education and Schooling

Latinos are now the largest ethnic-minority group in the nation (with a reported 38.8 million in 2002), and are growing at a rate faster than the U.S. population as a whole (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). In addition, Latinos are projected to make up over a quarter of the U.S. population by the year 2050 (Banks & Banks, 2001; U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). An even greater change can be observed within the K-12 population, where the proportion of Latino children under the age of 18 has increased more than any other racial and ethnic group and it is projected that by the year 2025 1 in 4 children (under age 18) will be of Latino origin (Lewis, 1994). Currently, Latino children account for more than 1 in 5 (22%) of all children under the age of five (Calderón, 2005, p. 2). This is particularly true in states experiencing recent influx of immigrants. North Carolina, Arkansas, and Georgia experienced the largest increases in Latino children under the age of 4, surpassing growth traditionally experienced in large states. North Carolina ranked first among the top 10 states with the fastest growing Latino child population ages 0-4 between 1990-2000, with a growth rate of 417.3% (Calderón, 2005, p. 3).

The experience of Latino, Latino immigrant, and Latino Indigenous families' with education in their countries of origin, and their decision to migration has had an affect on their lives in the United States. These experiences seem to affect Latino family education. First, it affects their experiences and interpretations of education and *Whitestream* (Grande, 2000; Urrieta, 2004) involvement as expected by schools. A second, supposed expectations that does not take into consideration the value attached to cultural experiences or family webs

of social relationships or social capital^{viii} (J. Coleman, 1988). The concept of social capital is used by Coleman (1988) to explain underachievement of racial and linguistic minorities.

An extensive body of research has explored the cultural performances of traditional Latino families in schools. These studies indicate that schools see newly arrived families as unaware of school expectations and as a hindrance to their children's education (Suarez-Orozco, 1988). In many cases because of their vulnerability as newly arrived immigrants, Latino families are the first to be blamed as their language, cultural beliefs, and traditions may go against the assumptions made about parental involvement by schools. Schools stereotype Latino families as unsupportive parents who "don't care about their children's education, because they don't even come to the school to find out what is going on" (4th grade teacher, Personal communication, March 10, 2005). This comment supports Coleman's notion of capital as it describes the social capital Latino immigrants don't already have. These modernist notions of "good," "involved," and "involvement," are outdated because they do take into consideration schools' dynamic population change. Yet, these outdated notions of what caring families look and act like are transformed into expectations implemented by schools on families. These untold expectations become a "hidden" report card used to score who is a "good" parent—a model of a good immigrant family.

Based on modernist notions of space, community, and the nation-state, these expectations of parental involvement are limited constructs in understanding the lives of Latinos in the United States. Mainstream/whitestream/traditional forms of parental involvement lack cultural hybridization—that is, the community connections and closeness that keep Latinos and Latino immigrants connected communally, educationally, and economically through cultural relational ties. This is especially true for Latinos, whose lives are defined by cultural

^{viii} Social capital includes cultural knowledge needed to work effectively within an ethnic group. (Trueba, 2004)

values. There is an extensive body of ethnographic research on families of Mexican and Central American families (Trueba, 1988, 1989, 2004; Vazquez et al., 1994; Suarez-Orozco, 1988; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 1995, 2000; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990, 1992, 1994, 2004) which argues against the notion of Latino parents and families as having deficits. Indeed, the families have strong cultural values such as *familialism*, *confianza*, *respetto*, and *dignidad* (Valdes, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999). These values are additive (Murillo, 2004) and an asset to children's education. These cultural values frame parents' expectations of schools and teachers, as well as their experiences within the school setting. These strengths of Latino parents are not understood by educators in the United States.

There has been an array of research on the socialization and home cultural beliefs of Mexican children. As the largest immigrant population with its longest experience with migration to the United States, Mexicans and Mexican Americans have been studied more extensively than immigrants from other Latin American countries. Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991) and Delgado-Gaitan (1990, 1992, 2004) look at the forms of socialization that take place in the home. They discovered that within families there is a "commitment to succeed" acquired through family practices. They also observed closely parent-child interactions at home and how these interactions affected children's socialization. They concluded that children's home socialization was very much tied to parents' home values which were reasonable given the educational background and social economic situation of parents. Parents passed on their knowledge to their children. Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991) spoke of the transcendence of families that, despite financial, social, and linguistic barriers, manage to elaborate their current values as well as gain a new set of social values in their new context. In 1994, Delgado-Gaitan looked at the ways in which parents and children

communicate and interact with each other, and she found that oral forms of communication such as cultural narratives or *Consejos* are often used by parents to give guidance and socialize children. Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991) also found in following children from school to home and back to school it was clear that the children's assets were thrown away by schools. The deficit model of education restricted which home values or practices counted as part of the equation for student success. Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba argued that participant families and children were not deficient. Instead they were not provided with the opportunities to use their cultural beliefs in participating in mainstream culture. Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba stated that families suffer from their language being devalued and marginalized and suggest that in order to achieve success this must be interrogated and confronted.

Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, and Shannon (1994) argue that it is problematic to view cultural differences as damaging to children's education. They argue that there are a set of unspoken presumptions about what a student is to do to prepare for school and to successfully participate in school. They demonstrated that for those parents who do not have this knowledge, the children were left to discover them. They also argue that schools make changes based on stereotypical assumptions. They found that many schools do not take cultural differences of ethnic groups into account when making crucial decisions about how teaching and learning will take place for minority students. According to Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, and Shannon (1994), schools do not take into consideration that there are many differences within ethnic groups: language, family organization, size, language spoken at home, and different forms of language socialization. They studied two families to explore what happens to parents who do not use the language socialization practices expected of

middle-class families by schools. They discovered that the Mexican family was just as equipped as the other family to offer variation in language learning. In this study, authors were able to look at the traditional oral practices often performed in Latino households and saw them as a benefit to children's learning. They discovered that children attain problem solving skills and use several language sources to create meaning. In other words, parents and children communicate to create or co-construct children's language acquisition and development in their home language. In addition children helped parents co-construct meaning, and helped develop mainstream language through everyday talk. The authors argued that language socialization is very much tied to multicultural "how to" transactions that provide life skills for maintenance and survival. Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, and Shannon (1994) and Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991) expressed that not all disconnections between home and school are bad and that knowing the context of these disconnections is important. Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, and Shannon (1994) showed that schools fail in that they devalue home culture and children's multi-cultural language identity—turning them into a cultural and language deficit problems instead of seeing them as complex intercultural transaction that draws meaning from the second language. In other words these families, and particularly these children, are transnational^{ix} brokers—who provide services back and forth from one culture of language to another.

As mentioned before, most research on Latino family and education has been performed on the experiences of Mexicans in the United States. Yet Mexican migration is not the only form of migration from Latin American in the U.S. Central American migration has also impacted the United States. Suarez-Orozco (1988) conducted a study examining Central

^{ix} Based on Trueba's (2004) definition of Transnationality: A unique capacity to handle different cultures and lifestyles, different social status, different roles and relationships and to function effectively in different social, political, and economic systems" (p. 39)

American students in a community in the southwest. He discovered that contrary to past research, “Hispanic” families were not a barrier to their children’s success and achievement either in school or in society. Suarez-Orozco (1988) looked at the experiences of these Central American high school students who persevered to stay in school, to do well, and to graduate. And indeed, they all graduated from high school. According to Suarez-Orozco, these students had a sense of responsibility for all that their parents had done to bring them to the United States and saw their academic success as a form of payback or reward to their parents.

Similarly Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, and Shannon (1994), Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991), and Suarez-Orozco (1988) discovered that families are an asset and a benefit to children as they provided children with the cultural and linguistic codes to survive in their world both in school and at home. All of these studies also argued that schools are not taking into consideration the assets that bilingual-bicultural children can bring to a school, and as a result marginalize students for their differences while ignoring that they are the new United States^x.

*To the oppressed
And to those who suffer with them
And fight at their side
By
Paulo Freire (1970)*

Whitestream Educational Practices: on Brownstream students

Just as their families are, students are also marginalized and attacked when in school. As stated by Paulo Freire in his renowned book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), “praxis” can create transformation. On the other hand, praxis can also destroy, oppress, and derail. Praxis or pedagogy is a way in which students can be directly affected in classroom and in the school. Current pedagogical practices have been found to be destructive to minority students, Latinos in particular. The pedagogical “rules” are designed for children who fit the “mold.” The rules are designed for those in the majority group. As earlier narrated my experience as a student describe how I felt victim to bad pedagogy, one that was making me feel insignificant and out of place. Unfortunately, that is the case throughout the United States. Current pedagogy sends the message that Latino students do not have what it takes to succeed in the American educational system. Students are treated differently for not knowing the language, being pulled out from mainstream classes, given watered down assignments, and not welcomed in schools (Trueba 2004; Delgado-Gaitan 1990, 1991; Nieto 1999; Flores & Diaz, 1984; Moll, 1992; and Suarez-Orozco, 1988). One can distinguish types of pedagogies that are aimed at students from pedagogies that guide relationships to parents.

The pedagogy practiced by schools influences the kind of experience many parents have, and their involvement in those schools. Research has found that there are several forms of mainstream parental involvement that count in schools. Guadalupe Valdez (1996) conducted a longitudinal ethnographic study on 10 children and 10 families beginning at the children’s ages of 4 and 5 for a period of 3 years. In this research she sought to investigate how the home environment prepared children to survive and be successful within the community and the family. Furthermore, Valdez sought to explore the effects of teacher perceptions and how those perceptions influenced their opinions about and expectations of

Mexican students and their families. In her findings, Valdez explores schools' expectations of parental involvement, she points out that the focus shifts from "mainstream" to "troubled families" (p. 35), pointing out that over time parental involvement expectations have shifted. Valdez points out that what the "U.S. Department of Education (1987) made evident, is that schools depend directly on parents for assistance in the education of children, and that without parental help the schools cannot carry out their work as effectively" (p. 31). She points out that in their publication *Schools and Families: Issues and Actions* the National Education Association has identified "four parental involvement models: (1) parents as volunteers, (2) parents as receivers of information about the schools, (3) parents working at the school, (4) parents working with their own children at home" (p. 38). Yet, Valdez points out that teacher beliefs about parental involvement work around the notion that parents "should receive training so that they can adequately work with their children at home" (p. 38). Many schools' praxis/pedagogy and actions do otherwise. In many instances, Latino parents cannot play the role of co-teacher, volunteer, and receiver of information because their working class status forces them to work, leaving little time for parental involvement. On this issue Valdez (1996) argues:

Lamentably, because of this, their home-school relationships will fall short of what school personnel have currently concluded as desirable for all families. Indeed, if teachers use the middle-class family as standards, teachers will generally assume that all parents who are "committed to their children's education" will engage in the same kinds of activities and behaviors. They will often surmise quite erroneously that parents who do not do so are unsupportive of their children's academic performance. (p. 39)

In this way, the education system is designed by and operates for the interest of the dominant, mainstream, white culture—a pedagogy that leaves Latino children without a point of reference when navigating the schools (Yeh & Drost, 2002; Barajas & Pierce, 2001).

Teachers, school officials, and administrators are not taking advantage of the possible contributions of students and parents. Schools do not tap into parents' and students' past experiences. This means schools are not tapping into what Luis Moll (1992) coined as "funds of knowledge" of these families. In order to succeed these students are forced to assimilate to norms and values of the dominant/mainstream/white culture, such as individualism (Nieto 1999; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Valenzuela, 1999; Bernal, Saenz & Knight, 1991; Barajas & Pierce, 2001). This is cultural knowledge that many minority students and parents do not possess when entering the classroom and schools. This pedagogy is consistent with research which states that Latinos are seen as the "problem" (Murrillo, 2002; Trueba, 2004). This pedagogy of disconnection goes beyond the classroom and expands into other areas within education such as assessment.

Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, and Shannon (1994), Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991), and Suarez-Orozco (1988) argue that Latino children's intelligence is currently being appraised by assessment methods that have been proven to be devastating for all children. These common methods of assessment have been a part of education for decades, and over time these assessment methods have become less personal, more quantitative, and modeled on "certain type" of student, the middle-class white student. For the most part these assessments are administered in English to all students regardless of their English language ability. Some state assessments are administered in Spanish for ESL students but those exams are not counted for the end-of-the-year exams.

These forms of assessment send mixed messages to parents saying, "Yes your child knows the information in Spanish, but that is not important; your child needs to learn it in English." These assessment methods are confusing to parents who are not familiar with the

system. They are shifting the focus from “mainstream” to troubled “families” (Valdez, 1996). They leave many parents disillusioned and ashamed because they are unable to teach their children in English and because their children do not know the language yet. The fact is that it takes five to seven years to learn a second language (Cummins, 1979, 1981, 1991; Collier, 1989; Thomas & Collier, 1992; Krashen, 1982; and Cloud, Genessee, & Hamayan, 2000). Some parents use drastic measures such as the prohibition of the usage of their native language at home and with friends. Current assessment methods send clear messages to both parents and students—they are told that in order to be successful they must be “other.” They must assimilate. Current assessment methods embody deficit thinking.

Deficit thinking toward minority students is expressed throughout the entire educational apparatus. It is expressed in many ways, both hidden and exposed, through pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, programs, and pre-conceived notions of particular groups of people. The deficit-thinking model considers second language a deficit or a handicap, and a “problem” (Murrillo, 2002; Trueba, 2004; and Valdez, 1996). The deficit model is problematic as it takes a potential gold mine (students’ and parents’ prior knowledge) and it turns it into problematic programs. As argued by Valdez (1996) “programs that have endeavored to alter or reverse educational outcomes for poor, disadvantaged, or at-risk children have reflected the thinking of theorists who have worked within the deficit-difference paradigm” (p. 29). As stated by Sonia Nieto (1999) in her book *The Light in their Eyes*, teachers, schools, and the current educational system are failing to recognize the five principles of learning (defined by Nieto, initially coined by Vygotsky (1978), and later presented by Barbara Flores and Esteban Diaz (1992) and Luis Moll (1992) in other ways): 1) learning is actively constructed; 2) it emerges from experience; 3) it is influenced by

cultural differences; 4) it is influenced by the context in which it occurs; 5) it is socially mediated with a culture or community. Deficit models fail to recognize the value of prior knowledge in curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and in the lives of students and their families. Valdez (1996) comments: “Ironically, even though the theorists that held that problems experienced by at-risk children were their own “fault” or responsibility have been called into question, program implementation still responds to this fundamental view” (p. 30).

The factitious treatment of Latinos has also been expressed through the political economy of racism, and this is poignant in the field of education. Hamman, Worthman, & Murillo (2002) explore this issue and argue that Latino Diaspora schools are usually the poorest and least financed schools. These schools are usually in very poor areas and tend to have the reputation of being the worst schools in the town. As stated by Murillo (2002), parents are also being tracked to “ethnically” through the type of work that parents are subjected to—low-paying, low-skilled jobs. That same political economy of racism is manifested in schools when they track students, and do not provide additional support to schools in communities considered low status, and with deteriorating schools. In these schools, the education of Latino children does not seem to be a priority. It is seen as a waste of time given that many assume that no matter how much education the children get they will end up in working low-paying jobs following their parents’ example. These schools become tracking industries of failure for many Latino students, who live daily with the consequences of the political economy of racism and are not provided with adequate education. Educational policies, schools, pedagogy, assessment methods, and politics need to support the growing transnational population in the United States so that we stop the perpetuation of

what I call “la destrucción del niño/a Indígena/Latino” (the destruction of the Indigenous/Latino child in the U.S.)

La Destrucción del niño/a Indígena/Latino (The Destruction of the Indigenous/Latino Child: Educational Policy Formation in United States South

Latinos have a long history in the United States. For decades Latinos have been an integral part of this country. Latinos are one of the engines that keeps much of the country running. The financial power of Latinos is immense and it continues to grow rapidly. According to Audrey Singer (2004) from The Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, Latino migration is growing and migration patterns are changing. Migration is now moving away from *post World-War gateways* (those states that have had a long history of Latino migration) to *pre-emerging gateways* (states that historically do not have a history of Latino migration) such as North Carolina and Georgia. This shift in migration is a reaction to anti-immigrant sentiment that has been expressed through policy changes in the entire country, particularly post World-War gateway states such as California. This “New Latino Diaspora,” a term coined by Murillo and Villenas in 1997 (Hamann, Wortham, and Murillo, 2002, p. 1), describes immigrants living in spaces that have not historically been places of Latino immigration. This Latino Diaspora is composed of mostly “unauthorized” immigrants (formerly known as illegal immigrants) a term coined by Cravey (2004)—mostly from Mexico and several Latin American countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and a few South American nations.

The largest ethnic Latino group in North Carolina and in the Southern U.S. is the Mexican community. The Mexican community has suffered from hostility from corporations

who have historically tracked Mexican and Central American workers into low-skilled jobs without benefits. It is because of these low skilled and low paying jobs that most newly arrived immigrants live in poverty and have had to access social services for their children who are U.S. natives. With the high cost of housing and other living expenses, newly arrived immigrants are forced into demeaning conditions that affect them and their children. The children born in this country are U.S. citizens. These children are and will be enrolled in schools where they will be pushed to be mono-national by denying their transnationality—their ties with both the American and Latino culture (Trueba, 2004). Current educational policies are not supporting the new face of the South. For the children of current Latino Diaspora parents the encounters of two cultures bring about new inherited generations—one that is transnational. Valenzuela (1999) argues: “that is, immigrant and U.S. born youth participate in the construction of “otherness” even as they are collectively “othered” by institutional practices that are ideologically invested in their cultural and linguistic divestment” (p. 17-18). This is particularly true of the South.

As stated by Murillo, Hamman, and Worthman (2000), Latino migration in the South generates suspicion. This suspicion is expressed by those who have institutionalized rights in voting for policies that affect immigrants of the New Latino Diaspora. Anti-immigrant policies complicate immigrant’s stay in the United States and in some ways, convey abomination. To paraphrase Murillo, Hamman, and Worthman (2002), policy and its effects are operating manuals for everyday life, for those who can vote and make policy. Policy constructs the problem it is to solve and in doing so determines who has the right to be educated. As previously noted by Villenas (1996), Murillo (2002), and Trueba (2004), educational policies currently in place see Latinos as a “problem.” The policies created to

eliminate the problem are actually expressions of racism, hate, and discrimination. They lead to the denial of basic educational rights to those who are classified as problematic.

North Carolina is fairly new to the immigrant experience. Yet it is already behind, consequently leaving many Latino children and their parents behind. Currently two educational policies are in place in North Carolina supposedly to “help” newly arrived immigrant students or students whose first language is not English. These are ESL (English as a Second Language) and NCLB (No Child Left Behind).

The ESL (English as a Second Language) programs in North Carolina are implemented in different ways. They may be pull-out programs, in which students are pulled out of regular classrooms to receive “sheltered English” instruction. The goal of ESL is to create English speakers without recognizing students’ home language. Currently in Mango County, ESL teachers are not allowed to talk to students in Spanish, and students are pulled out of the classroom to learn English only. Currently children get an average of 45 minutes a day of ESL instruction as mandated by North Carolina. Those classes are taught by teachers who for the most part do not know Spanish and who in some cases have to work in two schools because of the shortage of ESL teachers. Other schools consider Spanish classes as a form of ESL; therefore, they do not offer formal ESL services but do provide an aide who will work on English skills with students during reading or circle time. This policy was also obviously created to get children to speak English. Children are tested in English, so for school districts, schools, and teachers, having English-speaking children means “improved” scores, as is the driving logic of high-stakes testing in North Carolina and nationally. As a former ESL student I must say that when I was in ESL classes I learned some, but it was mostly a time of shame because I knew my classmates knew I was the student who did not

know any “better.” They knew I was the “special” student who had to be pulled out because the language I was speaking was not “the right one.” My accent was too thick in English and no one understood what I was saying. Unfortunately, ESL classes are implemented in ways that ignore the most important part of education—the child. ESL classes ignore the reality that the first language needs to be supported in order to achieve success in school as well as identity formation, healthy self-esteem, and pride. ESL programs are perpetuating monolinguality and shame among transnational children.

“No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) was implemented by federal mandate across the United States in 2001. NCLB requires that children in the public school system be “scientifically tested” in English on all subjects (Shaul, 2005). Under this mandate Latino Diaspora students are even more pushed to learn English and meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmarks (Heinrich & Trujillo, 2005). Another NCLB mandate is the implementation of parental involvement; school districts receive money they must use to promote parental involvement and support for all children. Yet, this policy has not been applied to Latino Diaspora parents in North Carolina. School officials and teachers are not effectively communicating to Latino Diaspora parents the schools’ expectations under NCLB. NCLB has become another way of tracking and labeling students for not making AYP and parents for not being “ideal parents.”

Summary

Immigration is a crucial part of the landscape of the United States, a country built by immigrants. Immigration patterns have shifted and changed throughout the years, providing the U.S. with a constant flow of immigrants from all over the world. Latin American

immigrants, because of proximal geographical location, have had a major impact on the United States' landscape and history. Latin American countries such as México, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Honduras continue to be active sending countries—countries that continue to have a constant flow of migration to the United States. According to research most of the newly arrived immigrants come into the U.S. as unauthorized immigrants, as the proportions of visas offered continues to decrease, especially for countries such as Mexico and El Salvador—countries reported to have a large proportion of their populations in the U.S. Furthermore the U.S. border increasingly is becoming more militarized, forcing immigrants to find creative ways of crossing to the United States. These shifts are visible not only around the border but also within the internal patterns of migration once in the United States. There are some aspects of immigration that continue to increase such as the use of coyotes and the use of social networks to cross the border and establish life in the United States. It has been found that social networks make it easier for immigrants to find jobs, settle, and make the U.S. their new home.

Mexican migration has had a long-standing history. There are many reasons why Mexican immigrants migrate, including globalization, industrialization, loss of agricultural jobs, economic instability in Mexico, and poverty. Yet, throughout history, Mexicans have contributed to the economic development of the United States.

Central American migration to the U.S. has also had a long-standing history. Reasons for migration to the U.S. are both similar and different from those of Mexicans. They are similar in that Central America has also been affected by globalization and poverty. But they differ in that most Central American countries have a history of civil unrest—forcing many people to leave. This was particularly true during the 1980s and 1990s, but it is still true

today in countries such as Guatemala, where persecution of Indigenous communities prevails. Consequently, migration from Central America continues to increase.

Once in the United States, immigrants are faced with discriminatory, alienating, and damaging immigration policies that make the life of the immigrant a constant border crossing. As previously mentioned, the end of the Bracero program marked immigration as we know it today (Calavita, 1992). New amendments established after the Bracero program have proven to be more restrictive. Many of these policies seem anti-immigrant rather than helpful to immigrants. IRCA (The Immigration Reform and Control Act) is an example of how immigration policies continue to increase in severity. For example, as a result of IRCA, new border patrol reinforcement was established and sanctions were imposed on those who employed undocumented labor. Yet, IRCA also had some positive effects: it provided amnesty to long-term residents and it provided legalization for agricultural workers (Cerrutti & Massey, 2004). Many Mexicans who resided in the U.S. before or during the 1980s were granted amnesty. And recently, some Central Americans have had Temporary Protected Status (TPS) as a form of legalization. As a result of IRCA, the border militarization budget has increased by 50 percent. And today, civil groups such as the Minuteman Project provide additional support to the militarization of the border. The border has become the battleground between hope and despair for many immigrants. Recently immigration reforms have also attacked children of undocumented immigrants who are denied access to higher education because they are undocumented. The Dream Act is an attempt to provide access to education for undocumented children. Yet, after several attempts it still has not become law.

Latinos are the largest ethnic minority in the nation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). Yet, the education of Latinos continues to be poor. This is particularly true in pre-emerging

gateway states (Singer, 2004) such as North Carolina that have had a relatively short history of Latino immigration. I provided my own experience to explore research on Latino Education in the United States. I began by providing similarities between my own life and preconceived notions of Latinos in the U.S. Two major issues affecting Latinos in the U.S. are the perception of Latino home education and the school's perceptions and expectations of Latinos. There is a wide body of research showing that schools are defined by *Whitestream* beliefs (Grande, 2000; Urrieta, 2004) which are imposed on *Brownstream* (Machado-Casas, 2004) communities. Therefore, many Latinos lack the cultural capital necessary to succeed in schools. Ethnographic studies on Latinos and Latino families argue that Latinos have strong cultural values, and that family socialization serves as an asset to Latino children. (Trueba, 1988, 1989, 2004; Vazquez et al., 1994; Suarez-Orozco, 1988; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco 1995, 2000; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990, 1992, 1994, 2004; Valdez, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999) Studies have also found that there is a problematic view of cultural differences that affects Latino education. (Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, and Shannon, 1994) Finally, Latinos are exposed to variations in language that are beneficial.

Yet, praxis or pedagogies placed upon Latinos are discriminatory. They are everyday pedagogies that send the message to Latino students they are not welcomed (Trueba, 2004; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990, 1991; Nieto 1999; Valdez, 1996; and Suarez-Orozco, 1988). These everyday pedagogies force many Latinos to assimilate in order to be successful. Similar to immigration, education policies are another way of attacking Latinos in the United States. Educational policies have proven to do more harm than good for Latino children. As stated by Hamman, Worthtman, & Murillo (2002) Latino Diaspora schools are usually the poorest and least financed. Therefore, they are most affected by policies such as NCLB that seek to

compensate “good” schools. These policies and pedagogies are leading to the destruction of Indigenous/Latino communities in the United States.

North Carolina, as a pre-emerging gateway, is experiencing the most rapid growth of the Latino population in the country. Over the last 20 years, North Carolina’s landscape has changed drastically. Yet Latinos in North Carolina are still relatively invisible institutionally. That is, they are invisible because their stories are not heard; even these people who are changing the South. They are new faces of the South. This research study explores some of the experiences of these new arrivals through an ethnography that narrates education and migration. In the following chapter we will explore the research methods used to narrate Latino education and migration in North Carolina.

CHAPTER II
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:
Entre Lineas (In Between Lines): Immigrant Lines as a Researcher in Gringolandia

“The struggle for a woman of color starts the moment we slide down a mother’s vaginal canal. That is the first border crossing. That was the first time I was a “mojada” (wetback). Having been born as a women of color marked my path, one of struggle, strength, resilience, and power.” By Margarita Machado-Casas (2004)

Research Methods

This research project addresses the migration, mobility, and survival of Latino immigrants within the New Latino Diaspora. My research explores racial/ethnic identity and negotiation of this identity, as well as the Latino immigrant experience in U.S. communities and formal educational settings. Past and recent scholarship identifies the rapid growth of migration to the U.S. particularly from rural and Indigenous Latin American communities. My dissertation builds on Portes & Rumbaut’s (2001) work on the immigrant second generation, Guadalupe Valdez’s (1996) work on differences between culturally diverse families and schools, Durand & Massey’s (1992) work on Mexican migration, as well as Trueba’s (2003) work on immigrant Latinos’ transnationality. In this chapter I will give the theory of knowledge used to frame this research study. Furthermore, I will explain the research methods I utilized to collect, analyze, and evaluate data.

As a transnational researcher, I have struggled between two worlds: the world of academics and the world of community involvement. Reba Page (1998, 2000) stated that qualitative research creates a problem in how and whose knowledge is presented. Hence, the knowledge that usually gets represented (white, mainstream) is constituted as “regimes of truth” (Foucault, 1990) as the “right/true” knowledge. The methodology I chose for my research is guided by my positionality as an immigrant who is also part of academe. It was a way to involve both the inside and outside as stated by Villenas (1996). I do this because, as Van Galen and Eaker (1995) stated, our legitimizing privilege is inaccessible to those whom we claim to write about. By gaining access to public schools and school officials, I was looked at by the schools as an “insider,” whom they were able to respect and ultimately use. Although gaining access provided me with an opportunity to work with these parents, administrators and teachers would come to me with their frustrations. They all wanted an easy, three-minute answer to the “Latino issue.” It was obvious to me that these administrators and others had made assumptions and decisions about the Latino population, but no one asked parents directly. Not a single parent was present during my meetings with administrators, so I was put in a situation where I was more than an “insider”—I was their “spy.” I was the link between the two groups (parents and administrators). Each group wanted to know how to deal with the other. I was the “spy” for administrators into the world of Latinos and I was the “spy” for Latinos into the educational system in the United States. To use Villena’s colonizer and colonized distinction, I was the colonizer in that I was a representative of the school system. But I was colonized in that I became their “spy” into the Latino world. I felt that my relationship with the Latino community was an exchange of information because they gave me their stories, and I gave them mine. Moreover, I could

negotiate for them with the schools. I had gained access to the school community and was able to provide schools with information about the parents and what services the schools could add to their parental involvement documentation activities. As colonizer and colonized, I both introduced schooling in the U.S. and tried to rupture the existing beliefs about Latinos.

The method of research I chose was one that reveals experiences lived by immigrants—as told by immigrants and written by an immigrant. They are heretofore untold stories of courage, resilience, pain, and struggle. They are their stories. They are my story. Narratives or oral histories provide school officials, legislators, teachers, community members, and participants themselves with a chance to experience and be part of history. They provide a way to gain understanding and to aim for transformation and change toward a pedagogy of liberation. As stated by Freire (1970), it is a way to validate the experiences of immigrants who struggle with the current elitist institutionalized systems. It is also a validation of a Nicaraguan girl who struggled in the United States educational system. It is a way to find lost footprints and re-tell the story of their path, the story of their lives, of the immigrant lines.

This research project collected life narratives of education, life, migration, and its effects on schooling. I explored how education and identity are linked in the life stories of adults. These narratives were collected in personal interviews and audio taped for later transcription. Interviews followed a typical life-story format, asking people to describe their lives beginning in their youth, to discuss what was important to them and how they chose to represent themselves at different stages of life, to describe what they have learned in life in both formal educational settings and through life experiences, and what lessons they take

from their own life and any connections of those lessons to formal education and/or life experiences. The life stories were analyzed for narrative structure, themes relating to formal and informal education, and identity construction processes. The following questions guide this research study:

- What is the role of formal and informal education in people's lives?
- What are the ways in which everyday life experiences have changed or shaped participants' educational experience?
- How are education and identity linked in the life stories of adults?

The research questions require that we understand both the experience of Latino families and their interpretations of that experience. Narrative research is especially appropriate for this type of study: "Understanding ourselves and our worlds narratively, our attention is turned to how we are engaged in living, telling, retelling, and reliving our lives within particular social and cultural plotlines" (Clandinin & Huber, 2002). This research study consists of working with immigrant Latino parents, typically subordinated groups who have historically been absent from history or, when present, misrepresented. Knowledge generated by this research is historically situated in specific contexts:

In a narrative discourse, therefore, events are always presented in their context. Context that refers to the physical, institutional environment as well as the social, cultural, and interpersonal environment includes significant others such as parents, mentors, colleagues, and peers (Dhunpath, 2000, p. 546).

Maintaining the narratives intact was important, although this meant taking an alternative approach to qualitative data analysis. Reissman (1993) states that "Fractioning the narratives by taking bits and pieces out of sequence, out of context" (p. 3) moves away from the story to the narrator, taking away its essence.

I borrowed from the works of feminist researchers, who state that oral histories differ from written history:

Oral history, in contrast to written history, is useful for getting information about people less likely to be engaged in creating written records and for creating historical accounts of phenomena less likely to have produced archival material. Relatively powerless groups are therefore especially good candidates for oral history research (Reinharz, 1992, p. 131).

Most participants who took part on this study are institutionally powerless, and often not represented in written history. Yet, they do possess a rich history of oral communication—they communicate their histories orally. Hatch and Wisuinwski (1995) argue that there are “no absolute distinctions between life histories and narrative” (pg. 124). Therefore, I took their oral life stories to be narratives and treated them as such.

These immigrants or “outsiders” tell stories that can provide understanding about their culture, migration, and lives in the United States. “Stories by and about Outsiders resist the subordinating message of the dominant culture by challenging stereotypes and presenting and representing people of color as complex and heterogeneous” (Valdez, Culp, and Harris, 2002). As stated by Ruby Dhunpath (2000) “Narrative research emphasizes personal stories and narratives, the intensive nature of each person’s experience and people constantly remaking themselves as an active, ongoing social project” (p. 545). In other words, the power of narratives is that they permit complexity and agency to be explored. Further, narrative stories are change agents that can challenge the “official” stories schools and institutionalized systems tell about the students, subordinated groups, and their families.

My positionalities have guided my research interest. I drew from the black feminist thought of Patricia Hill-Collins (2000) who stated that being a researcher of color is a struggle to regain voice. My research study with Latino families in six public schools in an

urban district in North Carolina is an attempt to help them find a voice, to tell their stories, and for me to tell my story.

In order to explain my research methodology and theoretical framework, I drew from the work of Shulamit Reinharz on feminist methodology. Reinharz (2000) explained that interviewing gives access to people's ideas, memories, and experiences in their own words. Reinharz (2000) added that feminist oral histories collected by a woman with another woman validates experiences of women and promotes continuity. In the same way, an immigrant interviewing other immigrants serves as validation, and dignifies their experiences. Reinharz stated that feminist researchers collect stories as a way to protest mainstream disciplines. My research was also a way to protest against years of invisibility, marginality, and academic blindness regarding Latino immigration.

As an immigrant researcher I felt that in order to collect these narratives I had to tell my own. I had to come "out of the closet" of fear and tell my immigrant story. This act was one of liberation for me and was a basis for a relationship with my interviewees. Christine Webb (2001) states that at times one needs to question motives and clarify: Whose side am I on? This can be done by an exchange of information—one that includes researchers telling our stories to the participants. Telling my story was like lifting a big weight off my shoulders; and in most cases it resulted in acceptance. To use a term used by Villenas (1996), it meant that I was not viewed as the "the oppressor" or the "colonizer." It meant acceptance as one of them—as what I am—an immigrant. Interviewees seemed to accept that we had a deep connection based in painful memories about migrating and being immigrants in the United States.

Telling my own story was an act that opened doors and built many relationships and friendships. Chicano feminist researcher Denise Segura (1989, 1994) stressed the importance of building relationships. Given immigrants' vulnerability, interviewees felt more comfortable talking to someone who was like them rather than a researcher who could not relate to them. She added that this opens the door for deep and reliable discussions. Reinharz (2000) added that if interviewers know that a person understands what they have gone through, they feel that they will be believed. That is the case with the Latino immigrants with whom I worked. I know that they knew that I believed them. How could I not? I have also lived through it. By self-disclosing, I reformulated the role of the researcher and I gained access to stories never before told. My goal was to bring out voices, experiences, speech, and feelings of those I was interviewing to enable others to hear what I heard as a researcher and to make visible this part of history that has been invisible. Reinharz stated that oral histories are ways to publish the views of those who otherwise would not have an opportunity to contribute to valued knowledge. This was precisely the case for the community I studied. The majority of parents that I interviewed were unauthorized immigrants (a term coined by Altha Cravey, 2004, to replace "illegal" immigrants). The majority of parents had no access to public institutions. They did not speak English, and for the most part they were scared of sharing their stories in fear of deportation and/or unfair treatment.

Because I had experienced what the participants experienced, I decided to give participants the opportunity to define our meetings. This was a power move. I included the pedagogy of their everyday lives in our interactions and as a result they had *confianza* (trust) to ask for the information they needed. Therefore, I provided participants with information

that they could use in their daily interactions with schools and other community organizations. I used this pedagogy to promote transformation and understanding among participants. I held monthly meetings that included about 20 parents from each of the six schools, where we discussed their rights, their children's rights, and the educational system in the United States, and I provided them with a resource for help with their concerns. As a result of these discussions, I began focusing meetings on topics chosen by participants. This focus on important issues provided those participants who were often silent a reason to listen and speak. This method, combined with the others, led to a new method of research. I redefined academic research to include feelings, aesthetics, and empathy. I wanted my role as the researcher to be that of an "insider." As a researcher, narrative inquiry allowed me a way to work with a community with whom I identify.

This long-term narrative research project was one where I heard, told, and codified stories as research in order to make it more accessible for media and for publications. Yet, I was concerned that translations can violate the central concern of narrative research: to preserve context. Thus, I have kept the narratives in their original language (Spanish, as well as translating them for those not literate in Spanish) as well as providing English translation. By providing the space to honor those life narratives in my dissertation, I also hope to signal to the wider academic community the value of hearing such stories in their original language.

My goal is to provide accurate representation of people's lives as they told them to me. My role as a researcher is both that of collector and narrator. When coupled with participation, narrative is generative. Because this research is situated in a community research approach, I have become the person in charge of the narrative. Therefore, I am a broker. I talk to people and disseminate these stories as a part of my work. As a result, I tell

stories (narratives) as a form of promulgation. I am the storyteller in the schools and community. As a Latina immigrant myself, I open a door to understanding by providing counter narratives to teachers and school officials promoting critical race analysis of a population they encounter daily.

Data Collection

Monthly meetings with Latino immigrants were held at six urban schools in North Carolina. Flyers were sent home inviting parents to participate in a dialogue about the U.S. educational system. About 20-30 participants attended each meeting; a total of 230 Latino immigrants participated in the community involvement meetings as part of this research. Thirty participants whose nationalities were representative of the three largest Latino groups (from Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala) in the total sample were interviewed in depth. Participants were asked if they wanted to share their life stories, and those who consented were interviewed. During the interviews, participants were asked to share

- 1) What were their experiences and interpretations of education in their countries of origin?
- 2) What are the migration experiences and interpretations of the Latino participants?
- 3) What are their experiences with and interpretations of education in the United States?

Interviews were recorded, analyzed, and compared by country of origin and whether or not the people considered themselves Indigenous. The narratives were then returned to the community as well as several teachers and an administrator during presentations provided by me. Bringing narratives back to the community provided “voice” and legitimization to the

immigrant experience in the community and schools. Additionally, it provided the basis for discussion about other social and educational problems. Hence, by doing advocacy through narratives, we redefined parent participation in a group of peoples with mixed literacy skills who traditionally had been silenced. It is a culturally appropriate approach rather than a Western *Whitestream* (Grande, 2000) and inappropriate approach.

A three-step triangulation process was utilized in the collection of narratives. The initial recruitment process allowed me to know and code participant's current demographic location (schools they came from/community where they lived, etc.). This was done via individual interactions with those participants who could not fill out a brief survey. Second, these were stratified by country of origin. Following this, the 30 participants were selected because of their willingness to be personally interviewed. These participants were then interviewed in Spanish. During the interviews they were asked to expand on their life stories, which included their educational experience in their country of origin, the life experiences, migration to the United States, their experience with the United States educational system regarding their child's education, and finally, how being in the United States has affected their identity. Because of the nature of the questions, the interviews were about three to four hours long.

I then looked for similarities, patterns, holes, and discrepancies in the data, as I coded the data. I analyzed the data in an attempt to interpret their experiences, struggles, and triumphs. Interviews were reviewed and narrowed to the six participants included in this study. The six participants included in the study were selected because their stories are representative of the themes found in all 30, and because of their availability to be

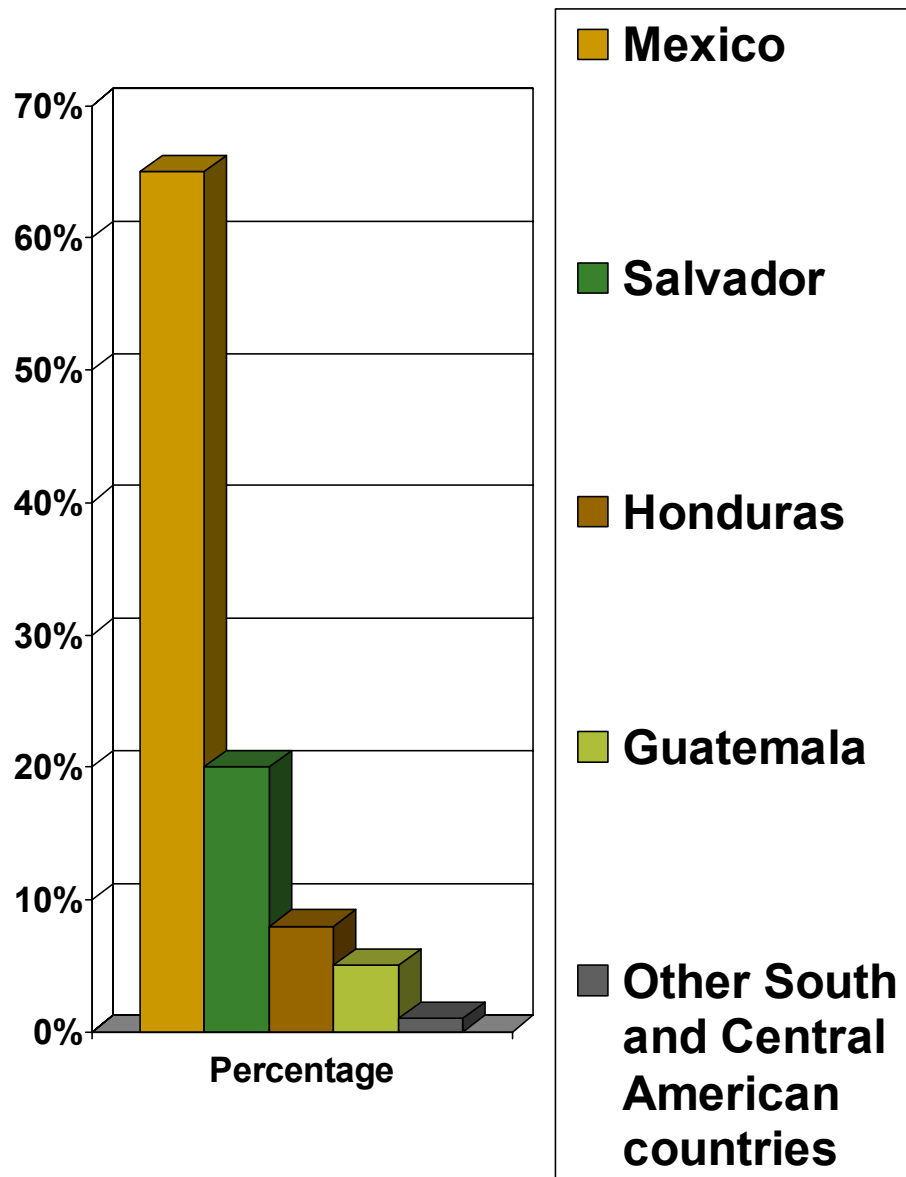
interviewed in depth. These data will lead to suggestions for teachers, school officials, policy makers, and the community.

Demographic Findings

Participants involved in this study were from different Latin American countries. Country of origin, language spoken, and nationality were identified through written and verbal surveys provided to participants. It was found that 65% of participants were from Mexico, 20% from El Salvador, 8% from Guatemala, 5% from Honduras, and 1% from other Central and South American countries (see figure 2.1). Most participants were not born in the United States, and 60% of participants involved were of “Indigenous” decent. Indigenous communities identified in this study include, from Mexico (Otomi, Náhuatl, Maya, Zapoteco, Mixteco, and Tzotzil), from El Salvador (Pipil, an almost extinct population), and Guatemala (K'iche' and Kaqchikel), among others. Overall, there were over 17 Indigenous languages spoken by those who at some point participated in community meetings. When asked about their knowledge of the school systems in country of origin, 55% reported that they had some formal^{xi} education (30% had some (K-12) education, 25% had some higher education) and 45% reported having no formal education.

^{xi} What I mean by formal education is (K-12) education in an educational institution.

(Figure 2.1) Demographic Results



Data Analysis

The data were analyzed and interpreted as I conducted the interviews, and more fully as I began to write the dissertation. The data were initially coded by the family's country of

origin and English language proficiency when the family first arrived in the United States, because that I suspected that these had an effect on the family's access to services. I used Alasdair Macintyre's (1981) notion of narrative unity, which gives a "way to think in a more detailed and informative way about the general construct of continuity in individuals' lives" (Clandinin, and Connelly, 2000, p. 3). The interviews were transcribed as narratives maintaining language used by the interviewee, the sequence of events, and their flow. I then compared and contrasted the narratives and considered their implications for education.

According to Barbara Czaraniawska, "narrative is a heuristic device, a metaphor useful for understanding organization." According to Czarniawska, the "researchers' role is to interpret these texts. They build world; we inspect the construction" (Clandinin, and Connelly, 2000, p. 11). This method also redefines analysis. As it involves the complexity of people's lives it "offers us as researchers a trust in life, and encourages us to listen to our teaching, to the stories that we, and those we teach, tell" (p. 17). As stated by Clandinin and Connelly, when analyzing data one goal will be "trying to understand experiences" (p. 17).

A narrative inquiry is:

Collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interactions with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up peoples lives, both individual and social. It is a story lived and told (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; p.20).

This chapter explored the research methods used in this research project. Chapter III provides the narratives of those of Indigenous descent. Chapter IV provides the narratives of those of non-indigenous descent. Narratives are presented first in Spanish and then in English translation of the narrative. Chapter V offers an interpretation of the narratives. Chapter VI

explores what these narratives may mean about our understanding of education of Latinos and how that education may need to move toward a concept of transnationality.

CHAPTER III NARRATIVES OF INDIGENOUS PARTICIPANTS

I borrowed Madison's (2005) definition of critical ethnography to guide the ethics of acquiring and distributing these narratives. Madison states that "Critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain. By 'ethical responsibility,' I mean a compelling sense of duty and well-being, and hence a compassion for the suffering of living beings" (Madison, 2005, p.5). This is an issue that is particularly central and imperative to the activist ethnographer, and to ethnographers like myself who conduct ethnographic research of people and communities from the same cultural and ethnic group. The question often arises, are we the colonizer or the colonized? Or can we be both? The ethical issue in this case for me lies in truthful representation and the possible misuse of ethnography by others (which I know it is something I can't really control). To move to the What is? to the What could be? as a form of resisting domestication is ideal but it raises many questions for me. I began to doubt as a result of a question that was posed to me after an interview with an Otomi Indigenous man who has been in North Carolina for about 18 years and who is known as the Otomi Indigenous man who has been here the longest. They call him "El sabiduria" (the knowledgeable). This 68-year-old (or so) man has been interviewed by many doctoral and

master's students. He has been a key figure within the Latino Indigenous groups in North Carolina.

He is very kind, a dark tan man, with short beard. He lives in a small townhouse apartment located in a very poor neighborhood. Immediately after he opened his door to me he smiled. I was immediately put at ease. He shook my hand and said, "Tu eras la mentada Margarita. Ya escuche toda la ruido que estas haciendo en las comunidades" (So you are "so mentioned" Margarita. I have heard about all the noise you are making in the communities). I was stunned that he had "heard" about me. I smiled and entered his apartment. The walls of the apartment were white; he had one single sofa bed and a small kitchen. He told me he slept there and other two men rented the other two rooms. He asked me to begin, and I said "Don't you want to know about me? What I will be doing with this interview?" To that he said, "I will by the end of our conversation." It was one of the most wonderful dialogues I have had. I was mesmerized by the resilience and strength of this 68-year-old man. And although he did not ask me one question, I felt that we were tuned in dialogue. He was, for lack of better words, unforgettably amazing! At the end of the interview he asked me his only question. He said, "Go with this question and let it follow you everywhere, let it become you, what will happen to his (interview)? How many hands and minds will penetrate it? And, what is going to be different? And finally, what does that make you?" He then got up, and said "Don't make any promises. Don't tell me this is to make a difference. When you figure it out come back." He then got up and said "I think is time for you to go." I was shocked, so I got up and said, "Gracias." To that he answered by saying thank you in Otomi, "Tiajui."

After weeks of thinking about this, I think he was really asking, "Can I live/deal with mal-intentioned representation? What are my ethics? Am I domesticating others?"

This example brings about the question of moving from politics to the politics of positionality (Madison, 2005, p. 6). *El Sabiduria*'s positionality of voices carried with it many meanings, corporal expression, language, and most importantly responsibility both in his part and mine as a researcher. It goes back to the "post critical ethnography" when Noblit et al. (2005) state that our acts are acts of domination. Again the question goes back I think for the critical ethnographer...Can I live with it?

In an attempt to answer this question to the best of my capabilities, and in attempt to be as true as possible to the stories told to me, I'm retelling these stories through the voices of those who entrusted me with them. In order to get to the What could be? question, one needs to know What is? This can be told no better than from those who have lived through it, in their language, and in codes of language, their mannerisms. Therefore, in order to be as true as possible to the lives represented in these narratives I decided to treat these narratives not as "an object, but as subject with agency, history, and his or her own idiosyncratic command of story" (Madison, 2005, p. 25). In order to do this and to respect their voice and their agency, I decided to present the narratives first in Spanish and then in English. This approach "addressed the profound importance of language relative to cultural identity and belonging as well as the multilayered implications when an imperial language displaces a people's language" (Madison, 2005, 49). Participants in this study live displacement daily; therefore, presenting their stories in Spanish has a three-fold purpose, 1) to honor them through their own voices, 2) to resist language domination and marginalization, and 3) to record their stories as part of history.

Thus, I present the narratives first in Spanish, and then in English translation and adaptation. The English version of the Spanish is both translated and adapted in order to

most truthfully convey the meaning of the codes of language available in the native language. The first three narratives are of Indigenous participants presented in Spanish first and then English. And the last three are non-indigenous participants presented in Spanish first and then in English.

Iza
“Ñañhu” (Otomi),
Pahuatlan, Mexico

La vecindad donde vive Iza es humilde, son apartamentos de dos pesos a los que les llaman “townhomes.” Descuidados y sucios por fuera. Un grupo de hombres que parecían obreros jugaban carta en frente de uno de los apartamentos. Al llegar con mi automovil todos paran y miran cada paso que doy... los saludos y les pregunto por la casa de la señora Iza...uno de ellos me pregunta....

Usted es la maestra?

Si, era maestra y ahora trabajo con la comunidad... y el señor me contesta...

Si pues la que habla en las escuelas...

A lo cual yo le respondo si.

Inmediatamente la tensión corporal de estos hombres para y como un clave de seguridad, como un derecho al paso, como cuidadores, me dirigieron al apartamento y siguieron jugando.

Al caminar al apartamento de Iza miro materiales de construcción y algunos niños jugando.

Uno de ellos corre y grita... ”Ya llego...la seno pa dona Iza”. El niño corre al apartamento de la señora Iza el numero 34. Y dona Iza sale. Y saluda con muy tímidamente y me deja pasar.

Dentro de su casa habían una pequeña televisor que esta acomodada en un mueble negro, dos sillones de color crema uno a cada lado de la sala para mejor accesibilidad a la pantalla. En medio de la sala una imagen de la virgen de Iza con candelas.

Mas atrás esta la cocina y el comedor los cuales son un solo espacio. La división de esta, siendo una humilde mesa de patas de hierro y mesa de madera. La casa estaba limpia, y e olor a canela y café eran fuertes. Inmediatamente ella me llama a la cocina diciéndome, “es el centro de mi casa...Quiere café echo en casa?”

A lo cual yo le dije que si. Dado que el simple olor me llamaba, me hipnotizaba, y me mesmerizaba. Era un olor tan extraño y tan conocido a la misma vez.

No se a mi se me ha echo difícil, pos todo esto. Es tan diferente y muy duro. Como usted sabe maestra pos nosotros somos de La Sierra México y pos lo que hablamos ahí es Otomí. En La sierra pos nos iba no tan bien. Yo crecí en una casa pos normal como la que teníamos las gentes aya. Mi Apa y mi Ama nos dieron pos lo que podían. Mi papa trabajaba en el campo para un jefe que tenia jarto dinero. Ahí trabajo por muchos años mi Ama pos hacia lo que saliera. Trabajaba en cocina, lavada, cuidaba pa los hacendaos... pos vivíamos. Es tan diferente aquí.

Iza se pone callada y pensativa por un momento...

Bueno mi familia vivió en el campo toda la vida. Yo tuve seis hermanos tres mujeres y tres hombres. Yo soy la mayor de todas mis hermanas y la del medio. Mi casa...*se ríe*...no era como las casas de aca. Era una casita chiquitita, ahí cabíamos todos. En mi familia se respeta

mucho el espacio. Pos, si mi hermana se estaba cambiando, pus, yo no mas esperaba. Mis hijos no son asi, se pelean jarto. Todo el tiempo.

Mi familia era una familia buena, mi Apa trabajaba mucho y mi Ama era la que siempre estaba con los hijos. Nosotros ayudábamos a mi Ama con todo en la casa y pues hasta cuando era niña ayudaba a mi Ama con la ropa o a limpiar alguna casa. Todas las hijas ayudaban. Mis hermanos se fueron a trabajar pronto. Los varones en la familia nomas anidaron en la escuela hasta como a segundo grado.

Yo le pregunto que si comenzaron a trabajar tan jóvenes.

Pus, trabajar a si todo el día no. Pero había que ganar dinero y pues perdían mucho escuela y pus no pasaban y luego ya estaban grande pa ir y pus se necesitaba el dinero. Y no siguieron. Yo llegue a ir hasta el trece grado, pus puedo leer en Español un poco. Por eso estoy tomando clases de español aquí, pa aprender bien. En el pueblo nos llamanos gentes que hablan otomi o "hña hñu". Asi es como sabemos que hablamos el mismo Otomi. Ahí otras gentes que hablan casi igual pero no "hña hñu". Mis hermanos todos se casaron chicos pus el mas grade tenia dies y seis cuando se caso con una chamaca del pueblo. Pus el ya trabajaba y pus 16 ya es grande aya. El otro se caso ya a los 18 y pues el mas chico se caso y mas mayor como a los 20 anos. Mis hermanas se casaron chicas también, yo también. Yo me junte cuado tenia 17 anos. Estaba bien pequeña. Mi esposo y yo nos conocimos en el pueblo cuando éramos niños y nuestros papas se conocían hace arto tiempo. Pero no nos conocimos así bien pus así como hablar, hasta que llegamos a trabajar a México. Nosotros no nos casemos pero nos juntamos con la bendición de los papas y la familia. Pus, lo que hicimos es que llegamos de México y el mi traía y me fui pa la casa dil y no la mia. Pus era muy caro dar a la iglesia.

Y pus no fue bien. La iglesia...*I ask which one...* catolica pus es importante pa el pueblo.
Pero no tan importante como la iglesia grande del municipio...

El pueblo de donde yo soy era muy pequeño—Pahuatlan, y había una cabecera que es como el centro. Hay había una iglesia y un santo padre que hacia las misas para el pueblo. Donde yo vivía no llegaba mucho el jefe de la iglesia pero al municipio más grande si llegaba, ellos si eran más importantes que nuestro pueblo.

Mi Apa era una persona fuerte y muy estricto, cuando el decía algo no podíamos decir que no, lo tínamos que hacer y ya. Mi mama también era muy fuerte ella también solo decía las cosas una vez. Fíjate que así como eran, ellos si nos hablaban jarto. Todo el tiempo se sentaban a decirnos de nuestros familias que ya no estaban y di como eran las cosas. Ello nos daban consejos y nos dician qui tiniamos ir a la escuela cuando pudiermos. Aunque nos sea mucho por lo que tiniamos qui trabajar. Mis papas estaban contentos que nosotros ayamos ido mucho mas tiempo que ellos a la escuela. Pus, ellos no fueron. Y si sintian mal de que no podíamos ir mas a la escuela. Ellos dician que teniamos que hacer mejor y ganar mas pa que nuestros chamacos podan vivir mejor.

Nosotros nomas hablabamos asi en la casa con opiniones. En la calle no se dicia nada. No chisme! Era lo que se tinia qui decir, si dicia en la casa con la familia y no con la gente di afuera.

Le pregunte que me diera un ejemplo...

Bueno, puz cuando nos jutamos, mi esposo y yo. El mi trajo a la casa di su Ama y pus la gente no dicia nada en el pueblo pero si en nuestras casas. Era un raro escuchar a su mama diciendo “ahí vino Adrián y trajo a Iza”. Eso era todo lo qui dician en la casa. Yo creo que la gente si dicia cosas en sus casa pero con nosotros pus no.

Le hago una pregunta acerca del tipo de cosas que sus padres le enseñaron a ellos.

Uff, un jarto. Ellos no fueron a la escuela pero sabían mucho. Nosotros no tiniamos dinero para ir a vernos en el hospital pero mis papas nos daban remedios y medicina que ellos cocinaban en la casa con hoja di afuera. Mi apas nos enseñaron eso, nos enseñaron el respeto a los demás que es algo que es importante. Nos enseñaron a tiner mucho cuidado con los extraños y a no hablar a personas qui no nos hablaban primero. Mi apa siempre dicia “diga lo menos” cuado istemos con gente qui no conocíamos. El no le gustaba muchas palabras, el dicia qui sus hijas hablaban mucho y qui teníamos que aprender a oir. Mi ama era callada y muy tímida y no dicia casi nada con otra gente qui ella no conocían bien. Cuando vendíamos ella dicia menos y mis hermanas y yo hablábamos mas. Esto era también porque ella no hablaba mucho español y pus yo mi mis hermanas sabiamos un poquito. Mi ama se enojaba y casi siempre nos regañaba por hablar jarto cuando nos hablaban y preguntaban y pus nosotras hablábamos con la gente. El la casa ira diferente todos nos sentábamos a hablar y a... *toma una pausa breve para preguntar...* como se dice cuando alguien dici algo que da jarto risa... *bromear...* si, bromear. Cuando comíamos nos hablábamos di todo, el día, de cómo estamos de dinero, que podemos hacer para ganar mas, y si un vicino estaba mal nos

puníamos a hablar pa ver qui poder dar. Mi apa y mi ama eran muy fuertes (*estrictos*) afuera pero el la casa era muy tranquilos y buenos. Nos daban jarto amor.

Yo cuando estaba mas chica era muy feliz. Mi apa como le diji no le gusto qui tuvimos que dejar de ir a la escuela pero como familia decidimos dejar pa ayudar, pus pa vivir. Mi apa siempre hablaba de un chamaco que vivía por la casa y qui termino y el podía leer bien y escribir y pus le hiba mejor con las jefes los *hacendados*. El pudo salir del pueblo y su familia también, y pus dician qui estaban muy bien. Mi apa siempre quiria eso el viia como la mucha gente estaba mejor y pus el quería qui nosotros estuviéramos bien. Yo pienso qui estábamos bien, mis apas nos dieron el saber chambear, el respeto, y lo importante de la familia y del la pueblo (*comunidad*). Todo nosotros por mis apas pudimos ser buenos y trabajadores asta sin escuela.

El pueblo de nosotros era uno di los mas chicos y quidaba jarto de lejos del mas grande. Para ir la pueblo di nosotros tiniamos qui tomar un bus del pueblo grande, despues in comino y caminar por mucho como por, y no se como un hora y media y después tomar otro comino por como treinta minutos mas. Casi nadien iba aya. Era muy lejos. En el pueblo no había gente di afuera todos éramos de ahí, todos nos conocíamos y nos ayudábamos. Éramos como una familia grande. Por eso cuando mi esposo

La gente del pueblo hace dinero haciendo pulseras de cintos. Todos pasábamos mucho tiempo haciendo eso. Pero como mi apa era peón y pus no ganaba mucho dinero. Cuando yo tenia siete años me fui pa la ciudad de México a chambear. Y llegaba a mi casa como unas dos veces al mes. En la ciudad de México nos quedábamos con unas gentes qui iba y traía a

persona del pueblo a la ciudad a trabajar, dician qui tenian trabajo...Era tan difícil...estar lejos de mi familia, yo era tan niña. Yo le digo a mis hijos y ellos no me creen... yo pienso. Asi pase limpiando carros, pidiendo en la calle, trabajando en fabricas, vendiendo pulseras, y haciendo de todo pa mandar dinero al pueblo. Esto lo hice hasta que cumplí 17 anos que es cuando conocí a Adrián. Nos encontramos en Mexico. Nos vimos en una feria y Adrián comenzó a hablarme bastante. El es de una familia de por ayi y pus nos hicimos amigos y nos hablábamos jarto. Fuemos buenos amigos por como seis meses y luego nos juntamos. El nunca fue a la escuela pero es buen trabajando, quiere mucho a su familia, y los handa bien. El quiria ir pero puz no pudo, tuvo qui trabajar. El mi dicia que el quiria que sus hijos fueran a la escuela y que tiniamos qui trajar jarto. Y pus, yo le dicia que yo también quiria lo mismo.

Se queda cayada y toma una taza enfrente de ella como pensando. Después se para y comienza a cortar pan y me dice...

Sus primos de el comenzaron la movida pa ca. Sus primos fueron los qui se fueron antes qui todos ellos habien escuchado en el pueblo grande que habia trabajo en el norte. Ellos hablaron con los hombres del pueblo y decidieron qui se fueran. Ese día qui se fueron todo el pueblo estaba despierto temprano y pus salimos a darles la bendición y pa ayudar a las mama de los primos de Adrián que se hiban. Mi ama nos levanto temprano y pus nos pusimos a cocinar pa llevar a las casas de los primos. Pa que las mamas y esposas no tuvieran que hacer nada porque pus da mucho dolor cuando se va alguien de la familia. Otras vecinas tambien hicieron otras comidas. Ya todas las mujeres se habian hablado pa la cocina y la limpiada de las casas de estas mamas y esposas. Y asi fue se fueron y las mamas y las

esposas lloraban y yo lo que pensaba era que estaba contenta Adrián se iba. Pero yo estaba feliz porque veía a las otras esposas y como lloraban. Lo que paso es que nosotros seguíamos. Yo me case dos meses después y vivíamos con sus papas porque la casa de mi mamá estaba llena.

Adrián: llega a la casa y me saluda a mí y luego a Iza. La abraza muy cariñosamente y le da un beso. Va a la cocina y le hecha agua a las flores que le había comprado. Yo le pregunto si había sido su cumpleaños y él dice que no. Que se las dio por amor. Los dos hijos de ellos bajan y lo saludan muy cariñosamente. Los dos hijos hacen una cara extraña y mueven sus ojos cuando ven la afección de sus padres. Él se sienta con nosotros y se incorpora la conversación.

Todo iba muy bien yo tuve a mi hijo y pus todos estábamos bien contentos. Adrián estuvo en el nacimiento de mi hijo. *Se queda callada...* Mi mamá no quiso ir. Éramos vecinas y no fue. No sé que le pasa a mi mamá es un poco rara. Mi esposo trabajaba en México y vendía los trabajos que hacíamos en la casa de su mamá. Su papá murió y pus estábamos con su mamá. Mis hermanos estaban más o menos entre todos nos ayudábamos. Un año más luego nació mi hija, y las cosas se estaban poniendo peor. Mi papá se enfermó y mi mamá estaba ya más enferma. Mis hermanas ya se habían ido de la casa. Mis hermanas y hermanos tenían sus familias y la mi familia era la más chica. Mi mamá tenía azúcar (*diabetes*) y pus ya estaba muy mal. No teníamos dinero para llevarla al médico. Mi papá tenía presión alta y ya no podía trabajar tanto. Un día a mi papá le dio un ataque y no teníamos dinero para las medicinas y pus el pueblo nos ayudó. Gastamos todo nuestro dinero y luego mi mamá se enfermó. Toda

nuestra familia estaba viviendo de la ayuda de los vecinos. Estábamos mal. Esa fue la primera vez que Adrián decidió irse al norte.

Adrián: Yo cruce la frontera por lo menos cinco veces. Me han cachado dos veces. La primera vez. Yo me vine solo. Mis primos no sabían qui venia y pus me fue a otro estado. Yo me hiba pus pa trabajar. Y me fui.

Iza: Un día me acuerdo mi hija tenía solo dos años y mi hijo cinco años cuando mi esposo vino y me dijo que había hablado con los hombres para ir al norte, y ellos le dijieron que me iban a cuidar a mi y a mis hijos. Adrián vino y me dijo que no le gustaba como estábamos que el tenía que hacer algo, y que se iba pa el norte con sus primos. Ellos le dijieron que había trabajo en Carolina del Norte, que iba a vivir con uno de ellos y que al siguiente día de llegar el iba a tener el trabajo. Yo estaba triste y con mucho dolor nos sabía que iba a pasar con mi familia. En dos días se fue al pueblo grande y pa el día siguiente ya se lo llevaron en un camión pa el norte. Ay que feo sentí, por mis hijos, por mi. Era como que me hubiera quedado sin marido, como que si había muerto. Las mujeres en el pueblo se portaron bien conmigo y con la familia. Nos ayudaban y pasaron muchos días casi tres meses cuando supe algo de mi esposo. Todo ese tiempo yo pensaba que algo le había pasado. Nadie sabía naa de el.

Un día llegó una carta el pueblo grande un chamaco que había ido a trabajar aya lo mando. Tuvi qui buscar a alguien qui mi lo leyera a mi y al familia. Dicia qui il pidió qui se lo escribiera. Ahí venían \$100.00 dólares. En esa carta me decía todo lo que tuvo que pasar pa llegar a la frontera de México con el Norte y de cuando nos extrañaba. Me dijo que me iba a

mandar a buscar cuando trabajara pa conseguir mas dinero pa pagar al coyote. Pus, me sentí mejor pero todavía mal por todo lo que decía en la carta. El decía que no pudo comer por días y qui al llegar no tuvo trabajo por la nieve y lo frio. Me sentía mal y sola con mi niños.

Pasaron dos anos sin poder vernos, el nos mandaba dinero y pus los niños lo extrañaban mucho, y yo mas. En ese tiempo comencé a lavar rope de hacendaos del pueblo grande. Y pus, así vivíamos. Mi mama me ayudaba con los chamacos y ellos ya estaban creciendo. Mi niño tenía siete y iba la a escuela y la niña tenía cinco anos. No estábamos nada bien y yo estaba desesperada, hasta con lo poquillo qui mandaba. Las medicinas de mi ama eran muy caras y ahí si iba el dinero qui el mandaba. Luego uno de sus primos llegó y me dio un número de teléfono y dinero y me fui con mis chamacos al pueblo y lo llame. Ya tenía anos sin escuchar su voz. Los dos nos pusimos a llorar no llegamos ni a decir nuestros nombres ni, hola ni nada, solo lloramos!

Comienza a llorar...se limpia las lagrimas y me dice...

Namas con acordarme me pongo a llorar. Eso fue duro. Yo le digi qui quieria ir con el. Que los niños estarían bien con mis papas. Y el me dijo que si. Me dijio qui hablara con mis apas y que si ellos decían que si que me viniera. Le colgué y quedamos en hablar el siguiente día. Hable con mis papas ellos digieron que me iban a cuidar a los niños. Me sentía tan mal porque el pueblo se estaba quedando ya con solo personas mayores y niños. Muchos de los papas y mamas se estaban huyendo al norte. El pueblo era de viejitos y niños. Me sentía tan triste. Mis niños estaban chiquitos y mis papas tan mayores. Pero, tenía que hacerlo necesitábamos ganar mas.

Así paso el tiempo y un día hable con Adrián y me dijo que tenía que estar en el pueblo el siguiente día en la temprano para irme con un camión de personas que iban a recoger. Esa noche no dormí. Abrasé a mis niños toda la noche y los bese...les dije cuanto los quería y que yo iba a regresar. Le dije a mi hijo que él tenía que ser el hombrecito y ser fuerte pa su hermana y a mi hijita que se portara bien. En la mañana todo paso tan rápido, me levante, me bañe, me despedí de mis papas y pus, me fui.

Comienza a llorar...

Namas me acuerdo cuando vi pa tras y mis niños estaban llorando mi ama tenía a la niña y mi apa al niño. Me fui rezando que todo fuera bien.

Todo fue como un sueño malo. Me sentía tan mal, no era yo en ese camión. Cuando se iba el camión muchas veces pensé en tirarme y regresar pero no lo hice.

Pasamos tres días de un pueblo a otro. Todos hadábamos hediondos y yo no podía ni comer. Una muchacha de otro pueblo que recogieron me decía que tenía que comer porque cuando llegáramos al río iba a ser duro pero no hice caso y no comí esos frijoles pasaos y fríos. Solo lloraba.

Por fin llegamos a la frontera en la noche y tenían un lista de las personas que necesitaban pagar y los que ya habían pagao y los que tenían que pagar en el norte. Yo tenía que pagar en el norte.

Bueno, los qui pagaron pasaron primero fueron los que ya habían pagado. Ellos fueron primero por eso. Luego los qui tenían dinero y por ultimo los qui iban a pagar aquí en el norte. Yo espere en una casa donde solo mi dieron pan por tres días hasta qui me pasaron. En

esa cuarto no mas nos daban leche y pan una vez al día y si largaban. Ya yo tenia jarta hambre pero éramos como diez de nosotros y no había mucho pan. Yo me sintia mal, cansada, y con jarta hambre. Yo dicia que nos iban a dejar ahí. No sabia lo qui iba a pasar conmigo.

Después de tres días vinieron por nosotros y nos llevaron al rio Grande.

Fui duro pasar el Río Grande. Hacia jarto frió era enero y estaba un frió. El agua del río estaba tan fría qui tratamos de cruzar como tres veces en un día y naa. Un muchacho trato de cruzar y no pudo llegar. Su fuerza se fue y se. Todos comenzaron a jalar hasta yo pero naa. El gritaba qui lo ayudaran...Un coyote li dijo qui se callara porque nos iban a agarrar. Y se cayo. Lo logramos sacar pero ya estaba morado, y murió. Yo tinia un miedo y dolor. No tratamos de cruzar hasta la otra noche y nos encomendamos y así criuzamos. El agua parecía qui no quiria dejarme pasar. Qui me estaba castigando por dejar a mis chamacos. Las juerzas si mi iban y yo trataba de jalar pero no tenia fuerzas. No se ni como lo hice pero llegue al otro lao. Cuando llegue al otro me echaron una colcha y seguimos caminando.

Caminamos toda la noche hasta qui llego un camión y nos llevo a una casa. La casa estaba fría y nos dijeron ahí solo con pan y leche...otra vez. Yo pidi otras colchas y nos dieron dos mas par nueve personas. Todo estábamos enfermos y hasta con fiebre. Yo comencé a vomitar de la fiebre y a temblar de dolor, y mis huesos mi dolían.

Por fin, mi llegaron a buscar y mi llevaron a la casa di una señora qui me dio medicina y me hablo en Otomí. Primero, yo pensaba qui estaba en mi casa. Fue rápido todo en mi mente

pero me quede ahí por cuatro días. Luego me levante y me di conocí a la señora qui era de México. De otro pueblo. Ella llamo a mi esposo al numero qui encontró en mi ropa, me dio ropa limpia y dinero pa tomar un bus y vinirme a Carolina del Norte. Así fui qui con la gracia de Dios me pude montar en el bus pa llegar aca.

Respira profundamente!

Llegar aquí era como bajar al pueblo grande pero peor. En el pueblo grande conocía un poco di español pero aquí nadien sabia hablar Otomi or Español. Paramos dos veces antes de llegar a Carolina del Norte. Cuando baje del bus, Adrián me estaba esperando. El se viia tan mal. Flaco y acabado. Y el mi dijo qui yo me miraba igual...y nos reimos de la pura alegria. Nos abrazamos por mucho tiempo y hablamos por muchas horas de los niños de nuestros apas y de todo lo que no pudo ver. Le conté de cómo estaba quedando el pueblo solo con niños y viejitos.

Bueno, hablamos jarto.

Nota que ya termine mi café y me ofrece otra taza la cual acepto.

La siguiente mañana salí y vi a muchos de los hombres del pueblo qui si habían vinido... ¡Casi todos! Ellos estaban durmiendo en otro cuarto. Todos mi preguntaban de sus familias y quirian qui les dijera todo lo que vieia aya. Yo fui la única mujer y luego como dos meses después lleo la esposa de otro hombre.

Bueno pa, no alargarte y acortarle, comencé a trabajar como a las dos semanas limpiando hoteles con una vecina qui havia conseguido trabajo haciendo lo mismo. Ocupe unos papeles

chuecos y así conseguí trabajo. Al comienzo ganaba \$100.00 a la semana por trabajar de la 6 a la 6 de la noche. Llegaba a mi casa cansada y con mucha hambre. Namas nos daban 15 minutos de descanso. Todavía trabajo ahí y gano ahora después de seis años \$200.00 al mes. Pero como encargada de más cuartos como 25 más cuartos. Muchas de ellas también son de por aya, de a donde soy yo, y otras de también México. Otras son de Salvador y otras de Honduras.

El teléfono suena y se levanta a contestarlo.

Bueno...No...No esta. Llame mas tarde.

Y luego cuelga.

Eso era lo bueno de estar en el pueblo nadie tenía teléfono pa ¡molestar! Fueron años muy difíciles porque mis hijos no llegaron hasta hace dos años. Ya estábamos tan cansados de estar solos. Necesitábamos a los niños.

Mi hijo llegó primero. El hermano de Adrián Si vino pa ca y le pedimos que si podía traer al niño y puso dijo que sí. Ellos llegaron por Texas y pasaron mal. Ellos estaban en el desierto por muchos días sin que nadie los ayudara. Eran un grupo de personas que iban y pasaron en el tiempo de frío y ellos nomás traían una chamarra de tela, naa muy bueno pa el calor. Pasaron cuatro días en el desierto con el frío en la noche. Dijo mi hijo que hasta nieve cayó. Cuando él llegó aquí a él estaba bien malo. Con una enfermedad de la anginas muy mala. Yo pensaba que casi se me moría. Le pasó jarto mal. Después que se sintió mejor mi hijo dijo que no quería hacer eso más nunca jamás.

Lo mitimos en la escola y le fue pus mas o menos. El no sabia mucho español y lo poco qui sabia no era muy bono. Pus otros niños también qui hablan español si reia in di el. Entonces cominzo a aprender il español mucho. No se era como qui tinia qui aprenderlo pa tene amigos.

Adrián: yo lo li dicia qui nosmas habláramos in Español pa practica. Pus yo no quiria qui le pasara como a mi. Yo sabia español muy poco qui aprendí en la ciudad di México, pero era español pa vender cosas y muy poco no mucho. Y no podia habla con otros de México muco y pus es muy feo cuando tratan di hablar en español y uno no entiende. Hasta in la escola lo mismo. La genti pisa qui sabemos habla español y pus así nos habla y pus hay jarto qui no entiendo. Pus cuando pudi ir a clase de español pus lo hice y ya tengo un año con clases di español. Y es difícil pero ya pudo escribir mi nombre. Y también pudo leer una oración pequeño esto muy feliz. Voy a seguir pa pode hablar bien.

Así fui qui le iseron ellos dos y dispues yo fui con ellos pa las clases. Luego faltaba mi hija y con todú lo qui mi hijo había paso pus no quisimos qui si vieniera sola y la fui a buscarla yo. Yo mi fui pa el pueblo y estuve ahí po tres semanas y luego no fuimos la frontera. Íbamos con unos personas qui cruzan....Coyotes....y pus ellos li dicen a uno lo qui ahí qui hacer. Y no llevaron a la frontera con texas y no dijeron qui teníamos qui caminar y caminar por jarto tiempo noche y día. Y mi pobre hija tinia jarto sueño pero pus nos dician qui teníamos qui seguir caminando y tuve hasta qui arrastrar a mi pobre hija. Luego de un día completo y una noche y la otro día completo pus nos viniron a buscar. Era una trocka negra de esas “ford” grandes y pus del ano. Le tuvimos qui correr tudos los hombres si fueron en la parte di atrás y las mujeres en li parte de frente. Pus no había mucho lugar a donde estar. Íbamos sies

mujeres en un lugar donde nomas caben dos. Y vinia mi hija en el medio. La pobre tinia qui bajarse hasta la parte mas debajo de las silla po qui no podía aguantar. Tomo como cinco horas pa llegar y luego nos llevaron a una casa. Cuando lligamos a esa cas no podíamos ni camina y nos apuraron jarto rápido pa qui nos bajáramos dil camión y pa qui nos fueramos adentro. La piernas istaban tan entumidas y nos dolian jarto. Y pus yo casi mi cai porque no podia mover las piernas y mi hija mi agarro y mi llevo pa dentro di la casa. y ahí estuvemos hasta qui llegara il señor qui nos iba a llevar. Y nos quidamos dos día ahí y luego no metieron en otro carro y nos trajeron pa ca. Fue difieil y pus yo tinia jarto miedo porque no sabia qui iba a pasar con nosotros. Y pa peor nomas hiramós la niña y yo.

Mis hijos no le gusta aquí ellos se quieren regresar al pueblo. Ellos dicen qui aquí no pueden aser naa. Qui en la escola li dicen qui no le gusta a los Mexicanos y a las gentes qui hablan español. Mi pobre hijo a tenido jarto problemas este ano. Me llamaban al trabajo todú el tiempo y era porque illos dician qui el era parte di un ahh...(Adrián le dice por detrás...Pandilla)...si, pandilla. Y pus fui a la escola y el maestro dijo qui era porque el hadaba con un pañuelo azul en el brazo. Ese pañuelo si lo ponen algunos hombres en nuestro pueblo pa el sudor. Hace jarto calo y pus todo los hombres lo ocupan. Y pus en la escola no creyeron. Yo fui a la escola y nos cuando llegue nadien hablaba español. Mi hicieron sentarme ahí por jarto tiempo. Hasta qui una señora mi dijo qui saliera. Llamaron a otras maestra y en el ahí donde caminan todas las personas y los estudiantes. Y mi comenzaron a preguntar cosas de mi, quirian saber como lo tuve, y qui comi cuando el nació, y qui tipo di cosas hacíamos en la casa. Ellos quirian saber porqui no lo ayudáramos y qui hizo en la escula en México y qui clase de convivio tinia yo con el.

Mi preguntaron porqui Adrián no estaba ahí y pus mi preguntaron si a el le importaba y pus yo les dije qui si pero qui el estaba trabajando. Y también lis diji qui el hablaba mucho con el. Las maestras mi pidieron qui fuira a la escuela a seguir por todas sus clases pa ver como si portaba. Y pus comencé a ir. Iba todos mis días libres por dos meses y pus me parencia tan mal porque en una clase un niño nomas le gritaba a la maestra. Yo no entendía pero si se le miraba en la cara lo qui dicia. Mi hijo mi dijo cuando llegamos qui el le dicia a la maestra cosas feas. Y diario viia a un estudiante durmiendo en el pasillo di la escuela. Los maestros pasaban y pus nadien le dicia nada. El chamaco nomas ahí durmiendo en piso frió como qui era su cama. Después cuando iba pus me ignoraban, y nadien me hablaba mi saludaban y ya. Pero si me sentía como qui a las maestras no les gustaba qui yo estaba ahí. Luego deje de ir.

Estos niño aquí...yo les digo a los mios qui tienen qui estar felices porqui pueden ir a la escuela, no tienen qui trabajar, tenemos un apartamentito y pus estamos bien...Aquí son Mexicanos y no tanto indígenas pus del pueblo.

Como yo le diji yo desde chiquita pus trabajo y pus Adrián también. En México no nos quirian mucho. Cuando llegue aquí pus nos hicimos más mexicanos. Yo soy Mexicana porqui naci ahí. Pero cuando estaba en México yo era Otomí. Y pus los soy pero, cuando la gente nos miraba muchos sabien qui yo no hablaba de la misma manera qui las personas en la cuidad di México. La mayoría nos trataban bien mal, y pus se burlaban porque éramos indios...pus del pueblo. Nos preguntaban di adonde éramos y nos lis diciamos di a donde y pus deciamos de Puebla y pus ya sabian. La gente alla cuando li dices qui eres di puebla y nos miran lo prieto, y como hablamos pus ya saben qui somos indígenas. Pa mi ser Otomi es lo primero yo siempre me senti como qui no era parte de los Mexicanos por qui no éramos

iguales. Por ser como eramos jartas personas nos robaban, nos golpeaban, eran groseras, y nos trataban bien mal. Siempre era no igual, diferente, la india. Mucha gente se creen mas porque son de la ciudad, porqui hablan mejor, porqui son menos pietros, porqui trabajan en oficinas, porqui fueron a la escuela. Pus, a los del pueblo nos miraban mal. Como qui no serviamos...como si no fuéramos del país. Cuando llegue aquí pus todos estamos como mexicanos y pus por eso pus vamos también a clases de español.

Cuando llegamos aquí pus la gente no nos preguntaba di a dondi eramos nos priguantaban cuando lligamos di mexico. Muchas personas nos hablaban in español y pus a veces no entendiamos y si enojaban con nosotros. Muchos pensban qui eramos malos pero pus no sabiemos como decir muchas cosas asi bien. Ahora voy a la escuela todo los martes y los jueves a aprender español y pus nos va bien.

Adrian: Si mire...(escribe en un pedazo di papel) "Adrian". Ya pudo escribir mi nombre. Cuando yo voy a la afuera yo le digo a mis hijo qui no quieron qui hablen Otomi. No. No quiro qui se rian y qui los molesten, asi nomas piensa la ginte qui son como todos los otros mexicanos.

Iza: Pus a mi no me importa porqui yo soy Otomí y ya. Pero el no mi deja y pus lo entiendo y mi a dicho qui no quiere qui nos traten pior y pus si la de verdad no quiro qui mis hijos posin todú lo qui pasamos nosotros cuando éramos chamacos. Fue muy feo. Todo por ser del pueblo y por ser indígenas. Porqui nos veian haciendo shaquiras!

Ahí pus qui le digo...No jue fácil!

Yo lis digo qui tinemos qui cambiar como somos, y como nos comportamos en diferentes lugares. Tinimos, pus, pa poder agarrar trabajo, pa vivi, y echale. Yo creo qui personas qui vinimos a batajar aquí somos como animal qui cambia pa qui no lo agarren. Pa qui no nos agarri la migra y pus otra gente qui son canijas y quieren hacernos puro mal. Yo lis digo qu la manera qui uno habla is pus lo primero qui ellos ven. Tinimos qui ser como camaleones, siempre cambiando y ajustandonos. Si, pus somos camaleones. Por eso yo lis digo a mis hijos en la casa Otomi, ajuera español, y ingles cuando aprendan.

Y lo bueno qui paso aquí esqui aquí somos Mexicanos y pus si hablamos otomí con otras personal Otomí pero en la casa o muy cayado pa qui no nos oigan. Todos sabemos lo qui pasa cuando ya se dan cuenta muchas personas nos van a tratar mal. También hay otras persona qui son muy nobles y buenas pero ahí mas personas qui nos trataban mal. Aquí el problema es qui pus todo es en ingles o en español y pus porqui no podemos hablar español nos quidamos atrás pus no sabemos leerlo hasta ahora qui estamos aprendiendo. Todos piensan qui sabemos español y pus no asi mucho y bien.

Yo veo en la televisión como odian a los mexicanos y pus a mi mi gustaria ir me a mi pueblo pero pus no hay como ganar dinero. Haciendo shaquiras nos se hace... Nos e puede vivir. La gente del pueblo vive de lo qui se manda qui aca, todo lo qui quedan son viejos y niños, y pus ellos viven di o qui mandamos di aquí. Pus todos tratan de salir del pueblo pa ganar dinero y comprar una casita aya. Los demás salen y mandan dinero y asi viven. Qui aria yo aya con mis chamacos si me deportan, ahí no!...no se como viviríamos. No tinemos ni casa! Pero pus

estamos tratando de ahorar pa poder mandar dinero pa qui mis papas puedan comprar e terreno de la casa. Osea, la casa esta ahí, pero el terreno no es di nosotros y pus cuesta jarto. Como en un ano mas talvez ya. Nose haber lo qui pasa.

Por ahora pus nos se qui hacer con todo lo qui pasa, mis hijos an cambiado tanto disde qui llegaron ya nos e portan igual. Ya no me quieren hablar en Otomí y pus no mucho en Español. Mi hijo me contesta en ingles y pus yo no lo entiendo. No se qui voy a hacer. El respeto que yo vi cuando era chamaca aquí ya no esta con mis hijos y pus no se como mejorarlo no se como se hace eso. La verdad yo ni mi esposo tuvimos asi problemas en il publo. Pus nosotros en el pueblo éramos bien portados y pus nuestros papas se respetaban. No como esto chamacos aquí. Estamos perdiendo a nuestros hijos y pus no lo queremos hacer. Quiremos qui siempre nos hablen así como cuando vinieron así como lo hacíamos Adrián y yo con nuestros familias. Ojala qui nos el maleen y qui aprovechen y qui hagan bien con la...opotu...oportunidad de este país. Como dicen mis hijos qui cuando crecen van a ser de aya y di aca porqui quieren trabajar y hacer algo grande aya. Ojala qui si, por ahora pus pusimos teléfono en las casas di nuestros papas y pus les mandamos dinero pa lo qui necesiten ellos y el pueblo. Ya donamos pa qui limpiaran el parqui entre muchos del mismo pueblo di aquí y pus haber qui mas acimos. No estamos ahí pero si somos de ahí, y pus uno nunca sabe como va a estar aquí en mas adelante y pus por eso tratamos di mejorar también ahí y aquí. Los dos lugares son importantis, en los dos hay algo...con los dos tenemos qui vivi!

Iza's English Adaptation

The neighborhood where Iza lives is humble, two-story apartments called "town homes."

From the appearance of the cracked walls one can tell that they're not taken care of and they are dirty on the outside. A group of men that looked like workers were playing cards in front of one of the apartments. As I arrived with my car, they stood and watched every step I took. I greeted them and asked them for Mrs. Iza's house. One of them asked, "Are you the teacher?"

"Yes, I was a teacher and I now work with the community."

The man said, "Yes, you're the one that speaks at schools."

I answered, "Yes."

Immediately, the men's corporal tension eased as if they had provided me with security clearance to enter. They gave me the right of way. Like guards, they guided me to the apartment and then continued playing.

As I began walking into Iza's apartment building, I saw kids playing next to construction materials. One of them got up and yelled, "She has arrived—the lady for Mrs. Iza." The boy ran to Mrs. Iza's apartment number 34 and Mrs. Lupe came out, timidly greeted me, and let me in.

Inside her home was a small television on top of black furniture, and two cream-colored couches, one on each side of the living room for better accessibility to see the television screen. In the middle of the living room was an image of the Virgin de Guadalupe with prayer candles lit.

Further in was the kitchen and dining room, both located in the same space, which was divided by a humble table with iron legs. The house was clean and there was a strong smell of cinnamon and coffee. Immediately, she called me into the kitchen: “This is the center of my home. Would you like some homemade coffee?”

The smell of the coffee called me, hypnotized and mesmerized me. It was a strange smell, yet recognizable, that drew me in to hear what Iza had to tell me.

I don’t know, but it has been hard, all of this. Is so different and very hard. Like you know teacher, we are from the highlands of Mexico, this is the tongue (Otomi) we speak.

In the highlands it didn’t go too well for us. I grew up in a normal house, like the one we have over there. My *Apa* (Dad) and *Apa* (Mom) would give us what they could. My Dad would work in the fields with a *jefe* boss who had a lot of money. There he worked a lot of years; my mom did whatever she could. She worked in the kitchen, washed clothes, and she would take care of stuff for the owners...well...we lived. It is so different here.

Iza stayed quiet and thought for a moment.

Well, my family lived in the fields all their lives. I had six brothers and sisters—three brothers and three sisters. I’m the eldest of all my sisters and the middle child. My house—*(She laughed.)* it wasn’t like the houses over here. It was a small home, we would all fit in there. In my family we respected space. Well, if my sister was changing, I had to wait patiently for her. My kids are not this way; they fight all the time.

My family was a good family; my dad would work a lot and my mom would take care of the kids. We would help my mom with everything in the house. When I was a little girl, I would help my mom with the clothes or do some housecleaning. All the daughters would help *Ama*. My brothers started work early. The boys in the family stayed in school only until the second grade.

I asked: Did they start to work young?

Well, working all day, no. But money needed to be earned...so they had to work to help out...And while working...and they would lose too much school, they would not pass to the next grade level, and then, they were too big to go. Because money was a necessity, they did not continue in school. I, on the other hand, was able to go until the third grade. I can read in Spanish a little. That's why I'm taking Spanish classes here, to learn. In the village we are called people that speak Otomi or "hña hñu." This is how we know we speak the same. Otomi—there are others who speak other (languages) but not "hña hñu." My brothers all got married young. The eldest was 16 when he got married with a girl from the village. Well he works now, and at 16 you are old enough there. The other married at 18 and the youngest married later at 20 years. My sisters also married young, me too. I married when I was 17 years. I was very young. My husband and I got to know each other in the village when we were kids and our parents knew each other from long ago. But we did not know each other well, like they say, not until we got to Mexico. We did not get married (by church), but got together with our parents' blessing and the family's. What we did is when we got here from Mexico, he brought me, and I went to his house not mine. It was very expensive for the

church. So, it was not good...The church, (*I asked which one*) Catholic, is important for the village. But not as important as the big Municipal Church.

The village where I am from is in the small town of Pahuatlan. It was a small town. There was a small church and a priest that would give mass for the village. Where I lived, the head of the church never came but he did for the Municipal Church. They were more important than our village.

My dad was a strong person, very strict. When he would say something, we could not say, “No”; we had to do it, and that’s it. My mom was also very strong; she would say things only one time. Just how they were, they would always talk to us. All the time they would sit down and tell us about our families that were not there anymore and how things were. They would give us advice and would tell us what we had to do, when we could. Even though it was not much, because we had to work. My parents were happy that we were able to go farther in school than they had. They would tell us we had to do better so that our children would live better.

We would only speak like that (as a family sharing points of view) at home. In the street we would not say anything. No gossip! What ever had to be said, it was said at home with the family and not with the people outside.

I asked her to give me an example.

Well, when we (she and her husband) got together, he brought me to his mother's house. The people in town would not say anything in the *pueblo* (village) but they did at my house. It was strange to hear his mother say "Here comes Adrian and he brought Iza," That's all they would say at home. I believe the people would say things at their house, but with us there, they didn't.

I asked her a question regarding the kind of things that his parents taught them.

A whole lot. They did not go to school but they knew great deal. We did not have money to go check ourselves in the hospital but my parents would give us remedies and medicine that they would make at home with leaves from outside. My parents taught us to respect others, which is very important. They taught us to be very careful with strangers and not to speak with people that would not speak to us first. My dad always said, "say the least." He did not like too many words when with strangers. He would say that his daughters would speak a lot, and that we had to learn to listen. My mom was quiet and very timid and would not say much with other people she did not know. When we would sell she would speak little and my sisters and I would do all the talking. This is mostly because she could not speak Spanish very well. My sisters and I knew just a little more. My mom would get upset with us for talking too much when people asked questions and we started a conversation. In the house, it was different. We would all sit down and talk and...*pauses* ... "How do you say, when someone says something and it makes you laugh?" Joking...Yes, joking. When we would eat we would talk about anything—our day, how we were with money matters, what we could do to make more, and if a neighbor was not doing well we would talk about it to see if

we could help. My dad and mom were strong (strict) outside, but in the home, they were calm and good. They would give us a lot of love.

When I was small, I was very happy. My dad, like I said, did not like that we had to leave school, but as a family, we left in order to help out the family, so we could live. My dad always said that a kid that finished school could read and write well. He would do better with the owners and bosses. He would be able to get out of the village and so would his family, and they said he would do really well. My dad would say that a lot, people were doing well and he wanted for us to do good as well. I thought we were doing good...my parents taught us how to work, show respect, and the important things of a family and the village (community). All of us due to our parents are good and worked hard even without school.

The village was one of the smallest and was far from the bigger ones. To get to our small village we had to take a bus from the big village, then on the way there, we had to walk a lot—about an hour and a half. We would take another path, like 30 minutes more. Almost no one would go there. It was too far. In the village there weren't any people from the outside. We would all know each other and would help each other. We were like a big family.

The people from the village make *chakiras* (wristbands). Everyone spent a great deal of time doing this. But because my dad was a worker and didn't make much money, I went to Mexico to work when I was 7 years old. I would get there (home) about two times a month. In the city of Mexico, we would stay with people who would go to our *pueblo* (village) to tell us they had work for us. To get *gente del pueblo* (villagers) to go work in the city (Mexico

City). It was hard to be far from the family. I was so young. I tell this to my children, and they don't believe me, I think. This is how it was: cleaning cars, begging for money, working in factories, selling wristbands, and doing everything to send money to the village. I did this until I turned 17. This is when I met Adrian. We found each other in Mexico. We saw each other in the fair; Adrian started to talk to me. He comes from a family from there *el mismo pueblo* (their home town) and we became friends and started to talk a lot. We became good friends for about six months and then we eloped. He never went to school but he works hard and loves his family and takes care of them. He wanted to go (to school), but he couldn't; he had to work. He would tell me that he wanted his children to go to school and he wanted for us to work hard. I told him I also wanted the same thing.

She stayed quiet, thinking. Then she started to cut bread and told me...

His cousins started coming over here to the United States. His cousins were the first ones to leave. They had heard there was work in the north (*el norte*). They spoke with the men in the village and decided to leave. On the day they left, the village got up early and we went outside to give them their blessing to help Adrian's cousins and their moms. My mom woke up early and started cooking food to take to his cousins' house. So the moms and wives didn't have to do anything, because it really hurts when someone in the family leaves. The neighbors also made food. All of the women talked and decided to cook and clean for these moms and wives. This is how it happened. They left and the moms and wives cried, and all I thought about was that I was happy because Adrian was not going. I was happy, but I would see how the other wives would cry...It was sad. We *en el pueblo* (in the village) just

kept going. I got married two months later, and we lived with his parents because my mom's house was already full.

Adrian came home and said "Hello" to Iza and me. He lovingly hugged her and kissed her, then went to the kitchen and put water to the flowers he had bought for her. I asked him if it was her birthday and he said, "No." He just got them out of love. His two children came down to greet him. And they rolled their eyes as they witnessed their parents affection toward each other. He sat with us and joined the conversation.

Everything was going well. I had my child, and we were all very happy. Adrian was there for the birth of my son. My mom didn't want to go. We were neighbors, and she did not go. I don't know what was wrong with her; she is a bit strange. My husband would work in Mexico. He would sell the things (jobs) we would make at home. His dad died, and we were with his mom. My brothers were doing well. We would help each other out. One year later my daughter was born, and things started getting worse. My dad became sick, and my mom was even more ill. My sisters had already left home. My sisters and brothers, all had their families. Mine was the smallest. My mom had sugar (diabetes) and she was really sick. We didn't have money to take her to the doctor. My dad had high blood pressure and couldn't really work anymore. One day my dad had a stroke and we did not have money for medications, and the people in the village helped us. We spent all of our money and my mom got sick. Everyone in our family was getting help from our neighbors. We weren't doing well. This was the first time that Adrian decided to go to the north (el norte).

Adrian: I crossed the border at least five times. They caught me twice. The first time I came alone. My cousins didn't know I was coming, and I went to a different state. I went to work and I left.

Iza: One day I remember, my daughter was only two years and my son was 5, when my husband came and told me he had talked to the men to go to the north (el norte). They told him that they would take care of my children and me. Adrian came and told me that he didn't like how we were doing, he had to do something and he was leaving for the north with his cousins. They told him that there was work in North Carolina. He was going to live with one of them, and the next day he would have work for him. I was sad and hurt. I didn't know what would happen to my family. In two days he left for the big village, and the following day they took him on a bus to the north (el norte). It was an ugly feeling for my children and me. I felt I had lost my husband, as if he had died. The women from the village were good to my family. They would help us. Many days passed. Almost three months passed before I knew anything about my husband. All that time, I thought something bad had happened. No one knew anything about him.

One day a letter came to the big village. A kid that went here (NC) brought it. I had to look for someone to read it to me and the family. It said that he asked someone to write it for him too. There was \$100 in it. He told me everything he had to go through crossing the border from Mexico to the north (el norte), and how much he missed us. He told me he would send for me as soon as he could make enough money to pay for a coyote. Well, I felt better but I still felt bad for everything the letter said. He said he did not eat for days, and when he got there, he could not find work due to the snow and cold weather. I felt bad and alone with my

kids. Two years passed before we saw each other. He would send us money, but the kids really missed him and I did even more. During that time, I started washing clothes for the ranch owners in the big village. That's how we lived. My mom would help with the kids as they were growing up. My son was 7 and went to school, and my girl was 5 years old. We weren't doing well, and I became desperate, even with the little he sent. My Ama's (mom's) medications were too much, and we would spend it on them. Then one of his cousins came and gave me a phone number and money. I left for the village with my kids to call him. I had been years without hearing his voice. We both started crying before we even said hello or our names. We just cried.

She started crying, then wiped her tears.

Just remembering, I start crying. It was hard. I told him I wanted to be with him, that the kids would be fine with my parents. He said yes! He asked me to talk to my parents and if they said, "Yes," to just leave. I hung up, and we agreed to talk the next day. I talked to my parents, and they said they would take care of the kids. I felt so bad, because only old people and children were left in the village. All the dads and moms were leaving for the north (el Norte). The *pueblo* (village) was full of old people and children, I felt so sad! My children were so young, and my parents so old, but I had to do it. We needed to earn more. This is how it happened: one day I spoke to Adrian and he told me I had to be in the *pueblo grande* (big village) early the following day to leave in the bus that was picking up people. I didn't sleep that night. I hugged my kids all night long and kissed them. I told them how much I loved them and that I was going to come back. I told my son he had to be strong and take

care of his sister and I told her to behave. The following morning, everything happened so fast. I got up, took a shower, said my good-byes and left.

She started crying.

I only remember when I turned around and my children were crying. My mom had my little girl, and my dad had my boy. I left praying that everything went well.

Everything was like a bad dream. I felt so bad, it wasn't me in the bus anymore. When the bus was leaving, a lot of times I thought about throwing myself out and going back, but I didn't. We took three days, going village to village. We all smelled bad, and I couldn't even eat. A young woman from another village told me I had to eat because when we got to the river, it would be hard. I didn't listen and didn't eat those! *Frijoles pasados y frios!* (Old and cold beans). I just cried.

We finally arrived at the border and they had a list of people that had to pay. Those that had paid and those that needed to pay in the el Norte (north). I had to pay in the el Norte (north).

The first to pay were the ones to cross first, since they had already paid. They got first pick. Then the ones that had the money, and then the ones that had to pay in the north. I waited in a house where they gave me only bread for three days until they helped me cross. They would come into the room only to give us milk and bread once a day and they'd leave. I was so hungry, but there were ten of us, and there wasn't that much bread. I was feeling bad, tired, and hungry. I didn't know what would happen to me. At some point, I thought they were going to leave us there! *!Perdidos con ese sueno...con la pura esperanza!* (Lost with

that dream...hanging on to hope) ...After three days, they came for us and took us to the Rio Grande.

It was hard to cross the Rio Grande. It was cold in January. It was really cold. The river water was so cold that we tried to cross three times but couldn't. A young man tried to cross and could not make it. His strength gave out, and everyone tried to pull him out—even I did—but we couldn't. He was screaming for help. A coyote told him to stop screaming because they would catch us, and he got quiet. When we took him out, he was purple and died. I was scared and was hurting. We didn't try to cross until the following night, and we prayed and crossed. The water seemed to not want to let me cross. I felt that it was punishing me for leaving my children. My strength got weaker. I tried to pull but didn't have any more strength. I don't know how I did it but I made it across. They gave me a blanket, and we kept walking.

We walked all night until a bus came and took us to a house. The house was cold. They just left us there with only bread and milk again! I asked for more sheets, and they gave us two more for nine people. We were all sick and fevered. I started vomiting and trembling because of the pain. All my bones were hurting.

Finally, they came to pick me up and they took me to a lady's house. She gave me medicine and talked to me in Otomi. I thought I was in my own house at first. Everything was happening so fast, but I stayed there for four days. When I got up, I met the lady. She was from another village in Mexico. She called my husband at the number she found in my

clothes. She gave me money and clean clothes to take a bus to North Carolina. “*Gracias a Dios*” (Thank God) I was able to get on the bus and come here.

She inhaled deeply.

When I came here, it was like going to the big village but it was worse, no one could speak Otomi or Spanish. We stopped two times before coming to North Carolina. When I got off the bus, Adrian was waiting for me. He looked so bad—skinny and worn out. He told me I looked the same. We laughed. We hugged each other for a long time and talked for many hours about the kids and our parents. I told him about how the village was getting empty with just old people and children. We talked for a long time.

She noticed that I had finished my coffee and offered me another cup.

The next morning I got up and saw all the men that had left the village sleeping in the other room. Everyone wanted to know about their families and they wanted me to tell them what I saw over there. I was the only woman there until two months later when another man’s wife came.

Well to *par acortar* (to shorten the story), I started to work cleaning hotels with a neighbor that did the same thing. I used some *papeles chuecos* (bad papers) and that’s how I got the job. At the beginning I got \$100 a week, working 6 to 6 at night. I would get home tired and hungry. They would give us only 15 minutes break. I still work there after six years, and now I make \$200 a week because I’m in charge of 25 more rooms and more women. Many

of them are also from there (her home town) and from other parts of Mexico, others from El Salvador, and others from Honduras.

She answered a brief phone call.

That was the good thing about being in the *pueblo* (village): nobody had a phone to bother you with. Those were very difficult years. We were tired of being alone and we needed the children.

My son came first. Adrian's brother was coming here, and we asked him if he could bring him and he said, "Yes." They came through Texas and *cruzaron mal* (crossed with hardships). They were in the desert for many days without help. They crossed in the winter and they had only cloth jackets, not very warm. They spent four days in the desert with cold nights. My son told me that it even snowed. When he came here, he was really sick with a sore throat really bad. I thought he was going to die. He was really sick and when he felt better, he told me he never wanted to do that again.

We put him in school, and he did well. He didn't know much Spanish and the little bit he knew was not good. Other kids who spoke Spanish would laugh at him. Then he started to learn more Spanish. I don't know how he learned it so fast, maybe to have friends.

Adrian: I would tell him to just speak Spanish so that we could practice. I didn't want him to go through what I went through. I knew very little Spanish that I learned in the city of Mexico, but it was Spanish to sell things and it was very little. I couldn't speak with others

from Mexico much. It is really ugly when someone is talking Spanish and one doesn't understand. Even in school here, the same thing. People think we speak Spanish, but there's a lot that I don't understand. When I could go to take Spanish classes, I did, and now I have a year with Spanish classes. It is difficult, but I can write my name and I can read a small sentence. I'm very happy. I'm going to keep going, so that I can speak right.

Iza: That's how they both did it, and then I went with them to class. Then my daughter was left and after everything that my son had gone through, we didn't want her to cross by herself. So I went to look for her. I went to the village for three months and came back to the border. We were with people that cross people over—coyotes—they tell you what needs to be done. They took us to the Texas border and told us we had to walk. They told us that we had to keep walking and I even had to drag my poor child. After a whole day and all night and another day, they came to get us. It was one of those black Ford trucks from that year. We had to run. All the men had to go in the back and all the women in the front. There wasn't a lot of space. There were six women taking space where only two could fit. My daughter was in the middle. Poor her, she had to go down from the seat. She just couldn't stand it anymore. They took about five hours to get there and they took us to house. When we got to the house, we couldn't even walk but they hurried us so we could all get down from the truck and go inside. Our legs were so numb they were hurting. I almost fell because I couldn't move my legs and my daughter caught me. She took me inside the house. We stayed there until the man arrived, the one that was going to take us. We stayed there for two days. Then they put us in a car and they brought us here. It was really hard because I

was so scared and I didn't know what would happen to us. The worst thing is that it was only my little girl and I.

My kids don't like it here they want to go back to the village. They say that they can't do anything in school. They tell them that they don't like Mexicans people who speak Spanish.. My poor son has had a lot of problems this year. They would call me at work all the time, it was because they would tell him that he was part of a...(Adrian tells her from behind: *pandilla* (gang)... Yes, gang. And I went to the school and the teacher said it was because he wore a blue handkerchief on his arm. In our *pueblo* and in my family the men tie it on their arm to wipe the sweat. When it's really hot, all the men wear it. And they didn't believe us in school. I went to school and when I got there no one would speak Spanish. They just left me there on a seat for a long time. Until one lady told me to get out. They called another teacher and they wanted to know all these things about me. They wanted to know how I had him, when was he born, what kinds of things we did at home. They wanted to know why we couldn't help him and what he did in school back in Mexico and what kind of relationship I had with him.

They asked me why Adrian wasn't there and if he didn't care, and I told them, "Yes," but he was working. I also told them he would speak a lot with him. The teacher told me to go with him to all of his classes (as a shadow) to see how he was behaving. So, I started going. I would go every day I had off and I thought it was not good, because one kid would scream at the teacher. I didn't understand his words, but you could tell what he was saying by looking at his face. My son told me when we got home that he would tell her ugly things. Everyday

I would see a child sleeping in the halls of the school. The teachers would pass by and wouldn't say anything to him. The kid was just there sleeping on the floor as if it were his bed. When I went there, the teachers would ignore me and no one would talk to me. They would say, "Hi," and that's it. But I felt that the teachers didn't like that I was there and I just stopped going.

These kids here, I tell them to be happy because they can go to school here. They don't have to work. We have an apartment and we are good. Here they are Mexicans and not Indigenous from the *pueblo*.

Like I told you, I have been working since I was a little girl, and Adrian has as well. In Mexico they didn't like us *los indios* (Indigenous people) as they would call us...so much. When we got here we became more Mexican. I am Mexican because I was born there. But when I was in Mexico, I was Otomi. I am, but when people would look at us they knew I didn't speak like the people of Mexico. The majority would treat us really bad and they would make fun of us because we were Indians from the village. They would ask us where we were from and we didn't tell them, but we would say we were from Puebla, and they would know. People over there, if one tells them one is from Puebla, they just look at the dark skin and how we speak and they know we are Indigenous. For me, being Otomi comes first. I always felt that I wasn't part of the Mexican people, because we were not the same. Just for being who we were, a lot of people would steal from us, hit us, and say mean things and treat us really bad. I was always the different one, the Indian. Most people felt they were from the city, they speak better, because they are less dark and work in an office, they went to school. They would look down at us because we were from the village. As if we

weren't worth anything, as if we didn't belong in this country. When I came here we are all considered Mexican and that's why I'm taking classes in Spanish.

When we got here, people didn't ask us where we were from, they would ask us when we got here from Mexico. A lot of people would speak to us in Spanish and sometimes we would not understand them and they would get upset with us. Many thought that we were mean but we really didn't know how to say many things the right way. Now I go to school every Tuesday and Thursday and it's going pretty good.

Adrian: Yes, look! *He wrote on a piece of paper:* "Adrian." I can write my name. When we go outside I tell my kids not to speak Otomi. No, I don't want people to laugh or bother them. This way people think they are Mexican like everyone else.

Iza: Well, I don't care because I am Otomi and that's it. But he doesn't allow me to be, and I understand he doesn't want us to be treated bad or worse. He just doesn't want our children to go through what we went through when we were kids. It was bad. It all happened because we were from the village and were Indigenous. I tell them that we have to change *como somos* (how we are), *y quien* (who we are), when we are in different places. We have to change, *pa trabaja* (to get a job), *vivi* (live), *y ir derecho* (and to push ahead). I think all people who come from other places do that. *Somos como el animal que cambia pa que no lo agarren* (We are like an animal that changes so that we are not caught) by the *migra* and other people who want to hurt us. I tell them (*pointing to her children*) the way you is the first way they see who you are, and they first way they can use that to hurt! I tell them (his

children) that they have to be like *Camaliones* (chameleons), *siempre cambiando y ajustandonos*. *Si pus somos como camaliones!* (Always changing, and adjusting. Yes, we are like chameleons!) *Pore so yo les digo a mis hijos en la casa Otomi...afurea Espanol y ingles cuando aprendan!* (This is why I tell my children: at home, Otomi, but outside, Spanish or English when they learn it).

What can I tell you? It hasn't been easy. The good thing that happened here is that we're Mexicans here. We do speak Otomi with other people who speak it as well or at home and very quietly so that we are not heard. We know that if people find out they will treat us badly. There are people who are kind, but there are also mean people that would treat us badly. Here the only problem is that people speak either Spanish or English, and we are behind because we didn't know how to read until now that we are learning. Everyone thinks that we speak Spanish, but we don't that much. I see on television how they hate the people who speak Spanish and Mexicans. I would like to go back to the village, but there isn't a way to make more money over there. Making "shaquiras" will not be enough. One can't live off that. People in the village survive with what is sent from here. Only the elders and children are left, and they live off money sent from here (U.S.) Everyone else got out trying to make some money. They send money and this is how they live. What would I do if they catch and deport me, no way!...I don't know how we would live. We don't even have a home! But we are trying to save so that we can buy a house. We are trying to save so that my parents can buy the land to build a home. Well the house is there, but the land doesn't belong to us and it's really expensive. Maybe in one more year, I don't know, we'll see what happens.

For now, I don't really know what to do. My children have changed so much. They don't behave the same way anymore. They don't want to talk to me in Otomi or Spanish. My son answers in English, and I don't understand him. I don't know what I'm going to do. The respect that I saw as a little girl, I don't see it in my children. I don't know how to improve it. I really don't know how to do that. Truthfully, neither my husband nor I had this kind of problems. Back in our Pueblo we were better behaved, and our parents were respected. Not like these kids here. We are losing our children and we don't want that to happen. We want them to be able to talk to us, like Adrian and I used to do with our families. I hope they behave and do better here and take advantage of the opportunities of this country. Like my kids say, when they grow up, they're going to be from there and here, because they want to work. I hope so. We put a phone in our parents' house and we send them money for whatever they need in the village. We made a donation so they clean the park. Among all of us that are from the village, we'll see what else we can do. We are not there, but we are from there, and we don't really know what will happen in the future. That's why we want to make it better there and here. Both places are important. We something in both, and we have to live with both.

Francisco (Pipil), El Salvador

Francisco es uno de los padres que religiosamente llegaba a las reuniones de padres Latinos. El llegaba y les decía a los padres que había que "hacer algo" para que los escucharan. Cuando Francisco accedió a entrevistarse con migo, llegue a su casa. Un apartamento localizado en un área pobre y conocida por la diversidad y su reputación de violencia.

Al entrar al apartamento de Francicazo se podía oler pollo frito el cual su esposa Jimena estaba haciendo. Jimena y Francisco se conocieron aquí en los estados unidos hace ya siete anos. Al entrar había un pequeño sofá, y un meza para comer. La casa estaba limpia y hasta olía a “pine sol”. Las niñas de Francisco estaban en el cuarto y Maria la manda a llamar para que saluden. Las dos Carla y Adriana son muy parecidas, morenas con pelo lacio, y ojos grandes.

Francisco me hace pasar a la mesa y comenzamos a platicar....

Nojotros somos una familia muy diferente a muchas de las familias que usted ve aquí. Yo soy de las Hojas, el Salvador, y mi esposa es de Chiapas México. Los dos hablamos Nahuat. Y los dos pues nos comunicábamos al comienzo. Tenemos mucha juerte porque Ella habla un Nahuat diferente al mió, pero todavía hay algunas cosas que si se pueden entender.

Francisco le dice a su esposa que se siente con nosotros en la mesa en Nahuat. Ella le baja al fuego de la estufa y se sienta con nosotros.

Como yo le dicia los dos somos “indios” como nos dicen. Yo creo que nos conocemos hasta de lejos. Cuando yo la vi yo supe que ella no era como las demas que ella era una de nosotras. Ella te puede contar luego de cómo llego.

Mi familia vivió en Las Hojas, Sonsonate toda vida. Mi familia habla Nauta. Igual que otra gente que de ahí, beno...los pocos que quedamos todavía. El español lo aprendimos porque pues no nos aceptaban como indios. En el Salvador siempre éramos eso indios. Personas que no tenían derecho. Todo era tan chueco y mal ahí. Para nojotros no era bueno si nos escuchaban hablando en Nahuat en las calles. La gente nos trataba mal si nos oía. Entonces

desde muy pequeño yo aprendí a hablar español, pa vivi. Ahí mucho gente que dice que en el Salvador ya no hay indígena, pero la verdad es que si hay, pero es como que hemos vivido escondidos por muchos años. Muchos piensa que ya no hay gente indígena, pero si habemos pocos. Y hasta ahora las cosas todavía no están tan bien. Por ejemplo, aquí yo le puede decir a usted que yo soy Nahuat pero yo se que usted no me va a criticar por eso. Ya me ha tomado mucho tiempo para decirle esto bueno que soy indio. Para usted hasta ahora yo soy del Salvador y la verdad lo soy para gente que no conozco pero para la gente que yo le tengo confianza, no me escondo y soy indio Nahuat del Salvador. Ahora le estoy teniendo confianza, aquí todavía se mira eso pero no tanto y en verdad que aquí somos nada mas del Salvador no como en nuestro país que la gente sabe luego, luego....Aquí la gente no sabe mucho de ojo.

Nojotros vivíamos bien pobres, pues con lo necesario. Ya nojotros trabajaamos en lo que se pudiera. Éramos en esos tiempos una familia de ocho. Mis papas no tuvieron educación y nojotros, digo los hijos tuvimos muy poca. Yo aprendí a leer en la escuela donde...siempre me decían y me hablaban acerca de la cultura del Salvador, y pues yo nunca estuve ahí. Mi familia ya no se bestia ají como antes, sino que nos vestíamos igual que todos las personas. Mis papas siempre quisieron que nos trataran bien. No como a ellos y desje muy pequeños nos decían que teníamos que ser como los demás y no oírnos tan indios. Yo creo que por eso nos mandaron a la escuela mas tiempo que otras familias. Yo era y soy un hombre que anda siempre metió en todo y cuando joven me metí a un poco de los derechos, cuando chico hasta anduve en los movimientos de derechos indígenas. En ese tiempo las cosas se estaban poniendo peor y había mucho problema entre el gobierno y nuestras comunidades. Y las

cosas se ponían peor. Habían gentes que nos decían que el gobierno venía a agarrarnos ya a sacarnos de nuestras casas y pues estuviéramos listos pero nada como cuando llego...y ese fue el tiempo cuando deje a mi pueblo...

Yo la verdad deje pues mi pueblo porque en 1997 nos tiraron de nuestras tierras en Las Hojas—nuestro hogar. Pues muchas gentes se dieron cuenta antes de que llegaran algo estaba pasando. Pues nojotros estábamos bien en nuestras casas y de repente llegaron unos camiones, policía, ambulancia y llegaron a las casas y nos montaron un los camiones. Pues antes de que nos llevaran... peleamos, y mucho. Pero ellos tenían pistolas, y un gas que ardía los ojos. No teníamos tanta fuerza como ellos. Y nos ganaron. También, había muchos niños y mujeres y la cosa se ponía peor. Nos montaron en un camión y nos llevaron a algunos a la selva. Ellos escogían a quien llevar. A mi familia la desaparecieron...*se pone a llorar*...uno a uno nos fueron dejando, algunos en grupos. Pero...Yo los busque mucho...por muchos días....En el monte encontré algunas personas que me decían que habían visto a algunos de mi familia pero nada así seguro. Yo pase días en el bosque sin saber nada....Y hasta este día te puedo decir que no se nada...*llora*...nada, nada, nada.

Yo me regrese a Las Hojas pero ya se habían quedado con las casas. Habían unos hombres que eran de un grupo de de derechos que me ayuda a irme a la capital y de ahí comencé a trabajar. Yo vivía en un cuarto con otras personas pero siempre regresaba y aunque me decían que no lo hiciera que era peligroso, ellos pensaban que yo estaba muerto. También me iba al monte donde me dejaron...bueno yo pensaba que ahí era donde me dejaron, había dejado una camisa para saber Y me caminaba por mucho tiempo. Pero nunca encontré

nada...En la capital puse un queja, porque así me pidieron algunas personas las personas del movimiento pero nada los del gobierno no hicieron nada. Mientras yo trabajaba haciendo de todo. Hasta que un día uno de los que se estaba quedando conmigo me dijo que me viniera a los estados unidos, y yo de tanta desesperación, me vine. Pues al irme me sentí mal como que iba dejando todo y pues sí pero había esperado tanto para encontrar a mi familia ya años después, y nada...y me fui con la esperanza de comenzar mejor, y hacer dinero para regresar a buscar a la familia.

Como yo estaba solo pues huerjano, yo tenía un poco de dinero guardado. Y con eso nos fuimos a Guatemala. Nos fuimos de San Salvador a Santa Ana que es la frontera de las dos ciudades, y de ahí cruzamos. Éramos apenas nosotros dos. Cuando llegamos a Guatemala ya no nos quedaba mucho dinero y pues dormíamos en la calle o a donde cayera el sueño. Nos montábamos en el bus y ahí dormíamos. Tuvimos que trabajar algunos trabajillos para tener más dinero cuando saliéramos. La verdad ni mi amigo ni yo sabíamos a los que nos metíamos, íbamos solos y los dos nunca habíamos cruzado. Tomamos unas dos semanas para cruzar Guatemala, y luego cruzamos a México escondidos en un carro. Claro que le tuvimos que pagar a la persona que nos cruja pero por lo menos cruzamos bien. Incómodos, y mal acomodados pero con vida, y pudiendo cruzar.

Luego en México ya fue otra cosa. No se hay muchos cosas que nos pasaron en México. Yo creo que lo más importante fue que nos robaron y nos dejaron sin un chelín. Sin nada. Ahí estuvimos en la calle, a mi amigo lo golpearon, y estaba mal. Pues yo era el que estaba trabajando bueno si se le puede llamar trabajo, era lo que se encontrara en lo que fuera. Pero la gente no me quería dar trabajo. Llegue hasta pedir limosna y ayuda para poder comer, para

agarrar algo. Estábamos ahí por mucho rato...cruzamos muchas líneas...muchas...de verdad que muchas...íbamos cruzando líneas y haciendo marcas. Fue mucho tiempo de eso.

Hasta que un padre llegó y se me acercó. Me pregunto si acababa de cruzar y yo le dije que ji. Y le dije de mi amigo también y nos llevo a un albergue donde habían un jarto de nojotros.

No me lo vas a creer pero en ese albergue yo aprendí un montón. Me quede ahí por un año y medio, pues no ganaba mucho pero ayudaba al padrecito con lo que se pudiera. Éramos muchos de centro América. Ese padre nos ayudo mucho y todavía sigue ayudando. Lo que era malo es que mucha gente lo veía como si estaba haciendo algo malo porque recogía a personas como yo que se habían quedado sin nada en la cruzada...cruzando líneas. El era bueno, y a él lo atacaban por todos lados pero él decía que su fe lo mantenía...ese fue un gran ejemplo para mí. Yo lo admiraba él era mi familia.

Cuando yo decidí irme del albergue me sentí como que se estaba faltando al padrecito pero el padre me comprendió y me dio su altísima bendición y le prometí que lo iba a ayudar. Ellos ahí fueron como mi familia. Muchos ahí lloraban por sus familias por lo habían perdido. Por sus cuerpos dolidos, sus marcas por las marcas que les dejó las líneas. Pero yo lloraba porque nunca los pude encontrar.

Así pues lleno de coraje y también esperanza para lo que me venía en el futuro, me fue y me vine para el norte. Yo crucé por ciudad Juárez., para llegar ahí me dure un mes entero. De empujones, y de jalones, y de favores, y en camión. Yo no quería gastar mi dinero en eso cuando yo sabía que lo iba a necesitar para la cruzada. Al llegar a ciudad Juárez me fui donde unas personas de una iglesia con una carta del padrecito y ellos me ayudaron con comida y cama. Ellos me decían que tenía que estar bien de salud para cruzar. Luego me fui a buscar pollero y eran muy caros. Tome el riego, ya me había arriesgado tanto que yo decía—tengo

que llegar. Y me fue en una maletera de un carro grande. Las personas que me cruzaron tenían mucho miedo pero dijeron que lo habían echo una vez antes y que todo fue bien. Bueno, me metí adentro de la camioneta y estamos como a una hora de la frontera. Y yo pues ahí metió. Hacia tanto calor, que después de un rato ya yo so sentía nada, ninguna parte de mi cuerpo. Estaba arregostado en el hierro del la cajuela. Y así me jui. Me acuerdo cuando pasamos, estuvimos paraos como dos minutos pero se me hizo una eternidad. Y ya yo venia con tanto dolor. Cuando ya comenzó a correr el carro otra vez, estuve ahí como una media hora mas y luego me llevaron a un garaje y me sacaron. Les di lo que tenia de dinero, me bañe, lave mi ropa y me jui. Sin saber a donde iba solo tenia una dirección que un muchacho en el albergue me había dado en Carolina del Norte donde el iba a trabajar. Y así pregunte...y lo bueno es que la gente en Tejas habla español porque no me fue difícil encontrar el camión para jaca. Compre mi pasaje, y me vine. Luego tome un taxi y me llevo a una compañía de tabaco y así fue que comencé a trabajar aquí hace ya mas de diez años.

Como yo era soltero nunca quise quedarme así pues, y tome clases de ingles en las noches una vez a la semana, esperaba conocer a gente qui no trabajaran conmigo. Y uno de los señores ahí se iba a ir a trabajar en una compañía de construcción y me dijo que estaban buscando trabajadores y que iba a ganar tres dólares mas, y la verdad no me pude contener y me jui.

Cuando yo llegue rápido me comencé a ganar la confianza de los jefes, y como en un año me hicieron un jefe del grupo también. Y jui practicando mi ingles, y hasta ahora pues no es perfecto pero si se lo básico....ósea que si te hablo en ingles vas a tener que escuchar fuerte pero me vas a entender lo que te quiero decir.

Mi esposa es de Chiapas, y ella también habla Nahuat. Ella le puede decir.

Maria: Yo soy Nahuat y yo llegui aquí hace como seis años con un grupo que vinia de Chiapas pa trabajar. Yo me quide aquí. Yo trabajaba haciendo de todo. Como no se leer en Español solo lo se hablar mejor, entonces yo trabajaba en lo qui podía. En lo primero que encontré, eso jue lo que ise. Yo le ayudaba a una señora en su tiendita y asi fue como concí a este hombre [She points to Francisco] El desde que me conoció quería con migo pero yo no, porque yo le mandaba dinero a mi familia y no quería nada que me iba a dejar de mandar dinero...o un hombre que me dijera que le tenia que dar.

El me espera afuera del mi trabajo y nos fuimos siendo amigos y el no sabia que yo era Nahuat hasta que un día, una amiga me hablo y yo le conteste en Nahuat y el se dio cuenta de verdad...Pero según el sabia...pero yo no creo...yo si no sabia que el era Nahuat hasta ese día...Cuando nos dimos cuenta nos comenzamos a ver mejor y a hablar mejor...yo creo que porque los dos habíamos pasado alguna de las mismas cosas y lo que mas me impresiono...era que...el se sentía bien de ser Nahuat...pues con migo...Y a mí me dio mucho gusto...y me comenzó a gustar...Para mí yo siempre voy a ser Nahuat y Mexicana después...y para el es lo mismo. Hablamos de hijos, y los dos quiriamos que nuestros hijos hablaran Nahuat, y que crecieran con eso en ellos.

Toma una pausa larga y se reí, muy picadamente....

Lo mas mejor es qui el y yo hablamos diferentes Nahuat, y pa hablar siempre legábamos que hable quien era el bueno. Y pues todavía lo acemo a veces, y lo que asimos ahora es que a las niñas les dicimos los dos. Y ellas saben los dos Nahuat el de papa y el de mama. Yo siempre

les digo que ellos tienen que saber que hay diferentes Nahuatl de hablar, es de donde son, de donde naciste. Pero todos de todos modos somos conectados. Y yo creo que si lo saben.

Yo no creo que yo estuviera casada si no con uno de donde yo soy o que sepa el Nahuatl. Es muy duro con todas las creencias llevarse bien. Y cuando lo conocí, me llegó bien, y me case. Yo me siento a gusto de que los dos podamos seguir con los que nos enseñaron a él y a mí.

Todo este momento, Francisco mueve su cabeza como afirmando la importancia de todo lo que María estaba diciendo.

Francisco: Cuando nos casamos pudimos hacer algunas cosas en la casa en Nahuatl, y fue muy especial. Yo sí que lloré porque era algo que había querido toda mi vida. Y no quería tampoco esperar para tener hijos, en nuestra cultura es una bendición y ya los dos quiriámos. Yo tomé dos trabajos y María se quedó en casa... Yo le atiné y a los dos meses y estaba de encargo. Y como estaba embarazada se tenía que cuidar y se quedó ya en la casa. Yo también le dije que no quería que otros cuidaran a los hijos y pues que yo le iba a echar ganas pa poder ganar...y hasta ahora...todo bien...no vivimos como ricos...y no vivimos en un lugar muy seguro...pero mis hijas están con su madre y eso me hace sentir bien. En la casa nosotros le estamos enseñando de nojotors, la familia, la vida de sus padres, de donde somos, lo que comemos aya [en nuestro país], y como hablamos...bueno son mis hijos y los hijos de ella, eso se tiene que enseñar.

Mis hijas nacieron aquí [en los Estados Unidos] y pues hemos tenido que lidiar con falta de seguro cuando mi esposa estaba embarazada y todavía estoy pagando cuentas de la primera. Tenía miedo de buscar ayuda porque no tenía papeles. No decían otras gentes que si le buscábamos ayuda no íbamos a poder ajustar los de nosotros.

Ya pa la segunda me dijeron que yo podía conseguirle pa que tuviera la niña a un bajo precio...y todavía pagamos pero muy poquito a comparado con la primera.

Fíjese, que yo todavía seguía con las clases de ingles y hasta horita las tomo una vez al mes. Y ahora es mucho más importante porque mis hijas ahora ya comenzaron la escuela y ellas no sabían ingles. Hablaban Nahuat, y español...pero se les hizo duro...

Las pusieron en clases bajas y no han tenido unas calificaciones que son así muy buenas. Ya en la casa les decimos que entre ellas hablen también en ingles cuando están haciendo la tarea...pero a su mamá...

Maria: No me gusta...pues ya les ha dado por nomás hablar en ingles y no me quieren contestar, y yo no se que fregados dicen...A mi no me gusta...no poder hablar con mi hijas...y no saber...qui dicen, o qui lis pasa...No me gusta.

Yo se que tiene que aprender ingles, pero también no quiero que se olviden de esto, del Nahuat...ellas tienen que saberlo todos...pues yo pienso qui así van a poder ayudar y saber mas a donde vallan. Así pueden hablar con nosotros y otras personas.

Yo digo que cuando hagan las tareas que se ayuden y que hablen en ingles pero ya después, ya no...no me gusta. Yo no se que dicen. Me hace sentir como que no su mamá sin saber lo qui dicen, sin sabe que ayuda necesitan.

Ellas alegan conmigo porque dicen qui las se ríen de ellas y les dicen cosas y yo les digo de todo lo que decían a mi a su papá y que hay que aguantarse y no hacer caso, y que me doliría mucho si no pudieran hablar Nahuat después. No, es parte de ellas, ya les dije.

Francisco:_Yo creo que las dos tienen razón...que niño le gusta que se rían de el. Yo se que a mí no me gustaba y la verdad me sorpendo de que a mis hijas les este pasando lo mismo que me paso en mi país por lo de Español, aquí a ellas es con el ingles. Pero también yo se que Maria tiene razón, y que por lo menos en la casa se tiene que hablar.

Cuando llevamos a nuestra hija a la escuela maestra ni sabia que era Nahuat. Mi hija le dijo y ella nos sabía lo que era. Yo le traje un diccionario y busque la palabra y se lo di. Luego ella comenzó a preguntar de lo que comíamos, que vestíamos, que hacíamos, y de todo. Y ella que pensaba que...no lo se...que somos como nos ponen en los libros con una pluma en la cabeza...pero yo creo que si aprendió ese año. Yo con mi ingles mal, me iba a buscar cosas pa que supiera di nojotros. Y así nos pasamos el ano. Pero no me gustaba cuando en el salón les dijo a los niños que éramos “indios”. Yo tenia años qui no me dician eso, me sorprendió, y sise siente feo. Mis hijas estaban que no querían regresar a la escuela porque se burlaban y hasta que la maestra yo le mande una carta en español y luego de tres días me dijo que ella no sabia que era no tan bonito llamar a alguien indio y que las niñas estaban mal. Mi esposa es la que va a la escuela y le va mal porque no sabe el español asi tan bien y no sabe el ingles. Pero ahí le trata...

Maria:_Si es asi como mal...porque mi train a una qui habla español mal y yo no entiendo y me quedo asi hasta qui me dio cuenta por otros. De tareas, y juntas. De todo soy la última. Esta maestra que nos llamo “indios” nos dejo de mandar papeles a la casa porque no íbamos a entender...y me dio un coraje...que yo le diji a mi hija que le dijera qui yo iba a ver como

le hacia. Y los mandaba en ingles...mi marido sabe algo pero no tanto... les pagábamos a un señor que es Nahuat que ya sabe bien el ingles y el nos decía que era.

Este año ya me mandaron dos en español pero no le entendió mi esposo y yo menos. Bueno ahí vamos aprendiendo pero es duro cuando ponin palabra qui no si pueden entender, so largas y duras.

Francisco: Es duro no saber...y que sea el tercer habla que se tenga que aprender...primero Nahuat, después español...que ni aprendí bien...y ahora ingles....me confundo mucho...abecés no se ni que decir. Pero ahí le vamos.

Yo cuando se me de algo en la escuela pues voy. Aunque tenga qui venir Maria, uno de los dos esta ahí. Es muy bueno que ella valla a la escuela...aunque no nos quieran aquí...auque nos digan indios...y que las niñas van mal...no me importa...ellas van a salir adelantes como Nauta, Hispanas y Americanas...Se asi es...*Se ríe*...no estos no saben que vinimos hechos de piedra de la tierra y piedra dura, y juerte...asi es...juerte.

Nojotros no creo que nos quedemos aquí...yo creo que nos vamos a ir a un lugar con menos gente...hay mucha gente del pueblo de mi esposa qui si esta moviendo a ares lejos de aquí con trabajo y con menos gente así...talvez nos tratan mejor...y no llamamos tanto la atención como aji. Vivimo con miedo qui no agarren, de halar, que nos ser nojotors, pues.

Francisco's English Adaptation

Francisco is one of the parents who religiously attended the Latino parent meetings. He would come and tell the parents that they needed to "hacer algo" (get involved) in order to be heard. When Francisco agreed to be interviewed with me, I went to his apartment located in a impoverished area known for its diversity and violence.

As I went into his apartment, I could smell fried chicken that his wife Maria was cooking.

Maria and Francisco met here in the United States 7 years ago. There was a small sofa and a tablet. The house was really clean; it even smelled like Pine-Sol. His daughters were in the room and Maria called them to say, "Hello." The two of them, Carla and Adriana, look alike, brown with straight hair and big eyes.

Francisco asked me to sit at the table and we began to talk.

We are a different family compared to the families that you see here. I am from Las Hojas, Salvador, and my wife is from Chiapas, Mexico. We both speak Nahuat; we both were able to talk to each other from the start. She speaks Nahuat a little different from mine, but there are some things that we can both understand. *Francisco told his wife in Nahuat to sit at the table, and she turns the fire down at the stove and sits with us.*

Like I was telling you, we are both "Indians," as they call us. I think we knew each other even from far away—the moment I saw her, because I saw her and I knew she wasn't like everybody else. She was one of us. She can tell you later how she came here.

Francisco: My family lived in Las Hojas all their lives. My family speaks Nahuat—just like the other people there, well, the few that are left anyway. We learned Spanish because we had to. They didn't accept us as Indians. In El Salvador, we were always "those Indians" or people without rights. Everything was *jodido* (crooked) and bad there. It was not good for us to speak Nahuat in the street. People would treat us badly if they heard us, so I learned how to speak Spanish at an early age *pa vivi* (to live). There are many people who think that

there aren't any more Indigenous people, but the truth is that there are. It is as if we have lived in hiding for many years. Many just looked at what they wanted...and it wasn't us. Things are still not as good as they should be. For example, here I can tell you that I am Nahuat, and you're not going to criticize me for that. It took long to tell you this that I was Indian, but for you I have always been from El Salvador, the truth is that I am, for people I don't know well, but for people that I trust and not hide from, I am Indian Nahuat from El Salvador. Now I trust you and you can see that, but it is not usually the case, and here for others, we are only from El Salvador. Is not like our country, where people know right away. Here, people don't really know about that, unless you are one of us, or you have been around us.

We lived really poorly, with only what was necessary. We lived with what we could. We were, in those times, a family of eight. My parents didn't have an education, and we (the children) had very little. I learned how to read in school, where they would always tell me about the culture in El Salvador. *Y los de alla donde yo no eran* (My people were not represented in this culture learned at school)... so the city and other normal people who were not like us were interesting to me. My family didn't dress the same as they used to before, but would dress the same as other people in the city. My parents always wanted us to be treated right, not like they were. Since the time we were little (small) they would tell us that we had to be like everyone else and not sound *como indios* (like Indians). But they could not tell us how to speak. I think that's why they sent us to school for more time than other families. I think that's why I was and still am always involved with everything. When I was younger, I was even in the Indigenous rights movement. At that time in the country, things

were getting *mal* (worse). There were a lot of problems with the government and our communities. Things were just getting *mal* (worst)...so bad! There were people telling us that the government would take us from our homes and to be ready, but when they got there, I had to leave the village.

I left my town because in 1997 they took our land from Hojas—our homes. All the people noticed that something was happening before they forced us out. We were in our homes and all of the sudden some trucks came. Police and ambulance workers went into the homes. They took us and put us in the trucks. Before they took us, we fought very much. They had guns and gas that would burn your eyes. We were not *fuerte* (strong enough), so they won. There were also women and children getting hurt, and things got worse because we (the men) fought. They got us into the trucks and took some of us to the *el monte* (jungle). They would pick who to take when they came. They picked us up little by little. My family, they destroyed it. [*He started to cry.*] One by one they just left us in the jungle, some in groups and some alone. I started looking. I was young and wanted to find my family. But I searched a lot, for many days. In the hills I found some people who told me they may have seen some of my family but they weren't for sure. I spent days in the jungle without knowing anything...[*He cried.*] nothing, nothing, *nada*...

I went back to *Las Hojas*, but they (the government) had kept the houses. Some men that worked for the rights movement helped me go to the city, and I started to work there. I lived in a room with other people. I always went back even though they (people in the Indigenous rights movement) didn't want me to *dicen que era peligroso* (they said it was dangerous). I

would also go to the hill where they left me. I had left a shirt as a sign to know how to get there, and I would walk for a long time to see if I found anyone. I was never able to find anything. I went to complain in the city, because some people from the movement said I should let the government know what happened to my family. I did but *los del gobierno no hicieron nada* (nothing happened). While I was doing whatever work I could get, one day one of the men that was staying with me, asked me if I wanted to come to the United States, and I was so lonely that I left. When I left, I felt that I left everything but, I had already waited years for something to happen to find my family and nothing did. So, I left with the hope of making money and bettering myself in order to go back and look for my family.

Since I was alone, I had some money that I had put away. With that, my friend and I left for Guatemala. We went from the city of El Salvador to Santa Ana, at the border of the two cities, where we crossed. It was only the two of us. When we got to Guatemala, we didn't have enough money to get a place to sleep *y descansar* (and rest). We would get on the bus and sometimes sleep there. We had to work some odd jobs to make money keep living. The truth is that neither my friend nor I knew what it would be like in *la linea* (at the line). We were by ourselves and we had never crossed before. We took about two weeks to cross Guatemala, and then we crossed over to Mexico hiding in a car. Of course, we had to pay the person who helped us to cross, but at least we crossed with no problems. We were uncomfortable and very tight, but alive, and able to cross.

Then in Mexico, it was something else. Many things happened to us in Mexico. The worst thing was that they robbed us and left us without any money. Without a thing! They beat up

my friend on the street, and he wasn't doing well. I was the only one working, well if you can call it that, at anything I could find. People didn't want to give me a job. I was even begging for money and help to at least get something to eat. But I have worked all my life and I was going to keep trying. Working for me is not a problem...*los espero y se que lo tengo que acer* (I expect it and know that I have to do it). We were like that for a long time...*cruzamons lineas* (we crossed lines)...many, so many...*Ibamus cruzando lineas y hacienda much marca* (we crossed lines and made marks) It was a long time of that until a priest approached me. He asked me if I had just crossed, and I told him I had. I told him about my friend, and he took us to a flophouse where there were a lot of people like us. You wouldn't believe how much I learned there. I stayed there for a year and a half, and I helped the priest with anything I could *le debo tanto* (I owe him so much). They were many people from Central America. That priest helped us a lot and is still helping us because he was helping people like me that were crossing over *las lineas* (the lines). He was a good man. He got many threats for helping us. They would threaten him in many ways, but his faith kept him going. He was a great example for me. I looked up to him. He was family.

When I decided to go to that flophouse, I felt that I was taking advantage of the priest, but he gave me his blessing, and I promised to help him in any way I could. They were like my family, and many there cried for their families—*por lo que perdieron. Por sus cuerpos heidos, y sin partes, por las cicatrice—por la marca que les dejo las linea que cruzaron* (For what they lost, for their injured and crippled bodies, for the scars and marks that the line left them with). I cried because I could never find them.

Filled with anger and hope for the future, I left to the north. I crossed through Juarez. It took me a whole month to get there. Hitchhiking rides, asking for favors, and in a truck. I didn't want to waste my money in getting to the border, when I knew I needed it for crossing over. When I got to Juarez, I went to a church that the priest had told me about with a letter he gave me. They helped me with food and a place to sleep. They told me I had to be healthy in order to cross, I went to look for a *pollero* (coyote—border crosser) but they were too expensive. I took a risk *ya habia arriesgado tanto yo decia...tengo que llegar...y nada que me queda en El Salvador* (I had already risked so much, I used to say. I had to get there. I had nothing left in El Salvador). I left inside the trunk of a car. The people crossing me told me they had done it once before and that everything went well. When I got inside the trunk, we spent about an hour to cross and it was so hot, that after a while I couldn't feel parts of my body anymore. I was in such pain. The car started to move, after being stopped for a while, and I was kept there for another half hour. They took me to a garage and then they took me out. I gave them what money I had left, I took a shower, washed my clothes, and left without knowing where to go. I only had an address that a young man had given to me for a flophouse in North Carolina, where he was going to work. I asked around. The good thing is that some people in Texas speak Spanish. It wasn't hard for me to find the bus to come here. I bought my ticket and left, and then I took a cab when I got here, and went to a tobacco company to work. I've been working there for over 10 years.

I wasn't married, but I never wanted to stay single, so I started taking English classes at night once a week; I wanted to meet people who didn't work with me. One of the men there was going to do construction work. He told me about it and said that I could make \$3 more. I

couldn't contain myself and left. When I got there I started to earn the trust of the bosses, and in about a year they made me a boss of a group as well. I kept practicing my English and up to now it is not perfect, but I know the basics. In other words, if I speak to you in English, you have to really listen in order to understand me.

My wife is from Chiapas.

Maria: I am Nahuat. I came here with a group from Chiapas that came to work about six years ago. I stayed here, and I would work doing the first thing I could. Since I know how to read in Spanish and can speak it better, I started to work in anything I could find. I would help a lady in her store, and that's how I met this man. *(She pointed to Francisco.)* Since I met him, he wanted to get to know me, but I was not interested. I was sending money to my family and I didn't want anything to interfere with that...or a man to tell me otherwise. He would wait for me outside my work to talk to me, and then we became friends. He didn't know that I was Nahuat until one day a friend of mine spoke to me and that's how he found out. According to him, he already knew that. I didn't believe him. I really didn't know he was Nahuat until that day. When we found out, we started to see each other more and speak more. I believe it was because we both had gone through some of the same experiences.

What really impressed me was that he felt good and proud about being Nahuat. I felt very happy when he told me that. I started to like him. I am always going to be Nahuat first and then Mexican. For him is the same thing. We talked about children and we both wanted them to know Nahuat, and we wanted them to grow up with that. *(She pauses and smiles).*

The thing is that he and I speak differently in Nahuat and we each believe we speak better than the other *(she laughs)*, but we speak sometimes in both, at least to our little girls. They know both kinds of Nahuat—their dad's and mine. I always tell them that there are different

ways to speak Nahuat depending on where you were sent to be born. But we are still connected. I think they know it.

I don't think I would have married, unless it was to someone that was from where I am or at least that spoke Nahuat. It's hard for all cultures to get along. When I met him we got along fine, so I married him. I feel good that we both are able to continue with what they taught us, to him and me.

All this time Francisco nodded his head, affirming the importance of everything Maria said.

Francisco: When we got married, we could make some things at home in Nahuat. It was very special. I cried, because it was something I had wanted my whole life. I didn't want to wait to have children. It is a blessing, and we both wanted them. I took two jobs, and Maria stayed at home. I was able to get it right quick...time and in two months she was expecting. She had to take care of herself and our baby, so she stayed at home. I told her that I didn't want anybody else taking care of the children and that I was going to make the effort to get...until now everything is well. We don't live like rich people. We don't live in a place that is secure either, but my daughters are with their mother, and that makes me feel good. We are showing them about us, our families, our lives in our countries, our foods, and our language.

My daughters were born here. We had to struggle because of lack of health insurance when my wife got pregnant. I'm still paying the bill for the first one. I was too scared to get help

because we didn't have papers. We were told that if we got help we could not get our papers fixed.

They told me that I could receive some program at a cheaper price so she could have the baby at a low price, and we still pay, but very little compared to the first baby.

I was still taking English classes once a month. Now is just much more important because my daughters started school already and they don't know English. They speak Nahuat and Spanish, but it was hard for them. They placed them in low grade classes, and they haven't had good grades. At home we tell them to also speak English when they do their homework, but their mom...

Maria: I don't like it. They just speak English and they don't want to answer me. I don't know what they are saying. I don't like not speaking with my daughters. Not knowing what they say and what's going on with them. I don't like it.

I know they have to learn English, but I don't want them to forget this, the Nahuat. I think they should know all of them. This way, they will know more wherever they go. They can talk to us and other people. We think that is good!

I think when they do homework they can help each other and speak English, but after that I don't like it. I don't know what they say. It makes me feel like I can't be a mother without knowing what kind of help I can give them. I don't want them to mother themselves.

They get upset with me because they say that they get laughed at and I tell them what happened with their dad and me. They have to take it and not pay too much attention to that,

but it would hurt me if they can't speak Nahuat later. Is not a part of them, I told them that already.

Francisco: I believe both of them have a good point. What kid likes that being laughed at? I know I didn't like it. I am surprised that my daughters are going through the same thing that happened to me in my country because of Spanish. Here with them it is because of English. I also know that Maria makes a good point and I know that at home they have to speak.

When we took our daughter to school the teacher knew that my daughter was Nahuat. My daughter told her, and she didn't know what that was. I looked it up in the dictionary and found the word and gave it to her. Then she started to ask what we ate, wore, what we did, and everything. She thought that we were like in books *con una pluma en la cabeza* (with a feather in our heads). I don't know but I think she did learn that year. With my bad English I had to search for things so she would know us. This is how the year went by. I didn't like when she told the class that we were Indians—I hadn't been called that in a long time and I was surprised that it happened here! My daughters did not want to go back to school until I sent a letter to the teacher in Spanish. She told me that she didn't know it wasn't very nice to call someone an Indian and that the girls were wrong—they got it wrong. My wife is the one who is not doing well in school, because she doesn't know Spanish well or English. But she's trying...

Maria: If it's this bad...then why don't they bring somebody that speaks Spanish. I don't understand and I have to learn it through others, about the homework and meetings. I'm always the last one. This teacher that called us Indians stopped sending us letters, because

we were not going to understand. I was so angry, I told my daughter that I was going to take care of it. She would send letters in English. My husband knows some, but not a lot. We would pay a man who speaks both Nahuat and English well, and he would tell us what it said. This year they sent me two in Spanish. I don't understand it, and my husband doesn't either. The Spanish in the paper is hard most of the time, with words we don't understand.

Francisco: It is hard not to know, for it to be the third language to speak—first Nahuat, then Spanish, and now English—well, I don't know it well. I get really confused. Sometimes I don't know what to say. We are still trying.

When they teach something at school, I always go. Even if Maria has to come, one of the two has to be there. It is really good that they both go to school, even if they don't think we are going to come. Even if they call us Indians and the girls are not doing good, I don't care. They are going to get ahead as *Nahuat-y Hispanas-y Americanas* (Nahuat-Hispanic-Americans). That's right. (*He laughs.*) They don't know we come from the hard stones of the earth, hard stone, and strong. That's right, strong.

I believe we probably will not stay here...I believe we will go to a place with fewer people. There are many people from my wife's town in this area that are moving to other places where there are jobs and fewer people. Maybe they will treat us better, and we'll not get the bad attention we get here. We live very scared of getting caught ...*de hablar...de ser nosotros!* (To speak to be ourselves).

Juana (K'iche'), Guatemala

Juana mide acerca de 4'9, tiene el pelo café oscuro, es tímida, calmada y callada. Ella es una de las madres que asistía durante el grupo entero de padres de familia. Juana siempre era muy atenta, puntual, y estaba siempre dispuesta a cooperar. Juana empezó a hablarme cuando yo pude conseguir unos clases de español para algunos los padres en el grupo...esa fue la primera vez que se me acercó. Un día Ella me dijo que había visto un anunciado que yo había dejado en la escuela y decidió hablarme.

A través de los meses que ella se iba sintiendo cada vez mas cómoda conmigo al punto que hablaba conmigo más a menudo...Su español no era el mejor, pero ella siempre pudo hacerme ver su punto de vista. Juana que me invito a ser parte de un día muy especial de su hija, su primera comunión.

Los trailer donde vivía Juana eran viejo y pequeño Su casa era simple pero calida. Solo había un comedor y dos camas en el piso del a sala y un cuarto para ella y sus esposo.

Esta en su casa, humilde pero aquí para usted, a lo que quiera. Mire aquí esta mi hija [la verdad me lleve una sorpresa al ver de que la hija de Juana era un adolescente].

Ella esta haciendo su primera comunión porque no ha echo. Ella, no es mi hija di sangre pero si di corazón. Ella lligo aquí sola con migo y mi esposo cuando llegamos. Su papa la mando conmigo pa' que trabajara. Y hacer algo aquí en el norte. La familia di ella vivía así como nosotros. Pues ella es nuestra hija ya.

Yo tengo un hijo en Guatemala, qui esta en la universidad. Yo y mi esposo nos estamos aquí pa' eso. Para que mi hijo pueda ir a la universidad. Es nuestro trabajo.

Nojotros de nuestros papas aprendimos qui hay hacer todo pa los hijos. Ellos nos ayudaban con tudo, y si tivimo qui trabaja piro [sus padres] nos dician qui illos no quiria iso, qui si sintian mal porque tiniamus qui trabaja. Nos dician qui no importaba illos hiban a esta ahí purqui nos quirian mucho. Illos no jueron a li escola, ni sibia leyer, pero mi papa ira bueno como pa il trabajo dil campo y mi mama ira buena hacindo ropa y si asi yo aprindi. Illos dician qui ira bueno aprendi a hacer iso di hicer ropa. Pa puder venderla un dia. “si is bueno” dicia mi mama pa poder tinir dinero, y no tinir qui nomas vivi dil dinero dil hombre. Illa simpre dicia qui tinir un hijo ira un rigalo di Dio. Y qui tiniamus qui ser buenos, y tiniamos qui ayudarlus a los hijos a se como troncos di arbol, duros y juertes. Illos siempre trabajaban juntos, bien pegaus, como uno solo. Y asi ician en todú, con lus hijos, el dinero, tudo. Illos simpre dician qui tudos pudiamos habla, y qui illos quirian iscucharnus, qui tiniamos qui habla y qui ira importante. Y asi pir iso yo iscuchó a mi hijo pa tudo, y tudo il tiempo. Ellos [los hijos] son los qui importan. Y ahí qui dicile a los hijos qui es su vida y como padres vamos a estar ahí. Con ellos y eso fue lo qui li diciamos a nuestro hijo. El sabia qui iba a ser el hombre de su familia y qui alistarse y poder hace para su casa y su esposa. Patricio y yo li diciamos qui fuera a la escuela pa poder tener una vida así, buena. Y que pa que sus hijos también pudiera ir a la escuela. Que como hombre li tocaba mucho y qui tinia que pensar en eso. Qui tinia qui querer a su mujer y a su familia y sea lo qui sea el como hombre siempre tine que hacer bien. Li enseñamos qui si la mujer no podia hace algo qui el lo tenia qui hace, qui el tinia qui aprender a poder el solo.

Así qui mi hijo nos ayudaba con todo en la casa. Como su papa. En no lo via como algo malo. El asi si crió, pidiendo solo.

Mi hijo iba a una escuela donde solo se llegaba hasta lo primaria. Cuando termino los maestros nos dician que lo deberíamos apoyar. Il era buen estudiante, muy bien portao, y si li gustaba la escuela.

Una maestra hablo con nojotros y nus dijo que ahí no podia ir más, y que tenias qui a buscar otra escuela, ella nos dijo que deberíamos punerlo en una escuela más buena. Y me dio los nombres de unas esculas. Para esto [de la escuela] no era buena, yo era dura no habíamos ido a la escuela... yo hasta il segundo y mi esposo hasta el tercero. Los dos sabemos leer pero y hacer de números pero nomas eso.

Mi familia era una familia que vivia del campo y yo trabajaba del la casa haciendo todo tipos de cositas que podían ganarme [más dinero]. Patricio era el que trabajaba más que todos. El si las tenía que pasar mal [momento] para hacer dinero. Nojotros somos de un pueblito y no éramos así con dinero. Y somos, Quiché di ahí mas aya de Alta Verapaz y pus pa la mujeres no hay mucho qui hace. Yo hacia camisas para vende. Y todo iso ista [echo a] mano y pus es mucho. Ahí [en Guatemala] nus enseñan cuando niñas como hacer todú eso.

Il trabajaba en muchos trabajos y así el nos daba. La familia de el esta toda en Guatemala. Yo tengo dos hermanas aquí que si vinieron después que Patricio si vino.

Allá no vivíamos muy pobres pero si teníamos de comer y nuestro hijo si comía, y vestía, usado, pero vestía. No teníamos ver [pensado] venir al norte,...hasta que nuestro hijo nos dijo que si que quería seguir a la escola y hasta que su maestra nos dijo que el si podía salir y hace mejor. Hay si li pinsamos, que talvez si [lo podían ayudar]. Pero no, así no jue.

Nos pusimos a hablar y a pensar a que era que íbamos a hacer. El se fue a buscar otro trabajo y yo fui a casas de ricos a buscar mas trabajo. Los dos diciamos que si los maestro veían que mi hijo podía hacer mejor, y el si miraba que si quiria entonces, teníamos que hacer para que el pudiera ir. Tiniamos que sacarlo.

Asi pus pasaron unos tres años, pero no dicidimos hacer nada hasta qui se puso jeo en Guatemala con los indios. Ira muy duro. Ni pudiamos hace nada. En los pueblos lligaban y si llivavan a gentes. O en el pueblo de las vicinas los mataron a todos en la noche. Todos tiniamos miedo. Yo, ese tiempo ya trabajaba en un mercao vendiendo mis camisas en el lugar [puesto] de una señora qui me dejaba llevar las qui hacia yo. Ella ira muy buena y conocía gente. Ahí conoci a muchos de aquí [los Estados Unidos] y también di otros lugares. Ahí había una señora qui llegaba qui era de una universidad y era muy buena. Me mando a hacer unas camisas y venia cada dos semanas a saludar. Ella siempre mi dicia qui si necesitaba algo qui li dijera. Ella estaba muy contenta con mi trabajo, le gustaban las camisas. Cuando yo trabajaba mi hijo si quidaba solo, y cuando llegaba di la escuela hacia su tarea y mi esperaba. La maestra trataba di darle cosas más par qui siguiera. Pero no era muy duro ya lu sabia. Hasta le ayudaba a la maestra.

Saliendo del trabajo un día me fui a la casa y en camino mi vecina venía gritando y llorando. Me venía gritando mi nombre, y decía que alguien había estado en mi casa. Y que no sabían si mi hijo estaba ahí. Ella vio que llegara y se vino a buscarme. El vecino si fui a buscar a mi esposo en el campo. Yo sali corriendo con mucho miedo. Ya era para que mi hijo estuviera ahí [en la casa]. Yo sentía que mi corazón se salía. Cuando llegue muchas cosas estaban agujeradas en la calle, y ya si iban. Yo los fui a pegar y uno me dio en la mera cabeza con un rifle. Las gentes del pueblo no podían moverse porque iban con muchas pistolas y rifles. Quise en el piso...no me acuerdo nada de eso.

Cuando me levante, mi esposo estaba ahí. *Comienza a llorar*. No sabía nada y no acordaba y luego me vino una foto [visión] de mi hijo muerto y comencé a gritar. Me dolía tanto la cabeza. Y mi esposo me dijo que él estaba bien. Golpeado pero bien. Yo solo lo quería ver a mi hijo. Esa noche me llevaron con él. Y nos quedamos mis vecinos y yo en la casa de ellos. Ahí fui donde dijimos que íbamos a irnos de ahí.

Ya habían algunas familias que ya se habían ido, y como el vecino era el jefe de campo él ganaba más para ayudar. Y si dijo que mi esposo iba a venir. Hasta ahí si hablo.

Mi hijo la siguiente mañana nos dijo que él no quería ir acá [Los Estados Unidos] que él quería ir a la Universidad y que quería de nosotros que lo ayudáramos. Ahí mi esposo dijo que él se venía.

Patricio: Antes de irme me senté con los dos...*comienza a entristecer*...y nos decidimos que me iba a ir. Nos abrazamos y luego comencé a buscar cómo venir.

Juana: La otra semana [Patricio] se fue a la capital y pregunto, y pudo saber de un lugar aquí [en Carolina del Norte] qui necesitaba gente. Y si vino. Solo, con muy poco dinero. Le tardo tres semanas llegar y cuando llego comenzó a buscar a donde trabaja y trabajo en una fabrica di gallinas. Y nos mandaba dinero. Cuando il comenzó a mandar yo dicidi buscarle escuela a mi hijo.

Yo fui a muchas escuelas y lo pusimos en una escuela donde temíamos que pagar y asi como era tan duro lo hacimos. A veces no podíamos ni comer pero ni el ni yo quisimos que el no juera a la ecula. Yo no quero que el pase la valla como a su papa y yo. Yo quero que el sea un señorón y que si pueda trabajar bien y salir pa lante. Y que no trabaje asi mucho.

El primer año lo pagamos todo y hizo tan bien que pudo salir mejor y li dieron una vica. Le pagaba los libro y parte de la matricula. Y nos ayudaba bastante.

Mi esposo siguió su trabajo, pero pagaba casa aquí, y aya. La di nojotros, la de mijo en la escula y la del acá [en Los Estados Unidos] y no tuvimos qui buscar algo más.

Patricio: Veni pa aca no fue algo qui ella hiba a hacer. Al niño le iba bien y no podía dejarlo así solo. Con Juana hablamos y dijimos que ella si iba a quidar pa ayudar al niño. Y luego ella en una casa, el niño en otra, y yo aquí. El ya pues no ira asi tanto como niño, pero pa nosotros si lo era.

Juana: Mi hijo hablo conmigo y mi dijo qui mi fuera pa con su apa y qui el estaría bien y qui hablara con mi amiga pa qui le tinga il ojo. Y asi fui como dicidi vinirme. Iso si jue lo mas duro qui tuvi qui hace. *She weeps...* Y dije a mi hijo solo, y como no esta casao me sinti muy mal. Una amiga lo veia si necistaba algo. Y mi vecina mi dijio qui si me podia llevar a su hija porque ella tinia miedo aya. Y yo hable con Patricio y si viniera conmigo.

Las dos no juimos bien temprano en la mañana. Nos fuimos en el público. Sus papas se fueron también. Tomamos un público de la capital hasta México a la frontera, y ahí nos fue mal. Todo era muy caro, y no tiniamos tanto [dinero]. Yo li trabaje y ella también. Ahí nos quidamos con una gente dil pueblo qui conocíamos. Ahí va mucha gente pa ver si buscan a alguien qui los pase. Ahí is qui si me gastaba il dinero y no tenia ni pa llamar a Patricio. Yo comencé a trabajar limpiando la casa y la señora mi daba pa comer y pa alguna otra cosa. Li llame a Patricio y il me comenzó a mandar algo y la gente de ahí lo robaban cuando llegaba. Y luego yo li dicia qui no lo tinia. El [Patricio] pensaba qui yo li dicia mentíra. Trabaje pa la gente de ahí, en la calle y ellos me daban un poco di lo qui ganaba. Y pase un mes ahí. Y luego Patricio vino a buscarme. Y si pileo con la gente y ellos dijeron qui ellos habían robado todo lo qui mi mandaban. La niña siempre estaba conmigo en la calle también vendiendo y pus no li paso nada. Yo no dijaba qui la tocan, ni qui la golpiaran. Algunos trataron pero ami mi copiaban y mi dijaban. Yo ira muy fuerte porque ya creíamos qui íbamos a quidarnos ahí.

Nos fuimos con Patricio, qui cruzo pa buscarnos. Y nos fuimos en público a la frontera. Ahí, el busco a un hombre..un coyote. Quirian cobrar mucho por los tres y il si gasto todo lo qui tenia...todo...en lo de del la buscada y la cruzada. El hombre nos llevo a los tres y nos

fuimos por el desierto pa ver como lligabamos. Ya quiria llegar, no sabia nada di mijo y estaba bien triste.

Patricio: Teníamos una muchila con agua y un poco di comida, y nos juimos [a cruzar la frontera]. En la noche cuando dormíamos il hombre nos dejo solos en il frio y asi ajuera. Y Patricio no sabia adonde agarrarli. Y seguimos caminando. Luego en la noche nos encontramos a otras gentes y los sigimos a ellos. Nos fuimos por un oyo bien largo, al salir los seguimos a ellos. Ya estábamos tan cansadas. La niña si sentía mal. Ya eran tres días, y ya no había agua ni comida. No viniamos con el otro grupo y no podíamos pedirle a ellos qui nos esperaban.

Juana: Il hombre le dijo a Patricio como nos pudiamos ir y asi fue que nos juimos...solos. Miriamos a la tirra pa ver pitada zapatos o comino di las patas di la genti qui pasaba. La niña ya estaba tan mal, vomitaba, estaba dibil. Si, muy mal...y nojotros en el desirto, y mi hijo solo en Guatemala. Ya yo sintia qui mi moria, y rese mucho pa pode lligar.

Patricio: Hay, decía yo nos vamos a morir. Me dije que tenía que ser juerte para ellas, y le seguí. Pero la no crea tenía mucho miedo...no sabia a dodi iba, yo nomas li seguia.

Juana: La niña ya no podía, y la cargaba Patricio o yo o los dos...Estaba muy mal. Le dibamos de todo liquido qui viamos...lo qui si podía. Hasta del mió, del orín. Así se mantuvo viva. *She weeps!!* No jue facil. No sibiamos qui hace. Ella ya ni hablaba. Ya

istaba como amarilla, y sus papa en Guatemala. Yo no podia qui si muriera, no. Su mama me cuidaba al mio. Y yo a la d'ella.

She stops for minute unable to speak... Jue comu una golpiada una paliza, mi doulia mucho.

La siguiente noche llegamos a una casa donde Patricio se había quedado cuando vino la primara vez. Ahí, nos prestaron [dinero] y nos vinimos a Carolina del Norte. En el trabajo lo tomaron y li dijiern qui había mucho trabajo y qui viniera. Y pus, pudo intrar al trabajo y gana...qui's bueno.

La niña ya estaba mejor. En la casa de la frontera li dieron un líquido de color [electrólitos] y así le dimos hasta en carolina. Lligamos y ella ya podia come un algu.

Yo conseguí trabajo en una fábrica de pollos también. Patricio consiguió otro trabajo haciendo construcción qui li pagaba mas. Luego di cuatro meses pudimos conseguir un apartamento solo pa lus tres.

La niña entro a la escuela a los diez años y le fue mal. No la pasarun un año por eso del ingles. Y nosotros no podíamos [hablar el ingles]. Y ya como qui si esta mejorando. Yo trato de ir a la escuela cuando puedo. Muchos si reían di ella porqui no sabia hablar español bien. Pero ya lo fui aprendiendo porqui is bueno saberlo bien. Y trato de estar ahí. Los maestras no han sido tan buenos. Ellos la ignoran y la hacen sentir mal. Ella no quiria ir a la escuela. Yo tuve qui ir a la escuela. Y mi dijaron esperando en la oficina. Y me fui. Luego regrese pa ver si me atendían. Y lo mismo, ya me canse y le comencé a hablar juerte a la mujer de la oficina y ella llamo a un policia. Y me dio un miedo. Ya yo pinsaba qui mi llevaban pa Guatemala.

Ese policía busco a alguien qui hablara español y yo li dije qui yo solo quiria quejarme de las maestra y qui ya había ido muchas veces y nada mi dician. Qui la nina hasta la habian golpeado, y li dician qui ira su culpa. Illa no podia decir qui era lo qui pasaba...no sabia ingles.

Ahí mi atendieron y el policia jue muy bueno. Y nos trato bien. Y mi dijo qui la proxima vez qui tenia que no gritar. Y li dije qui si. Pero, yo no podia mas, soy india pero no voy a dijar qui me golpea a la niña.

Yo viia qui en la escuela no si podia hacer nada y entonces dicidi qui la niña necesitaba y yo también algo de nuestro pueblo y con otros qui llegaron aquí. Aquí y en todos lados somos K'iche' y eso es.. No asi tantu Guatemala. En Guatemala nos fue mal. Nos quirian matar, y hasta los del gobierno no nos quirian. Aquí, bueno nos miran como de Guatemala pero somos K'iche' primero y después para los de aca de Guatemala. Por eso me hice un grupo de baile. Y primero lo hicimos en una fiesta y de ahí en la iglesia, y de ahí en otra fiesta. Pa no sintime qui me falta y pa qui los niños aprendieran a la bailada de ahí. Le diji a la maestra qui si podiamos en la escuela y dijo qui no. Pero lo hago en la comunidad. Y las mujeres hacemos los trajes y las niñas nos ayudan. Los barones practican también. Y se hablan en K'iche'. Es muy bunito. Ahí otros qui no son K'iche' pero lo hacen también.

También mandamus a Guatemala, pa ayuda. Illos también hicieron un grupo en il pueblo. Y li ayudamos aquí. Tudos mandamos pa ayuda con lo qui hace falta. Estamos aquí pa manda aya. Y así si se ayudan. Como somos K'iche' y nos ha costao pero si podemos hace bien.

Mi hijo ya esta en la universidad y le va bien. Se esta convirtiendo en abogado y lo quiero mucho. No lo hvisto hace muchos años pero le hablamos todas las semanas. Y lo ayudamos como li prometimos. Aquí, mi niña qui no ha visto a sus papas, y pus ya es mi hija. Ya bien crecida. Ya pronto tendrá qui ir a la universidad pero nos dicen qui no va a poder por lo de los papeles. Pero, no se talvez se tengo qui ir a Guatemala otra vez. No se por ahora, vivimos aquí con otros de nuestro pueblo qui ya se vinieron. Mi niña trabaja conmigo los sábados y domingos y li manda a sus papas. Illa habla K'iche', Español, y ingles. Illa me ayuda a vende. Y is buena en il ingles. Los sabe tudos. Me hace falta mi hijo pero ya es hombre y se esta haciendo un señorón, y esta de acá y va a terminar. Si quiro regresar y estamos guardando pero si hicimos lo qui dijimos y esperamos hacer mucho mas. Buno no si qui va a pasa con la nina, illa dici qui si no va a escula qui va a hacer su propio puesto [negocio] y si pude más que su Patricio y yo, illa si le sabe bien al ingles. Y si crio aquí. Y si siente bien aquí.

Juana's English Adaptation

Juana is about 4'9", dark brown, and shy and quiet. She is one of the mothers who attended the parent group. Throughout the parent meetings she was always punctual, attentive, and cooperative. Juana began talking to me when I was able to find Spanish classes for some of the parents in the group. She told me that she saw the letter I had posted and she decided to come and talk to me.

Throughout the months she became more comfortable with and talked to me more often...Her Spanish was not the best, but she always got her point across. Juana invited me to be part of her daughter's communion.

The trailer where she lived was old and small, but very accommodating. There was a dining room, a couple of beds in the living room, and a bedroom for her and her husband.

Feel at home. It's humble, but come in, and welcome. This is my daughter, *[I was surprised to see that Juana's daughter was an adolescent.]* She is doing her first communion because she hasn't done it yet. She is not my daughter by blood but she will always be like a daughter in my heart. She came with me and my husband. Her dad sent her with me so she could work and to see if she could do something here in the *Norte* (The north). Her family lived just like us *[in the same village]*. She is our daughter already.

I have a son in Guatemala. He's in the university. My husband and I are here so that my son can go to the university. It is our responsibility.

We learned from our parents that we must do everything for our children. They *[her parents]* would help us with everything, even after we had to work. They used to say that they felt bad that we had to work. But that with work or no work they would always be there for us, because they loved us. They never went to school. They could not read, but my father was good at work in the fields and my mother was good at making clothes from our town. And that is how I learned. They used to say that it was good for me to learn that *[skill]* so that I

could one day sell them. “Yes, it is very good!” my mother used to say, so that you can have money and you don’t have to depend only on the man’s money.

My mother used to say that a child was a gift from God that he sent us from above, and we had to be good and we had to help them to be like *troncos* [trunks] of a tree, strong. My parents used to always work together, very close, like one person. And that is how they did everything. They used to always tell us that we could all speak, and that they wanted to listen to us, that we had to communicate, that it was important. And, that is why I’m like this—I listen to my son all the time.

They are what matter. And we have to tell our children that they are important to us and that we will be there for them. That is what we told our son. He knows he will be the man of his family and needs to get ready for his house and his wife. Patricio and I would tell him to go to school to be able to have a good life. This way his children can also go to school. As a man he had to think about that and love his wife and her family and no matter what, like a man always has to do well. We taught him if his woman could not do something, he had to be able to do it himself. My son helped us do everything in the house. Just like his dad. He did not see it as something bad. He was raised this way.

When my son went to elementary school, his teachers would tell us to give him support. He was a good student, very responsible, and he liked school.

A teacher told us that he could not go there any more. We needed to look for another school. She told us that we would have to place him in a good school. She gave us the names of

some good schools. It was hard. We had not gone to school. I went until second and my husband until third. We both know how to read and work with numbers, but that's it.

My family was a family who lived off the land, and I worked in the house doing all types of small things that could make me more money. Patricio was the one that worked the most. He had it bad in order to make money. We are from a small town and we are not from money, and we are K'iche'" from Alta Verapaz. For the women there isn't much to do. I would make shirts to sell and everything is made by hand, it's too expensive. There in Guatemala, they teach us very young to do all that.

His family is all in Guatemala. I have two sisters here, who came after Patricio came.

We lived very poor, but we had enough to eat and our son ate. And he dressed, with used clothes, but he dressed. We did not have to come to the north until our son told us that he wanted to keep going to school and his teacher told us that he could leave and do better. We really thought about it, maybe they would help him, but it was not like this.

We talked and thought about what we were going to do. He (Patricio) went to look for another job and I went to rich houses to look for work. We both said that if the teachers noticed that my son could do better, and if he wanted to do it, then we had to do something so that he could do it.

Three years passed. We decided not to do anything until things got really bad for the Indian people. It was difficult and we couldn't do anything. In the town they (the soldiers) would

come and take the people. One night they killed our neighbors, and we were scared. I was already working selling shirts in the town market where a lady allowed me to sell shirts that I made. She was very nice and knew people from the United States and other places. There was a lady there from a University that was nice enough to have me make some shirts and would come every two weeks. She would tell me, if I ever needed anything to let her know. She was pleased with my work and she liked my shirts. When I was working, my son was by himself and he would get home to do his homework and would wait for me. The teacher would give him easy things, and he was even helping her.

One day when I got out of the market I saw my neighbor screaming and crying. She kept screaming my name saying my son was not home and that someone had been there. She saw them go in and came looking for me and her husband went to look for my husband in the fields. I was scared and rushed back home. My son should have been there, but I felt my heart beating hard. When I got there my things were on the street and the soldiers were leaving. I went to stop them, but one of them hit me with the rifle. I fell on the floor. I don't really remember much, but my head was hurting bad. A vision came to me of my son being dead, and I started to scream. My husband told me he was fine, a little beaten up but he was doing well. I just wanted to see my son. That night I went to see him at the neighbor's house. There, we decided we were going to leave that place.

A few families had left the town already. Our neighbor was the one in charge at the fields. He was going to help us; he said my husband had to leave. He did not say it twice.

The next morning, my son said he didn't want to go to the United States. He just wanted to go to a university. All he wanted was for us to help him. My husband decided that he was going to leave.

Patricio: Before I left, I sat there and we talked. (*He gets sad.*) We decided that I had to leave. We hugged each other and I began to look for a way to leave.

Juana: The next week Patricio went to the capital city and asked around until he found a place here in North Carolina that needed workers. He left, alone and with little money. It took three weeks for him to get there. When he got there he started looking for work and found a job in a chicken company. He sent money, and I decided to look for my son's school. I went to many schools and found one where we had to pay to put him there. Sometimes we couldn't afford to eat, but neither he nor I wanted for my son not to go to school. I don't want him to struggle like his father. I want him to be somebody who doesn't have to work so hard and come out ahead. The first year he did so well that he got a scholarship. It would pay for his books and some of his tuition. This helped us enough. My husband continued to work, but he paid for house bills, here and over there. We had to look for something else.

Patricio: She didn't want to come here. The boy was doing well, and she could not leave him. I spoke with Juana, and we said that she was going to stay to help the boy. So, she was in one place, the boy in another, and I here. He wasn't that young, but he was to us.

Juana: My son spoke with me and told me to leave and go with his dad. He would be fine. I decided to leave. That was the hardest things I had to do. (*She wept.*) I left him by himself, and since he's not married, I felt very bad. A friend would look after him in case he needed something. My neighbor asked me if I could take her daughter because she was afraid for her. I spoke with Patricio to see if she could go with me.

We both left early in the morning. We took the bus along with her parents. We took a public bus from the capital city through Mexico until we got to the border. Everything went wrong. Everything was very expensive, and we didn't have much money. We both worked and so did she. We stayed with people we knew. We tried to find someone to pass us over. I was spending all the money and did not have enough to call Patricio. I started to work cleaning a house and the lady would feed me would give me some other things. I called Patricio and he began to send some money to me and these people would take money from us. Patricio came to look for me after a month. He fought with them and they told him that they did take the money he had sent to me. The girl would be with me selling in the street but nothing happened to her. I didn't let them touch her. I had to be strong because I thought we were going to stay there.

We left with Patricio, who had come to look for to us. We took the public bus to the border. There, he searched for a man, a "coyote." They charged him a lot for all three of us. He spent everything. The man took us through the desert. I just wanted to get there. I didn't know anything about my son and I was sad.

We had a water bag and a little food and decided to cross the border. At night in the darkness the man left us alone outside in the cold. Patricio didn't know which way to go, but we found other people and decided to follow them. We walked through a long hole and when we got out we were tired. The girl was not feeling good. It was three days and we had no water or food. We were not with the other group and did not ask them to wait for us.

The man just told Patricio to see how we could just keep going, so we did, alone. We were looking for marks on the ground, signs, or the painting of feet on the earth. The little girl started vomiting. She felt sick. My son was left alone in Guatemala. All I did was start praying and we continued walking.

Patricio: I would say "We are going to die." I told myself that I had to be strong for them, and I kept going. I was really scared. I didn't know where I was going.

Juana: The little girl could no longer bear it. Patricio would carry her, or both of us would. She was very sick. We would give her every liquid we could find, even my own urine. This is how we kept her alive. *(She wept!)* It wasn't easy. We didn't know what to do. She couldn't even speak, she was turning yellow, and her parents were back in Guatemala. I couldn't let her die. Her mom was taking care of my son, and I would take care of her daughter.

She stopped for a moment as her emotions prevented her from speaking... It felt like somebody was hitting me; it was taking a beating.

The following night we arrived at a house where Patricio had stayed when he came the first time. There, they lent us some money, and we came to North Carolina. There was plenty of work. He started to work and started to make money.

The girl was doing better. In the house they gave her a liquid with electrolytes and we kept giving it to her until we got here to North Carolina.

I also got work in the chicken factory. Patricio got another job doing construction, and after four months we were able to get an apartment for us three.

The girl was placed in school at ten years and she was doing poorly. They didn't pass her due to her poor English. We were not able to speak English, but she is doing better now. I try to visit her at school when I can. Many laughed at her due to her poor Spanish. She has improved, and is getting to know it well. I try to be there, but the teachers have not been good. They ignore her and make her feel bad. She doesn't want to go to the school anymore. I went to the school and waited in the office. I left because they had me wait too long. Later I came back to see if they would assist me and the same thing happened. I got tired of it and I started speaking loudly to the woman in the office. She called the police, I was so scared that I was thinking we were going to be deported to Guatemala. The policeman looked for someone who spoke Spanish. I told him that I complained because somebody had hit my daughter and they said it was her fault. She couldn't tell them because she didn't know the language. The policeman was nice and helped me. He treated us very well. He told me that next time this happens I should not scream. I am an Indian, but I will not let anyone hurt my daughter.

I noticed that in the school kids didn't have much to do, and I also needed something from our hometown. Other people who came here also needed it because here and everywhere we

are Quitche. It is not like in Guatemala. In Guatemala it didn't go well for us, and even people from the government wanted to kill us. Here they see us as people from Guatemala, but we are Quitche first. This is why I started a dance group. First, we started with a party, then at the church, and then another party. This made me not miss my traditions. So that children can learn how we dance over there in Guatemala. I asked the teacher to see if we can bring the dance group to the school and she said, "No." So I do it in the community. The women make the outfits and the girls help us and the boys also participate. We all speak in Quitche. It is beautiful. There are others who don't speak but like to dance.

We also send money to Guatemala to help out. There they started a group in the town. All of us help to send money over there to help them. We are Quitche and it has been hard and we can do good [get ahead].

My son is already in the University and he's doing well. He is becoming a lawyer, and I love him more than ever. I haven't seen him in many years, but we talk to him every week. We help him like we promised him. My daughter has not seen her parents in a long time, and she is now my daughter. She is well brought up. She will soon have to go to the university but they tell us she won't be able to since she doesn't have papers. She may have to go back to Guatemala for that. For now we live here with other people from our hometown who have moved here. Our daughter works with me on Saturdays and she speaks K'iche', Spanish, and English. She helps me sell because she speaks well in English, and she knows it well.

I miss my son. He's now a man, and is becoming an important man. This one right here, is going to finish soon. Yes, I want to go back, and we are saving money, but we did what we said we were going to do. I don't know what will happen with our daughter. She says if she can't go to school then she will start her own business. She will be able to because she knows good English. She was raised here and she feels good here.

CHAPTER IV

NARRATIVES OF NON-INDIGENOUS PARTICIPANTS

Sonia, Mexico

Un grupo de padres estaban gritando y estaban molestos acerca de lo que acababa de pasar al el programa de tutoría de sus hijos. “No es justo! Nosotros queremos que nuestros hijos sean educados!” De repente, Sonia la mas callada de todos los padres, levanto su mano. Yo me di cuenta de que ella había levantado su mano y le di la palabra para que se expresara. Ella procedió a decir:

“Hemos pasado mucho, y sufrido muchos. Hemos llegado acá a este país con las esperanza de que algún día nuestros hijos puedan salir adelante. ! Hemos cruzado muchas fronteras, y mucha tierra, y ahora en que llegamos al país de las oportunidades nos sierran las puertas! No es suficiente que nuestros hijos sean ciudadanos, que tengan papeles, ellos son juzgados por nuestro estado, por haber cruzado y estar aquí, por no hablar ingles, y porque somos mexicanos. !No es justo! Que tenemos que hacer para atravesar este problema? !Que va a tomar, y como lo comunicaremos! !Todo lo que pedimos es los básico, educación para los que ahora

son ciudadanos también de este país, son como ellos nacidos aquí! !Lo hemos dejado todo! Hemos perdido mucho, y así nos tratan?.”

Sonia se sienta temblado y con lagrimas en los cachetes se sienta, sin saber si había echo lo correcto ya que le salón estaba completamente callado. Cuando de repente, un grupo de mujeres se levantan y comienza a aplaudir.

Para Sonia esta fue la primera vez que ella sintió que había expresado sus preocupaciones públicamente. Sonia era una de los pocos padres de familia que no querían que la entrevistaran. Estaba ansiosa, desconfiada, y tensa.

Después de la reunión Sonia se acerco a mi, y dijo, “Sra. Margarita ahora ya estoy lista para hablar con usted.”

Sonia quien comenzó a llegar a los grupos de padres porque alguien le había comentado de mi de una señora que les hablaba a los padres Latinos. Siempre había estado callada, y nunca había demostrado interés en ser entrevistada por mí. Por lo tanto cuando ella se acerco a mi par decirme que estaba lista para una entrevista le dije que si pero que la llamaba después para ver si todavía se sentía igual. A los dos días Sonia me llamo y me pregunto si la iba a entrevistar...Me menciono que estaba sorprendida que no la “Agarre” cuando estaba enojado...Lo cual le dije yo...”Quiero que este segura de que quiere hablar conmigo.” Lo cual ella confirmo y con una humildad noble que la caracteriza se disculpo por haber “quedado tan mal,” a lo cual yo le dije que no se preocupara que “no quedo mal.”

Al llegar a la casa de Sonia en unos apartamentos viejos de concreto, en una área pobre y conocida por su diversidad (Afro-Americanos y Latinos). La pintura de las paredes de este edificio de tres pisos estaban deshaciéndose y los apartamentos se miraban maltratados. Sonia vive, en el tercer piso de los apartamentos los cuales tienen unas escaleras viejas y des-balanceadas. . Al subir hasta el tercer piso siento el des-balance de las escaleras al sentir que las escaleras se movían de un lado a otro como que se iban a caer. Sonia se asoma por la ventana de su apartamento en el tercer piso. Me saluda y sale a saludarme Inmediatamente al entrar al apartamento de Sonia esta la una pequeña cocina. Ella me lleva ahí y me ofrece algo de tomar. Sonia saca un refresco de la refrigeradora. Sonia me enseña la estufa la cual no sirve y por lo tanto tuvieron que compran unos fogones portales de electricidad. Sonia me comenta que “El bill de la luz me sale mucho, pero que le hago.” Al lado de la cocina esta una pequeña sala con un sillón verde y negro. En el centro de la sala esta llo que parece una desnivelación del piso el cual ello lo tiene protegido por una mesa, “Para que no se vayan a caer las niñas. Ya les he llamado y no me hacen caso. Uno de estos días nos vamos a hundir.”

Al sentarnos Sonia comienza a platicarme porque reacciono de tal manera durante la reunión de padres y algunas otras cosas.

Yo nací en Puebla y desde Chiquita tuve una niñez muy Buena. Mi papa y mi mama estuvieron casados por muchos anos y ellos siempre nos daban lo que mas dolía. Mi familia vivió en la ciudad de México por muchos años ya que en Puebla no había trabajo y mi papa pudo conseguir algo con una compañía en la ciudad de México (Por eso nota mi acento de chilanga). Mi niñez fue buena aunque no vivíamos como rico si vivíamos cómodamente con

lo necesario, mi mama vivía vendiendo comida...era lo único que podía hacer ya que nunca tuvo la oportunidad de ir a la escuela...

Mi papa fue a la escuela porque cuando estaba en Puebla un señor americano le pago sus estudios y pudo terminar. Luego comenzó la universidad pero ya no pudo porque en Puebla las cosas no estaban bien y se tuvo que regresar a Puebla. Ahí fue donde se caso con mi mama, y me hicieron a los demás. Al crecer mi apa siempre nos decía que teníamos que ir a la universidad y pues tener mas que el. El siempre hablaba acerca de cuando fue y que tuvo que salirse. El siempre decía que el no quería que eso le pasara a ninguno de sus hijos. El no quería que ninguno de sus hijos dejaran de la escuela. Yo tuvo tres hermanas, una mayor, y una menor. Y dos hermanos. En mi casa siempre hubo movimiento todos teníamos planes y queríamos hacer y lo hacíamos. Mis hermanos y mi papa nunca se llevaron bien, ellos siempre andaban alegando y pues mis hermanas no eran tan apegadas a mi papa. Mientras tanto yo si fui muy apegada con mi papa y nos queríamos mucho.

Mi papa me enseñó a arreglar carros, a tirar pistolas, a estudiar, a ser fuerte. El siempre decía que de todos sus hijos yo era las más “Chingona.” Y pues si lo era. No se quizás porque me llevaba tan bien con mi papa siempre fui muy fuerte.

Mi mama nunca fue a al escuela. Ella trabajaba en Puebla con su mama tenían un comedero. Y ahí vendía todo tipo de comida. Así que mi mama la verdad no sabe ni leer. Mi ama dice que cuando ella conoció a mi apa ella pensó que era el hombre más inteligente del mundo pero, ella decía que por más inteligente nunca iba a poder con ella. Mi ama era así también de fuerte como mi apa, los dos eran de un carácter que no había que cruzar. Era lo que ellos decían y ya.

Mi mama y mi papa tenían algo en común era que ellos querían que nosotros saliéramos adelante pero no todos lo pudimos hacer o queríamos hacerlo.

El trabajo que mi papa tenia en la ciudad de México se acaba porque la compañía serró. El había trabajado ahí por muchos años y ahora el se las estaba viendo malísimo. Luego un señor le comento que la compañía Volkswagen estaba contratando en Puebla y pues nos agarro a todos y nos dijo que nos íbamos a mover.

Todos estábamos tristes, mi hermano y hermana mayor ya tenían novios serios y pues mi hermana se junto con el novio (ahora ya están casados), y mi hermano decidió quedarse en la ciudad con un tío que teníamos ahí. Mi apa dijo que nos los podía detener y pus nos fuimos tres de nosotros.

Entones depuse de mucho años en la ciudad de México mi familia migro otra vez a Puebla, porque la neta ya no estábamos haciéndola. Las cosas se estaban poniendo caras y a las personas no le daban aumento. Y a mi padre que lo corrieron no por ser mal trabajador pero por lo de la fabrica, porque tuvo que cerrar.

Pero en Puebla nos fue bien. A mi papa le estaban pagando bien y hasta pudo comprar una casita y vivíamos bien. La verdad que el costo de vida era menos que en la ciudad de México. Mi ama para ganar mas dinero vendía comida como enchiladas, y tamales. La verdad es que mi ama no se podía estar quieta.

Mientras todo esto pasaba yo seguía en la escuela y la verdad poco a poco me fue cayendo mal ir a la escuela. Los maestros eran bien canijos. Se portaban bien mal con los estudiantes, especialmente los que eran como yo....Morenos...bueno si prietos, y bien chiquitos.

Y con tiempo y por el carácter que tengo comencé a meterme en problemas porque no me quedaba callada. Hasta que un día llamaron a mi apa a la escuela y el se avergonzó tanto que me dio una regañada y me pego. El me dijo que el no iba a mantener a canijas que no querían educarse. Que si no quería ir a al escuela que tenia que ponerme a trabajar. Y pues me dio tanto coraje que mi apa me aya regañado que me conseguí un trabajo, porque según yo iba a a demostrarle pero la verdad es que...No, el tenia razón y ese fue el ultimo día que me porte mal en la escuela. Y Salí bien, con buenas calificaciones...Pues pasando. Cuando Salí todavía trabajaba en un almacén y me iba bien.

Desde chiquita yo quería ser diseñadota y hacer cosas, y eso era lo que yo quería estudiar. Todavía me acuerdo cuando le fue a decir a mi apa que yo quería estudiar diseño...Huí...se enojo tanto...Me dijo que no, que esa no era una carrera que pagaba. Me dijo que con eso iba a pasar muerta de hambre todo el tiempo. Luego le dije que si nos podía diseñar que podía ser profesora de diseño...Huí y pior...ser puso...

Y me comenzó a decir que las únicas carreras que todavía valen son de ingenieros, doctores, licenciados de leyes....Pero que los demás pues no...Yo estaba tan triste...La verdad que por primera vez me sentí usada por mi apa...yo sentí que quería que yo viviera lo que el no pudo...El iba a ser ingeniero antes que se saliera, entonces el quería que yo fuera eso. Que

viviera su vida, y pues no. La verdad es que desilusioné y pues no seguí... mi apa me dejó de hablar por un tiempo. Y fue muy doloroso. El era como mi mejor amigo.

La verdad es que yo soy muy terca porque no quise seguir. Me enteré y ya nadie me sacaba de ahí. Me fui de mi casa y me fui a vivir con familia en la ciudad. Yo estuve muy bien en el trabajo hasta que no me quisieron dar un aumento, me tenían de secretaria, limpiadora, conciba, hacía de todo pero no me querían dar un aumento. Y mi tía en la ciudad me dijo que podía encontrar trabajo y me fui a ciudad de México.

Aquí estuve por unos cuantos años, trabajando, pero la neta no me iba tan bien. Era tan diferente y a como adulta estar en México. La gente me trataba mal por verme “india,” Pietra, mestiza. Pero yo no me dejaba, yo siempre he estado muy orgullosa de mi patria y de ser quien soy. En México tenemos de todos los colores. Luego seguí trabajando y me regresé porque mi ama me decía que me regresaba que mi apa estaba triste. Y me regresé.

Al regresarme conocí a mi primer marido. El era un negociador que vendía diferentes cosas. Yo lo conocía y a su familia desde hace mucho tiempo pero la verdad es que nuestras familias nunca nos gustamos. Cuando regresé de la ciudad de México le comencé a gustar y yo era muy penosa para decir cualquier cosa. Y por fin él se fue a la casa de mis papas a pedir permiso para verme, porque también era mayor, y parecía buena pareja. Quedé embarazada y pues mi apa esta vez sí que se encabronó y me dejó de hablar. Me fui de la casa al a casa de él y ahí nació mi hija. Luego un día, él llegó diciéndome que lo habían corrido y mientras yo seguía trabajando y llevaba a la niña. Ahora trabajaba en una panadería

y me levantaba bien temprano y me llevaba a la niña. Vivíamos con lo que yo ganaba yo, que no era mucho. El había puesto su nombre en una lista que era para los que querían ir al norte a chambear, y pues al siguiente día llego un señor que le aviso a las 5 de la tarde que lo habían escogido y que pasaban por el a las 9pm. El se despidió, hablo con su mama y se fue.

El día siguiente me fui a trabajar, cuando regrese a la casa de su mama...mis cosas estaban en la sala. Cuando llegue yo me quede sorprendida y mi suegra me dijo que su hijo se había ido a los Estados Unidos a chambear, y a vivir con su otra familia y que ya no me podía quedar ahí. Bueno con vergüenza me fui la casa de mis papas. Mi apa estaba enojado, todavía no me hablaba pero era un amor con mi hija. Con el tiempo mi hija lo comenzó a llamar papa a el. El papa de ella no regreso. Me cuentan de que el tenia otra familia en el norte y que yo fui solo un juego.

Con el tiempo mi apa me comenzó a hablar y yo agradecía tanto que nos tuviera a mi hijita y a mí, bueno en su casa. Lo malo es que mi apa se golpeó en el trabajo y no pudo trabajar...El se estaba poniendo peor y no teníamos lana para las medicinas...Sabe que aya sin o tienes no te ven en el doctor. En el seguro le decían que no podían hacer nada por el.

Mi mama tomo otros trabajos para poder ayudar en la casa y poder completar pero, hasta con nosotros dos trabajando no se podía y no pudimos pagarles los doctores a mi apa. O comíamos o curábamos a mi papa. Con mucho dolor vi como mi padre se iba muriendo, como la falta de dinero lo iba matando. Primero le amputaron las piernas, depuse lo brazos, y luego, se fue muriendo, hasta que una noche se fue entre gritos de dolor por falta de medicina. Mi papa murió pero para mi algo mas murió...fijese que...Yo no pude salvar a mi

padre, trabaje, y trabaje, y no podíamos reunir el dinero para aliviarlo. Y lo que más me duele es que por estar trabajando no pude pasar sus últimos días con él. Yo estaba trabajando y pues trabajaba horas más pa poder ganar más. Antes de irme al trabajo el día que murió, le di un beso y el me agarraba las manos...mi ama me dijo que talvez debería quedarme a estar con el pero yo decidí que no porque tenia la fe deque todo saliera bien y que yo pudiera ganar el dinero para poder pagarle su medico. Pero no fue así...Se murió llamándome, mientras yo trabajaba como perra por migajas. Luego de esto que pase con mi apa, yo jure no volver a abandonar nadie, a ningunos de mis seres queridos. Jure, no dejar que alguna persona de mi familia muriera por necesidad. Y yo se que por eso es que yo estoy aquí...por la desesperación de tener las manos atadas por la falta de dinero...yo si estaba dispuesta a dejar a mi familia por venir a trabajar y para que ellos vivieran mejor...en ese momento de tanto dolor y de la realidad plena de la angustia y pobreza, bueno si lo pensé.

Por todas las necesidades nos vimos obligados a vender la casa y movernos a una casa más pequeña. Estábamos económicamente en la quiebra y además rentando. Mi mama siguió trabajando como vendedora de comida mientras yo trabajaba también. La verdad no podíamos, yo ganaba unos diez dólares al día. Y como cuenta por la semana entera. La verdad es que cuando me comenzaron a comentar de irme para los estados unidos me habían dicho que yo hiba a estar ganando como \$70.00 dólares al día. Pues como comparar. Yo la verdad tenia todo lo que había pasado con mi papa muy adentro de mi todavía y no veía como sin una educación iba a ganar mas. Antes de hacer la decisión la pensé mucho y comencé trabajar otros trabajos, vendiendo tortillas, limpiando casas, vendía chilaquiles en el trabajo bueno de todo. La verdad lo trate todo. No estábamos bien económicamente no

estábamos ganando suficiente dinero como para mantenernos económicamente. Un día que no teníamos para comprarle leche a la niña y ya no me lo daban por fiado ya que debía mucho dinero, me desesperé y me di cuenta que estando en mi país yo estaba matando de hambre a mi familia. Y decidí hacer algo y irme de al norte. Fue donde los polleros y les dije que siempre si me iba. Ellos me dijeron que les tenía que dar un adelanto y les dije que les daría todo lo que ganara en las siguientes dos semanas...Al las dos semanas nada mas tenía como \$150.00 dólares y pedí prestado a diferentes personas para poder completar para los \$500.00 dólares. Esas dos semanas fueron muy difíciles para mí, me angustiaba saber que iba a tener que dejar a mis hijas y a mi mama. Yo sabía que mi mama no se iría conmigo, pero mi hija yo sé que si yo la llevaba pues era una opción. Tuve que tomar una decisión y decidí llevarme a la más grande ya que llevarme a las dos y pasar la frontera como que lo veía muy pesado. Le mandé a pedir dinero a un tío que estaba aquí en el norte para la cruzada y a otras personas de la colonia para que me ayudaran con lo de la cruzada.

La mañana que me fui, no podía ni hablar, me temblaban las piernas, el Corazón, el alma me dolía, estaba dejando una parte de mi Corazón en México. En ese momento cuando me despedía de mi bebe sentí que nunca la volvería a ver. Me rompió el alma. La bendije, la bese, le di mi cadena de la virgen Guadalupe, y me fui. Me monte al camión que estaba recogiendo personas, de ciudad a ciudad y me fui. Nos tomó cuatro días para llegar a la frontera, entre mas lejos nos íbamos yo me preguntaba con angustia como estarían mi madre y mi hija. Me preguntaba una cantidad de cosas, que cuando iba a ver a mi hijita, si ella se iba a resentir conmigo, si mama no se iba a cansar tanto cuidándola, si iba a conseguir trabajo sin saber el inglés, que iba a hacer con mi hija al llegar...si iba a encontrar alguien

que me la cuidara. Como se imagina cuando uno deja todo, tuve un chorro de preguntas. Y también me sentía triste porque no sabía cuando iba a regresar a mi México lindo. Como le dije antes a mi me encanta mi país, lo malo es que no se puede vivir bien ahí, no se gana suficiente. Hay Dios mió....*Comienza a llorar*...Hubiera escuchado mis presentimientos y mis dudas...la verdad que fueron muy reales y fuertes...Tenia una angustia enorme.

Luego de estos días de calor, ansiedad, y anticipación llegamos a la frontera, no llevaron al río y las personas comenzaron a cruzar. Primero cruzaron algunos hombres para que pudieran ayudar a las mujeres que veníamos atrás. De repente alguien grito, “La migra!, y todos corrieron...para mi fue todo tan rápido...no se que paso...todos corrieron y me dejaron sola. *Toma un suspiro largo y lleno de angustia...Ay...*me escondí debajo de un árbol que estaba por la parte de atrás y le tape la boca a la niña y le rece para que no llorara...*comienza a llorar*...la verdad no se como supo ella que algo estaba pasando, a mi me parece que ella lo presentía... se quedo calladita!

Yo lo único que me acordaba es de que el coyote nos había dicho a todos los que íbamos que si pasaba algo así que deberíamos esperar...y eso fue lo que hice...Espere! Mira, espere y espere, por dos días! La verdad que *comienza a llorar*...En ese momento me arrepentí de haber dejado el pueblo. Mira yo no tenia comida porque lo deje en el camioneta. Ese camioneta nos iba a estar esperando al otro lado y no nos llevamos nada. Tenia un poco de dinero pero la verdad que no había a donde comprar nada...a donde en el media del mendigo nada...Éramos nada mas nosotras y el monte. La niña ya se estaba poniendo mala, y luego vi a otro coyote cruzando a otros y le pedí que me cruzara y dijo que si. Me amarre al la niña... *¡llora intensamente!*...con mi reboso...*Casi no puede hablar por la intensidad de su llanto*...pero la corriente estaba brava...Y al pasar se llevo a la niña...Se murió....Mi hija se

murió... Ahí... *¡llora incontrolablemente!* Esa es mi gran cruz, mi castigo... *llora intensamente mas fuerte!*

Sonia toma algunos minutos para estar sola, y cuando regresa me cuenta que esto ha sido lo peor que ha vivido en su vida y que todavía le duele como si fuera ese mismo día.

La verdad no se ni como llegue a la camioneta, yo quería que el río me llevara a mi también. Algunos hombres buscaron pero no se pudo mucho porque nos podían agarrar. Yo lloraba que me dejaran, yo quería que le río me llevara con mi niña... que yo la quería buscar y ellos no me dejaron. Yo me desmaye, perdí todo conocimiento, por unos cuantos días, y cuando por fin me “levante.” Bueno digo eso porque no es que pase inconciente todo ese tiempo pero es que yo estaba en un shock, ida completamente, en otro mundo, comía y eso era todo. No podía hablar me hablaban y yo solo movía la cabeza. Por eso cuando me levante, reaccione, ya estábamos en le otro lado en el norte. Me tomo unos días pero cuando comencé a ser yo otra vez comencé a pensar y me di cuenta que llegue a la línea bacía, de mi alma. Ese río se lo llevo todo. Esa línea fue mi muerte. Porque así fue que me sentí... vacía. Sin esperanza, No se ni como le hice para seguir adelante... la verdad es que fueron unos meses horribles, yo creo que el saber que tenia a mi familia en México me ayudo a poder sobre pasar todo eso. Pero para decirte la verdad... eso nunca lo he podido sobrepasar completamente... el dolor esta ahí, muy verdadero y fuerte, no, ese dolor nunca se va, pero uno so se acostumbra a ese dolor.

Sonia toma una foto de su familia en México y la toca... por ellos es que estoy aquí viva!

Ya con el tiempo, conocí a un hombre muy bueno y me case con el. Tuve hijos con el y hasta el día de hoy pues vivimos con lo que necesitamos y hasta le puedo mandar dinero a mi familia a mi hija en México.

Lo mas triste es que aunque estoy bien aquí con mis hijas, mi hija en México no me considera su mama. O sea ella sabe que soy su mama porque la cargue, pero para ella su mama de verdad es su abuela...Para ella yo soy la que la parí...pero su abuela es su mama. Ya me la he querido traer pero ella no quiere..Yo soy la madre invisible! Eso me parece que soy, la que le da para comer pero la que no esta aya para ver que coma y la que manda para la medicina pero no esta ahí para ver que este bien. Mi relación con ella es muy fría, ella me habla pero no creo que para ella sea lo mismo que para mi...Ella esta resentida conmigo por haberla dejado me dice me mama, y aunque mi mama le diga que me fue para poder estar mejor, ella no lo comprende igual. Yo soy un vacío en su vida.

La verdad es que somos muchas mamas que estamos así, viviendo como madres invisibles, como números del dinero que mandamos, somos el vacío de un teléfono, pero no la presencia ni el calor de una madre. Eso me duele mucho!! Pero no puedo hacer nada...ella no se quiere venir conmigo. Ella me dice que se queda con su mama. *¡Se hecha a llorar!* Y lo peor es que ella tiene razón, su abuelita ha sido su mama y yo soy la invisible. Lo que me consuela es que comparado a otras mamas que han tenido que dejar hijos, la mía se quedo con su abuela y no con amigos o tíos pero con la persona que yo confié mas en esta vida mi madre.

Aquí [en los Estados Unidos], Tuve la bendición de tener dos hijas mas aquí, y lo que me hace mas feliz es que las dos son Americanas o sea son nacidas aquí y tienen papeles. A ellas

nadie las va a tratar mal. No como a mí y a mi marido que nos pueden hacer pedazos porque no tenemos papeles...pero a ellas no...ya sebe que la vida se nos ha hecho más difícil aquí. Buscar trabajo, mantener trabajo, y vivir sin papeles no es fácil. Es lo primero que piden. Los papeles. A nosotros no nos pagan igual que a todos si no que debajo de la mesa. Hasta hace poco que pudimos sacar un Ipin (numero de identificación de impuestos) pero me da miedo usarlo porque no quiero que nos deporten...aunque dice que no lo van a hacer. Yo no quiero tomar el riesgo.

Cuando mis hijas comenzaron a ir a la escuela aquí pues yo pensaba que yo les iba a poder ayudar ya que yo mas que mi marido...el nada más termino hasta el sexto grado...pero yo termine la prepa, entonces yo las puedo ayudar. Pero es tan difícil. Lo primero que vi cuando llegue a registrar a mi hija fue la manera que nos trataban en esa oficina. La verdad es que éramos muchos padres ahí, y nos trataban bien mal. Nos hablaban feo, y nos pedían un montón de cosas que muchos como yo no teníamos como un seguro social. La verdad es que yo no la registre ahí me dio miedo y me fui. Luego una vecina me dijo que podía ir al centro de ayuda al los latinos y fui. Ahí me ayudaron mejor...y si pude entender.

La maestra de mi hija era una mujer muy alta y cada vez que hablaba con nosotros lo hacia viéndonos para abajo. Abecés yo conseguía una persona para traducir. Y nos decía cosas como que si no teníamos papeles que la niña tampoco tenia los mismos derechos. Yo tenia tanto miedo la verdad yo sentía que esa maestra no nos quería ahí. Cuando fuimos a hablar con ella, no tenía a nadie para que traducir y lo hizo todo en ingles, yo no sabia nada...ella hablaba y hablaba y apuntaba a las calificaciones de mi hija y yo no entendía nada. Ay me da un coraje. Me sentí tan humillada, pero mi marido dijo que nos íbamos a quedar y

escuchar para que se diera cuenta ella y que se sintiera mal, y también para que se diera cuenta que nos preocupamos. Pero que coraje!!

Así pasamos todo el año, fuimos a la oficina a quejarnos y no nos hacían caso. Mi hija un día la maestra se burlo de ella porque hizo la tarea en español. La verdad es que era una página de actividades (*worksheet*) que era muy confusa, no le entendía. Estuve ahí con un diccionario, y hasta le fui a pedir ayuda a una de mis vecinas que estaba tomando clases de inglés y ella tampoco entendió y la hice en español como yo pensaba que se tenía que hacer. Dice mi hija que la maestra la puso como ejemplo de un trabajo que no se debe de hacer así. Y la dejo sin recreo. Yo fui a tratar de hablar con ella y le pedí a mi vecina que fuera y ella le dijo a la vecina que “ella no sabia que no sabíamos hablar inglés”...ay que coraje...Como no va saber...cuantas veces no fuimos y le decíamos “no espique english.” ¡Ahhh!...No sabia que hacer. Me tenia con miedo de que algo malo iba a pasar si decía algo.

Mi hija paso el año pero de pasa con bajas calificaciones. Yo creo que de milagro porque la verdad no nos hablábamos entre la maestra y nosotros. Mi hija tuvo una mejor maestra pero de todos modos fue muy difícil no poder ayudarla. Cuando vamos a la escuela nos tratan igual como que no somos parte de la escuela y me imagino que para ellos somos la parte que menos importa. Una de las maestras me dijo que ella sabia que mi hija no iba a ser bien el examen de final de año que ella ya estaba contando en eso, y a cada rato me preguntaba que si de verdad ella había nacido aquí—que le podía tener confianza. Yo le explicaba que en la casa solo hablamos español y que cuando aprendamos inglés yo voy a hablar inglés con ellas pero hasta ahora es puro español. Las maestras nos dicen que les leamos en inglés y no en

español. Y si trato pero no me entienden las niñas. Me dicen que así no se dice y que lo estoy diciendo mal.

La verdad es que mis hijas aunque hayan nacido aquí son mexicanas también. Me da mucho pesar que ellas no tengan ese amor y enseñanza de patria que yo recibí en mi país. Y es mi trabajo, me toca dársela a mi. Yo les digo de lo bello que es la patria y que ellas son de dos patrias y lo saben. Para mi estar aquí me ha hecho mas orgullosa de ser mexicana, me hace falta tanto que lo deseo y me siento orgullosa mas. Cada vez que alguien se burla de mi por ser mexicana pongo mi cara en alto y me acuerdo de lo que me dijo un maestro en mi país “pon tu cara en alto porque tu eres tu patria”...Ay... ¡que lindo! No creo que las niñas puedan decir lo mismo. No, con la manera que las tratan.

La verdad es que no solo para mi a sido difícil pero también para mis hijas que están aquí en la escuela ya que a ellas las tratan no igual que a otros niños porque no saben el ingles bien. Es tan malo eso...no hay mucho que las puedan culpar ya que ellas no tuvieron la culpa de haber tenido padres inmigrantes sin papeles. La verdad que yo les digo que tienen que estar orgullosas que pueden hablar en las dos lenguas pero ellas me dicen que a veces a ellas no. Pero yo se que es bueno para ellas y que en el futuro les ayudara. Además ellas nunca van a ser igual a un niño que tiene padres americanos porque ella es de las dos culturas, ella es de aquí [Estados Unidos] y de aya [México].

Sonia's English Adaptation

A group of parents were yelling and upset about something that happened at their tutoring program. “It is not right! We want our children to be educated!” Suddenly, Sonia,

the most quiet of all, raised her hand. I called on her to give her the opportunity to express her opinion. She said:

“We have been through a lot, and suffered much. We have arrived here in this country, hoping one day our children can come out ahead. We have crossed through many frontiers and lands and now that we have arrived in the country of opportunity, they closed the doors on us! Is not enough for our children to be citizens and have papers. They are judged for having come across the border, for not speaking English, and because we’re Mexican. It is not right! What do we have to do to solve this problem? What is it going to take, and how are we going to communicate? All we ask for is just the basics, an education for the ones that are from this country. They were born here. We have left everything. We have lost a great deal—and that’s how they treat us?”

Sonia sat down shaking and with crying, not sure if she had done the right thing. The silence of the room was broken when suddenly a group of women began to clap. It was the first time since she had left Mexico that Sonia had been able to express her concerns publicly. Sonia had been one of the mothers from the parent groups who had not wanted to be interviewed. She was hesitant, mistrustful and apprehensive. But after the meeting, Sonia said, “Mrs. Margarita, I am now ready to talk to you.”

Sonia started attending the parent meetings because someone had told her about a lady who spoke Spanish and knew about the schools (me). She had always been quiet, and had never shown interest in being interviewed. So when she approached me to say she was ready for

an interview, I told her I would call her later to see whether she still felt the same way. Two days later, Sonia called me and asked if I would interview her. She said she was surprised that I had not interviewed her after the meeting when she was upset. I answered, "I want you to be sure that you want to talk to me." She confirmed that she did and humbly apologized for doing wrong, I told her not to worry, that she had not done anything wrong.

Sonia lived in an old concrete apartment building in a poor area known for its diversity (African-Americans and Latin-Americans). The paint was peeling, and the apartments looked mistreated. The stairs to her third-floor apartments felt rickety and dangerous.

Sonia welcomed me into her small kitchen and gave me something to drink. She took a soda from the refrigerator. Her stove doesn't work, she said, so she had bought hot plates instead. "The electric bill is usually high, but what am I to do?" The living room contained a green and black arm-chair. In the middle of the living room was a crack in the floor, covered by a coffee table to keep her little girls from falling. "I've called them already and they don't listen to me. One of these days we are going to sink in."

Sonia started telling me how she felt during the parent meeting. ... But in order to truly understand why this explosion of emotions is significant, one needs to go to Puebla, Mexico.

I was born in Puebla, and I had a real good childhood. My father and mother were married for many years and they always gave us what they could. My family lived in Mexico City for many years, because there wasn't any work in Puebla. Eventually my father was able to get work with a company in Mexico City. (That's why you'll notice my *chilanga* (people

from Mexico City) accent. It was very good. Even though we were not rich, we had what we needed. My mom worked selling food. It was the only thing she could do; she never had the opportunity of going to school. My dad did go to school and he was able to finish because a man from the United States helped him pay for his studies. Then he started college but was not able to finish because things were not right at home, and he had to return to Puebla. That's where he married my mom, and made me. When I was growing up, my dad would always say that I had to go to college so we could have more than he had. He always said he did not want any of his children to stop school. We were three sisters, one older and one younger, and two brothers. There was always something going on in my house. We always had plans and we would do them together. My brothers and my dad never got along. They were always arguing. My sisters were not too close to him. But I was really close to my dad, and we always got along. My dad showed me how to fix cars, to shoot a gun, to study and be strong. He always said that of all his children I was *la mas chingona* (the toughest), and I was. I don't know, maybe because I always got along with my dad. I was always very strong.

My mom never went to school. She would work in Puebla with her mom. They had an eatery. They would sell all kinds of food there. The truth is that my mom really doesn't know how to read. My mom said that when she met my dad she thought he was the smartest man in the world, but even with all his intelligence, he would never overpower her. My mom was as strong as my dad. Both of them had very strong personalities. My mom and dad had something else in common: they both wanted us to become something. But not all of us could or wanted to.

My dad's work in Mexico City ended because the company closed. Truthfully, we were not making it. Things were getting expensive, and they were not giving raises to people. My dad was fired, not because he was a bad worker, but because the company had to close. He had worked there for many years, and had a tough time adjusting. Then a man told him that the Volkswagen Company was hiring in Puebla, so he gathered all of us together and told us we were going to move.

We were all very sad. My brother and sister both had serious relationships. My sister moved in with her boyfriend. (Now they are married.) My brother decided to stay in the city with an uncle. My dad said that he could not keep us from doing what we wanted. Only three of us went along to Puebla.

So, after many years in Mexico City, my family migrated back to Puebla. In Puebla, things got better. My dad was making a good salary. He was able to buy us a small house, and we lived well. The cost of living was less than in Mexico City. My mom would sell some food, like enchiladas, and tamales, in order to make some money. The truth is, my mom could not just sit still.

While all this was going on, I was still in school, but little by little I started to dislike school. The teachers were really mean to the students, especially the ones like me: *morenos y chiquitos* (brown-skinned and short). With time and with my personality, I started to get into trouble because I never stayed quiet. One day they called my dad to school. He was so

embarrassed that he yelled at me and spanked me. He told me that he would not allow this disrespect from troublemakers who didn't want to be educated. If I didn't want to go to school then I would have to start working. I was so angry that my dad had punished me that I got a job. I was going to show him. But the truth is that he was right. That was the last time I misbehaved in school. I did great. I had good grades. Well, okay, I passed. When I got out, I worked for a warehouse and I did well.

Ever since I was a little girl I wanted to be a designer and create things, and that's what I wanted to study. I still remember when I told my dad that I wanted to study design. Wow! He was so upset. He said "No!" That it was not a career that would pay. He told me that with that career I would be hungry all the time. I said that if I could not make a living in design then I could teach design. He got more upset. He told me that the only careers that were worth anything were doctor, engineer, and lawyer. The rest weren't worth anything. I was so sad. The truth is that for the first time I felt used by my dad. I felt that he wanted me to live what he couldn't. He had planned to be an engineer before dropping out. So he wanted me to do that—I guess—to live his life! The truth is that I was disillusioned and I didn't continue my schooling. My dad did not speak to me for a while, and that was really painful. He had been my best friend.

But I was so stubborn that I didn't want to continue, so I moved to Mexico City with family. It was very different being in Mexico as an adult. The people there treated me badly for being "Indian," dark, a *mestiza*. But I did not give up. I have always been very proud of my

country and who I am. In Mexico City there are people of every color, so I just kept working. Then my mom asked me to return to Puebla because my dad was sad.

So I returned and I met my first husband. He was a businessman and salesman. I had known his family for a really long time, but the truth is that our families had never liked each other. When I returned from Mexico City, he started to like me, but I was really too shy to speak. Finally, he went to my parents house to ask permission to see me. He was older than me and seen as a good partner. I got pregnant. This time my dad really got upset and stopped talking to me. I moved to his house, and my daughter was born there. Then one day, he came to tell me he was fired. I was still working in a bakery. I would have to get up really early and I would take the baby with me. Now we lived on my income, and it wasn't much. He signed up with a man who wanted to go to the north (el norte) to work. The next day a man came to let him know that he had been chosen. The man said he would pick him up at 9 p.m. He said his good-byes to the baby and me, said good-bye to his mom, and then he left.

The following day when I came home from work to his mom's house, I was surprised to see that my things were in her living room. My mother-in-law told me that her son had gone to the United States to work and live with his other family, and I couldn't stay there any more. Well, I was embarrassed, but I went back to my parents' house. My dad was so angry that he would not speak to me, but he was really nice to my daughter. In time my daughter started to call him "dad." Her real dad never came back. They tell me that he had another family in the north, and that I was just a game.

Eventually my dad started to talk to me and I was thankful that my small daughter and I lived in his home. Unfortunately, my dad got injured at work and couldn't work. He was getting worse, but we didn't have money for medicine. You know that over there if you don't have money you can't see the doctor. In the hospital they told him they couldn't do anything for him.

My mom took in extra work in order to help around the house, but even with both of us working, we could not afford the doctor for my dad. Either we could eat or we could pay to cure my dad. I watched my dad suffer, until one night he left yelling because of pain and lack of medicine. My dad died, but for me, something else also died. I couldn't save my dad. I worked and I worked, and we couldn't save enough money to help him. What hurts even more is that because I was working, I couldn't spend time with him. I would work overtime so I could earn more. Before I left for work on the day he died, I gave him a kiss and he grabbed my hands. My mom told me to just stay with him, and I told her, "No," because I had faith that everything was going to be fine. I would make the money so that we could afford his doctor. It didn't turn out like that. He died calling out for me while I worked like a dog for leftovers. After going through this, I swore never to leave any of my loved ones. I swore that I would never let any of my family die for lack of medical care. I know that's the reason I am here—the desperation of feeling my hands tied due to lack of money. I was willing to leave my family in order for them to live a better life. At that moment of great pain, reality, and poverty, I thought about it.

Due to all the expenses, we had to sell the house and move into a smaller one. My mom continued to work selling her food, and I worked as well. The truth is that we were broke and renting; we just couldn't do it. I earned \$10 a day, about \$50 for the whole week. When they told me that if I went to the United States I could make \$100 a day, well, how to even compare? I still had all those feelings about my dad inside me, and I did not see how I could earn more without an education.

Before making the decision I thought about it a lot and I started working other jobs, selling tortillas and cleaning houses. I would sell gum at work. Well, everything. We weren't doing well economically and we weren't earning enough money to live a basic life. One day when I went to buy milk for my little one and couldn't because my tab showed that I owed too much, I realized that I was killing my family of hunger. I decided to do something. I went to the *polleros* and told them that I would go. They told me that I would have to give them money upfront and I told them I would give them everything I made in the next two weeks. I had only \$150 and I asked for loans from different people and was able to put together \$500. Those two weeks were very difficult for me. I was anxious about leaving my daughters and my mom. I knew my mom wouldn't go with me, but I could take one of my daughters. I decided to take the oldest one. I knew that it would have been too hard to cross the border with them both. I asked an uncle and other people I knew in the neighborhood for money to cross the border.

The morning I left, I couldn't even speak. My knees were shaking, and my heart and soul were hurting. I was leaving a part of my heart in Mexico. In that moment when I said good-

bye to my baby I felt I was never going to see her again. My soul was torn to pieces. I blessed her, kissed her, gave her my Virgin Mary gold chain, and I left. I got into the bus that was picking up people from city to city—like they were picking crops—and I left. It took us four days to get to the border. The further we went, the more I would ask myself how my mom and daughter were. I would ask myself many things: When could I see my daughter? Would she be resentful toward me? Would my mom get tired of taking care of her? Would I find a job without speaking English? What would I do with my daughter when I got there? Would I find someone to take care of her? All sorts of questions. I also felt sad because I really didn't know when I could come back to my beautiful Mexico. As I told you before, I love my country. The only bad thing is that one cannot live there. One can't earn enough. My God! *(She started to cry.)* I should have listened to my feelings and doubts. They were so real and strong, and I was just so anxious.

After so many days of heat, anxiety, and anticipation, we got to the border. They took us to the river, and the people started to cross. The men crossed first so they could help some of the women that were falling behind. All of the sudden someone screamed "*la migra!*" (immigration officials!) and everyone ran. Everything happened so quickly. I don't know what happened. Everybody ran and left me alone. *(She inhaled deeply, full of anguish.)* I hid under a tree and I covered my daughter's mouth and prayed she didn't cry. *(She started crying.)* The truth is, I don't know if she realized something bad was happening. But I felt she did, because she was really quiet. All I remember is the coyote telling us, if something happened, to just stay there and wait. That's what I did, I waited! I waited and waited for two days! The truth is, in that moment, I was sorry I had left the village. I didn't have food;

I had left it in the truck. The truck was supposed to be waiting for us on the other side so we didn't have to carry anything. I had some money, but there wasn't a place to buy anything. Where in *la nada*? (middle of nowhere?) It was just us after a while, and my little girl was getting sick. I saw a coyote crossing another group. I asked him to take us, and he said, "Yes." I tied my daughter to me (*cried intensely*) with my *reboso* (veil). The current was too strong, and when I passed, it took my little girl. She died. My daughter died. (*She cried uncontrollably. Sonia took a few minutes to be by herself. When she returned she told me that her daughter's death is the worst thing that ever happened to her and that it still hurt as much as that day.*)

The truth is, that I don't even know how I got to the truck; I wanted the river to take me as well. Some of the men looked around for her, but they couldn't look for long because we could have gotten caught. I cried and asked them to leave me. I wanted the river to take me to my daughter. I wanted to find her. But they didn't leave me. I lost consciousness for a few days, and when I finally came to—I say this because I was not unconscious all that time, but I was still in shock. I was gone completely, as if in another world. I would only eat, but couldn't speak. They would talk to me and I would only move my head. When I finally came to, we were already on the other side in the north. It took me a few days, but when I came to, I noticed that I was empty. The river took everything. Crossing that day was like death for me. I felt empty—not just physically, *pero aqui adentro, sin nada* (but here inside, without anything). Without hope, I don't know how I kept going. The truth is that those were some horrible months. Knowing that my family was still in Mexico helped me to keep going. But, to tell you the truth, I haven't recovered completely. The pain is still there, very

true and strong. It never goes away. One gets used to such pain. (*Sonia touched a picture of her family in Mexico.*) I am still alive because I am here for them.

In time I met a very nice man and we got married. I had children with him and up to this day, we live together and get by with what we have. I can even send money to my family and my daughter back in Mexico.

The sad thing is that even though I'm here with my daughters, my daughter in Mexico doesn't consider me her mom. She knows I'm her mom, because I carried and had her, but for her, her grandma is her real mom. For her, I'm the one that brought her to this world, but her grandma is her mom. I want to bring her here, but she doesn't want to come. I'm her invisible mother. That's what I think I am, the one who gives her food, but is not there to see her eat it. The one who sends medicine, but does not see if she is doing well. My relationship with her is really cold; she talks to me, but it is not the same for her as it is for me. She's resentful toward me for leaving her. That's what my mom tells me. Even though my mom tells her I left to have a better life she doesn't really understand this. *Yo soy un vacío en su vida.* (I'm a hole in her life.) Point.

The truth is that many of us moms are like this, living like invisible moms. We are the amount of money we send, the emptiness in a phone call, but not the presence or the warmth of the love of a mother. That hurts me a great deal! I just can't do anything. She doesn't want to come to me. She tells me she will stay with her mother. (*She started crying.*) And the worst thing is that she is right: her grandma is her mom and I'm the invisible one. The

only consolation to me is that unlike other children left back home, mine was left with her grandma. Not with friends or uncles, but with the person that I trust the most, my mother.

Aquí (Here, in the U.S.) I was blessed with having two more daughters, and what makes me happier is that they are American—born here—with papers. They will not be treated badly. Not like me and my husband. They can tear us apart because we don't have any papers. But not my daughters. You know that life has been more difficult here. To look for a job, maintain a job, and live without papers is not easy. The first thing they ask for is your papers. They have to pay us under the table. Until recently we were able to get a tax ID number, but it scares me to use it. I don't want to be deported, even though they say they won't. I don't want to take a risk.

When my daughters started school here I thought I would be able to help them, since I had more schooling than my husband. He finished 6th grade, but I finished high school. I can help them, but it is so hard. The first thing I noticed when I came to register my daughter was how they looked at us in the office. The truth is that there were many parents there, and they treated us badly. They talked to us rudely, and asked us about things that many of us didn't really have, like a social security number. The truth is that I didn't register her there. I was scared and I left. Then a neighbor told me that I could go to the Centro Latino (Latino center) for help, so I went. They helped me there, and I was able to understand. My daughter's teacher was a very tall woman, and every time she would speak with us, she would do it looking down at us. Sometimes she would get a translator and would talk to us with the translator. She would say things like if we didn't have papers, than the little one

didn't have rights either. I was so scared of her. Truthfully, I felt as if that teacher didn't want us there. When we went to speak to her, she didn't have anyone that would translate for us, she did everything in English. I didn't understand anything. She talked and talked and pointed at her report card and I didn't know what she was saying. I got so upset. I felt so humiliated, but my husband said that we should stay, so she could realize what she was doing and feel bad about it, and to know that we care. I was so upset.

That's how it was all year. We went to the office to complain, but they didn't pay attention to us. The teacher made fun of my daughter one day her because she did her homework in Spanish. It was an activities worksheet that was really confusing. She didn't understand it. I tried to help with a dictionary, and I even went to ask for help from one of my cousins who was taking English classes. But she couldn't understand it either, so I did it in Spanish the way I understood it. My daughter told me that the teacher used her as an example of a job that is not done right, and kept her from having recess. I went to talk to the teacher and I asked my neighbor to go with me. The teacher told my neighbor that she didn't know that we didn't speak English. How could she not know that? How many times had we told her, "*No espique english*"? I didn't know what to do. She had us *con miedo* (scared) of what would happen.

My daughter passed that year, but with low grades. I think she barely made it because truthfully, we hardly spoke to the teacher. My daughter had a better teacher later, but it was still hard to be unable to help her with all of her homework. When we visit the school, they treat us as if we are not part of the school. I imagine that, for them, we are the least

important. One of the teachers told me that she knew that my daughter would not do well on the final exam. She was counting on that. She would ask me frequently if my daughter really was born here. She said I could trust her. I explained to her that in our house we spoke only Spanish and when we learn English, I will speak English with them, but now it is just Spanish. The teachers told us to read to them in English and not in Spanish. I do try but the little ones don't understand me when I read. They tell me, "You don't say it like that!" I'm reading wrong.

The truth is that my daughters, even though they were born here, are Mexican as well. It gives me great pain to know that they don't get the love and wisdom from their country the way I received it in my country. It is my turn and my responsibility to give them that. I tell them of the beauty of their country and that they have two countries, and they understand that. For me, being here has made me feel more Mexican. I need it (Mexico) more. I long for it, and I'm more proud of it. Every time someone makes fun of me because I am Mexican, I hold my head up high, because I remember what a great teacher once told me: "Hold your head up high because you are your country." Now that's beautiful! I don't think my daughters could say the same, not by the way they have been treated.

The truth is that it has been hard not only for me but also for my daughters who are not treated equally in school because they don't speak English well. That is so wrong. They are not to be blamed; it is not their fault they have immigrant parents without papers. The truth is that I tell them they should be proud that they can speak two languages, and they tell me that sometimes they are not. I know it is good for them and that in the future it will help

them. They will never be the same as a child that has American parents because they have both cultures. They are from here (U.S.) and there (Mexico).

Alondra y Daniel, Guatemala

Alondra y Daniel me invitaron a su casa a platicar con ellos después de unas reuniones de padres en la escuela donde su hija iba a primer grado. Los dos se quedaban platicando conmigo y siempre participaban en las actividades de la escuela y del grupo de padres y maestro. Ellos siempre buscaban la oportunidad de hacerles a otras personas presentes que ellos tenían educación...que eran licenciados, y que fueron educados en su país de origen.

Al llegar a la casa que Alondra y Daniel alquilan, la cual era una casa de ladrillo rojo muy común en el sur de los estados unidos. Ellos alquilaban esta casa. Alondra me abrió la puerta y me abraza dándome una bienvenida cálida...Y procede a decirme que me tiene que dar la “gira” por la casa antes que comencemos...Al entrar a la casa hay fotos de familia en Guatemala, vacaciones, graduaciones de secundaria y de la universidad. Los títulos universitarios respectivos a cada uno de ellos colgaban en las paredes también.

Inmediatamente al entrar al pasillo hay títulos en la pared—una señal que en esta casa vivían personas educadas.

La siguiente pared en el pasillo el cual estaba localizado en el medio de la casa y que dividía la sala, la cocina y los cuartos estaba lo que parecía un monumento a su hija de apenas siete años. Tenía dibujos, premios de kinder, premios de primer grado, escrituras, entre otros. Parar ahí fue obligatorio. Ella comenzó a contarme de todos los logros académicos de su hija.

Al entrar a la cocina y el comedor los cuales estaban en el mismo espacio, Alondra tenía ya puestas en la mesa unas tazas muy elegantes las cuales yo le agradecí y le complementé diciéndole que no se hubiera molestado...al cual ella responde que..."sus visitas son siempre tratados con lo mejor."

En ese momento sale Daniel de la recámara con el cabello mojado...procede a saludarme y a contarme que acababa de salir del trabajo se dio un refresquito antes de platicar conmigo. Después, de algunas palabras procedemos a sentarnos en la mesa a platicar...

Alondra: Daniel y yo los dos nacimos en la ciudad de Guatemala de familias de clase bien acomodada. Mis padres los dos fueron educados, y terminaron la secundaria. Mi papa pudo avanzar hasta la universidad donde saco carrera como farmacéutico. Mi niñez fue una niñez normal y muy linda. Tuvimos la fortuna que mi papa ganaba muy buen dinero y nos dábamos lujos de ir en paseos de la escuela y familiares. A mi nunca me faltó nada...*se ríe*...a veces hasta me sobraba!

Mi padres tuvieron cuatro hijos de todos ellos yo era la única mujer y yo creo que por eso también me lo daban todo. Mi mama y yo tomábamos paseo a los centros comerciales a ver que había de nuevo en la moda. Fue reina de mi secundaria, reina de carnaval, y también princesa de un equipo de béisbol. Mis hermanos todos fueron a la universidad yo como la mas pequeña también. Mis papas abrieron una farmacia y de eso vivíamos todos. Con eso nos educamos todos.

Daniel: Yo también viví tomo mi vida en la ciudad de Guatemala. Mi familia no tenía negocios pero si vivíamos bien. Vivíamos del trabajo de mi papa y mi mama. Los dos se graduaron de la secundaria y trabajaron para el gobierno por muchos años. Yo tuve cinco hermanos todos hombres. Yo soy el mediano. De todos mis hermanos dos llegamos a ir a la universidad, los otros no fueron porque no quisieron. Yo trabajaba en los fines de semana para ganar dinero “extra” para gastar en mis cosas. Esto era raro porque aya cuando estas en la universidad no trabajas. Tu trabajo son los estudios.

Yo soy ingeniero civil. Me gradué con muy buenas notas, fui uno de los mejores de mi clase. Yo conocí a Alondra en la universidad ella estudiaba educación y yo ingeniería civil. Nos veíamos durante los almuerzo porque los dos íbamos a comer a la casas de una señora que nos hacia la comida y la vendía muy barata. Y así fue que nos conocimos, comiendo....*se ríe!*

Yo termine los estudios primero y mi padres me dieron un fiestón por ser el primer en mi familia en terminar. Alondra llego a la fiesta como mi amiga y le callo muy bien a mi familia. Ya que termine la universidad, me costo mucho tiempo encontrar trabajo de ingeniero, yo diría que como unos seis meses. Esos seis meses estuve ahí en la casa a ver si alguien me llamaba. Cuando comencé a trabajar de ingeniero ganaba muy poco. Pero como todavía vivía con mis padres valía la pena. No tenia que pagar alquiler, y todo el dinero que ganaba era mió.

Yo le pedí a Alondra que fuera mi novia ya sería y que la fuera a esperar para que terminara. A ella le faltaba un año. Y así fue. La espere y nos casamos ya cuando ella termino su carrera en educación.

Alondra: Después que nos casamos Daniel siguió trabajando y yo daba clases. No iba más o menos. Vivíamos bien porque vivíamos con los papas de Daniel y no gastamos tanto en alquiler de casa... ¡ojala todo se hubiera quedado así!

Las cosas comenzaron a cambiar cuando a Daniel y a otros ingenieros civiles les bajaron el sueldo. Ya sus papas se habían retirado y nada mas vivían de su pago de retiro. Yo como maestra la verdad no ganaba mucho. Nos las vimos mal. Estábamos económicamente más apretados que nunca.

Mientras todo esto pasaba, dos hermanos de Daniel ya se habían ido para los Ángeles a trabajar. Ellos eran de los que no habían estudiado y no podían conseguir trabajo que les pagara bien en Guatemala.

La verdad es que para nosotros dejar el país era una noción tan extraña e inconcebible. Nosotros adoramos nuestro país, y tenemos orgullo en ser guatemaltecos! El dejar el país era lo último que se nos hubiera pasado por la cabeza. Nosotros cargamos tan en alto a la patria que nos vio nacer que no concebíamos irnos. Mi esposo hasta se enojo con sus hermanos porque se fueron y no trataron de seguir ahí tratando de seguir apoyando nuestra economía nacional....quien iba a creer que íbamos a estar aquí.

Daniel baja la cabeza y la mueve de un lado hacia a otro como en forma de desagrado.

Daniel: Puchala! Es que nos tratan como si fuéramos de clase baja. No todo lo contrario, éramos de una buena clase y de una familia con prestigio. Tenemos los dos europeo en nuestra familia, ella de España y yo de francés. Y con educación éramos de buena clase.

Pero las cosas comenzaron a cambiar. A mi me bajaron el pago casi mitad de lo que ganaba y yo mantenía la casa, pues antes de eso yo era el que ganaba mas que Alondra. Todo el estilo de vida que conocíamos se nos estaba hiendo abajo. Primero, tuvimos que correr a la señora que nos limpiaba y nos cocinaba...yo me sentía tan mal que mi esposa estuviera haciendo eso con profesión. Ella estaba para tener ayuda, ya era una profesional. Pero yo el presupuesto era mucho más pequeño. Después vendimos, uno de los terrenos que me había dado mi papa, y usamos ese dinero para poder vivir. Después lo peor...me corrieron...a mi y a como quince ingenieros civiles...*se queda callado...toma un suspiro...eso ya fue lo ultimo.*

Mis hermanos nos estaban ayudando económicamente desde Los Ángeles, y a mi me daba una vergüenza que mis hermanos que no eran educados, pero me estaban manteniéndome a mi, mi mujer, y mis padres. Ellos comenzaron a decirme que debería ir para los estados unidos y que fuera a pedir visa. Pedí visa pero como ya no tenia trabajo no me la dieron, pero si pedí para México y me la dieron. Entonces viaje para la ciudad de México y de México a Tijuana y de ahí un hermano me estaba esperando con un coyote. Nos pasamos dos días en Tijuana y en esos dos días me prepararon para la cruzada. Cuando me fui de Guatemala yo solo pensaba quedarme un tiempo en los Estados Unidos hacer suficiente dinero y regresar.

Y me despedí de mis padres como que los iba a ver otra vez...*suspira profundamente*...sin saber que iban a ser años antes que los pudiera ver otra vez.

Cuando deje Guatemala me fui bien vestido como me lo habían dicho. Me fui en primera clase hasta que llegue a Tijuana. No creo que alguien haya sospechado que yo iba a cruzar la frontera. Al llegar a Tijuana me hospedaron en un hotel muy bueno la primera noche y después me fui a la casa de un señor donde me cambie y donde me fueron preparando.... La verdad yo no pensaba que iba a cruzar así. Yo el ingeniero civil...cruzar así como si fuera si no fuera educado...Como si fuera un campesino...El coyote noto que estaba incomodo...hasta se enoja con migo y me dijo..."aya puedes ser presidente, ingeniero, lo que sea, pero aquí [en los Estados Unidos] cuando cruzas eres igual a todos...un simple inmigrante ilegal." ..*Se le ponen llorosos los ojos*...eso para mi fue como un disparo en mi estima, clase identidad y a mi dignidad.

Estaba tan triste...pero nada me preparo para lo que seguía. En la noche nos fuimos a la loma...y cuando subí esa loma y vi la cantidad de gente que estaba esperando cruzar...me di cuenta que el tenia razón...que me había ya añadido a la lista de emigrantes tratando de cruzar... ¡fue una realidad muy dura! ¡Una cachetada! Fue como el final del hombre Guatemalteco de la vida de clase alta...y el comienzo de m i sombra...de los mas bajo y lo que ¡menos quería ser!

La cruzada pues que te digo, fue lo peor. Yo vi de todo, familias, niños, ancianos. Esta tan presente en mí como si hubiera sido ayer. Corrimos por dos días hasta que llegamos al otro

lado. Ahí me esperaba un auto que me llevo a una casa donde nos cambiamos y nos fuimos para Los Ángeles. Y así fue que llegue, y así fue que me condensé a desmoralizar. Estaba en un estado de mente muy malo después de eso, y me bajo mucho mas cuando comencé a trabajar en una fabrica de zapatos, haciendo trabajo bajos como u ¡Don nadie! ¡Como un cualquiera! Debo admitir que hasta en esa fabrica ganaba mas de lo que hubiera ganado en mi país, y me sentí tan feliz cuando le pude mandar a mi esposa dinero por primera vez....*se para y consigue una cajita...mire aquí esta el recibo de envió de dinero...saca un recibo con su nombre, fecha, y la cantidad que mando \$350 dólares...*Eso era mucho para ella. Yo le dije que lo que debería hacer era estudiar y sacar la maestría para poder ganar mas cuando regresara...y así lo hizo.

Yo creo que a mi me fue bien, bueno comparado a otros que llegan aquí solos. Porque yo llegue aquí a una comunidad de amigos y gentes de Guatemala que ya tenían contactos con mis hermanos. Ya yo vine a un trabajo que me esperaba...al siguiente día de llegar ya yo estaba trabajando...y con personas que ya sabían que hacer en este lugar. Me llevaron a sacar licencia cuado llegue, a sacar seguro social, me tenia un carro, me consiguieron seguro para el carro por un mes, hasta que yo lo pudiera pagar. Todo eso lo pude hacer por que ellos ya estaban aquí. Ya yo tenía una red de personas aquí que me enseñaron como era a la vida aquí. Yo no creo que yo lo hubiera echo tan bien sin eso...no se como lo hizo mi primer hermano que se vino—me imaginó que fue difícil.

Alondra: Para mi fue muy difícil estar sola... y verlo ir. Pero como el me dijo que hiciera si saque la maestría en educación y hasta conseguí mejor trabajo ganando un poco mas de lo

que ganaba. Todavía, vivía de lo que me mandaba Daniel, y sus padres y familias también vivían de lo que mandaban los hermanos.

Nosotros no teníamos planes para que el se quedara, pero un día recibí una llamada de Daniel y me decía que las escuelas eran buenas que si teníamos hijos deberían estudiar inglés. El me decía que era importante porque era el idioma del presente y el futuro. Y que sería mejor si nacieran aya [en los Estados Unidos]....Así me pasó tratando de convencer como por tres mese...hasta me convenció. Bueno, yo siempre le daba el ¡No! Hasta que accedí.

Como yo todavía estaba trabajando, aproveche una conferencia aquí en los Ángeles para pedir visa, y me la dieron porque tenía suficiente dinero en el banco y no me veían como una amenaza. Veían que las posibilidades de quedarme en los Estados Unidos eran mínimas....La verdad yo si no me quería venir...para mi hasta hoy te digo que prefiero Guatemala.

Yo llore, y llore por mucho tiempo después de llegar aquí. Primero estuve en la casa y después comencé a buscar trabajo con mi maestría y ahí fui donde caí en una depresión grande. A todos los lugares donde iba me decían que mis estudios no valían ¡NADA!

¡NADA! ¡NADA! ¡NADA!

Que decepción depuse de estudiar tanto que llegue aquí y que te digan que tu capacidad mental académica y profesional ¡no vale nada! [En este país] No eso fue un golpe bajo y fuerte! *Comienza a llorar!* Fue, y es una humillación tan grande!

Yo estuve en la casa sin hacer nada y era la cocinera para todo eso hombres que vivían con nosotros. Hasta que me canse, y busque trabajo. Comencé trabajando en un restaurante,

limpiando baños. Y hice eso pos un año hasta que quede embarazada con mi hija. Después de eso, ya no seguí haciendo trabajo tan duro.

Daniel: En California las cosa estaban poniéndose peor y mi hermano escucho de que en Carolina del Norte necesitaban personas que trabajaran en construcción y personas que supieran de números y que iban a estar entrevistando. Y fui al entrevista, me dieron un examen de matemáticas, lo pase, y me dieron el trabajo. En Carolina del Norte no conocíamos a nadie aquí en Carolina del Norte. Ellos nos pagaron para poder mudarnos. Nos montamos en nuestro carro y manejamos aquí a Carolina del Norte, nos quedamos en un hotel por dos semanas hasta que conseguimos apartamento. Ya después de unos cuantos años rentamos esta casa.

Mi hija nació aquí, y ella ahora es Americana. Así como lo quería yo. Yo quería que ella tuviera la oportunidad de ir a la escuela aquí y que aprendiera la ingle. Ya después de todo lo que nos ha pasado con las carreras sabemos que es importante que ella estudie aquí para que le sirva en todas partes. ¡Un titulo Americano es invaluable! Vale mucho en todas partes del mundo.

Lo que no esperábamos es la falta de atención los maestros tiene con nosotros aunque somos educados. Nosotros pensábamos que si les decíamos que si fuimos a la escuela iban a tratar a nuestra hija mejor, pero en realidad no fue así.

Alondra: Yo pienso que todo lo contrario, los maestros como que no les importa. Y tratan a mi hija como si no supiera nada. Yo entiendo un poquito el ingles y trato de hablar pero

como que no me entienden. Ellos deben de pensar que yo también yo soy educada. Yo digo que a mi hija no la van a tratar mal pero es duro pelear por eso cuando no se puede hablar el idioma muy bien—y no se puede articular un argumento claramente. De todos modos vengo a la escuela, y me aseguro que las maestras me vean. Aunque no me hagan caso y me ignoren.

Ellas tienen que saber que aunque no quieran que este ahí si lo voy a estar por me hija, no solo hoy pero siempre. En la escuela tienen que saber que aunque no hable ingles si voy a pelear. No si se que tenemos derechos. No soy una ignorante. No soy como muchas otras personas.

Daniel: Yo pienso que muchos maestro piensan que eso es lo que somos ignorantes, pero en realidad algunos de ellos si no saben mucho de cultura. Como en la escuela de mi hija hicieron un festival Latino. Y una de las maestra en el salón de mi hija pensó que Guatemala era un municipio de México. Me enoje tanto! Y pensé esta mujer esta dándole clases a mi hija!...La tuve que corregir y se le noto en la cara la vergüenza. Pero aun así ya el daño estaba echo...Mucho maestros piensan que porque nos vemos morenos, hablamos somos de México...como si es el único país Latino que existe!. No...hay otros y muy buenos...y el mió en mi opinión es buenísimo y si hay mucha diferencia entre los países Latinos. Pero muchos piensan que las culturas son iguales y que solo se trata del valet folklórico, el charro, mariachi...no así no es! Eso me molesta mucho...se que hay muchos Mexicanos pero también habemos de otros lugares y nuestra diferencia es los que nos destaca!

Lo bueno es que en la casa le enseñamos a nuestra hija acerca del mundo y la geografía. Pero es triste cuando en las escuelas no se inculca eso ni el español. Como en Guatemala cuando íbamos a la escuela nos daban clase de inglés, bueno por lo menos en las escuelas privadas donde íbamos. Pero aquí no quieren saber nada de español. Ni siquiera de los papas que lo hablan. Eso no es bueno porque va a haber más personas que hablen español y es necesario que ya vayan aprendiendo diferentes idiomas.

Alondra: Nosotros vamos a todos los eventos de la escuela...aunque no nos quieran. Vamos nada más para que por lo menos nos vean, aunque no nos podamos comunicar con ellos. Aunque a veces no nos manden información a la casa, o no nos inviten...si nos damos cuenta, vamos. Ni siquiera sabemos que es lo que se planea para padres Latinos, sino para gringos tampoco. Ya estoy cansada ser transparente y invisible, de ser una sombra, de que mi profesión no valga nada, y que me ignoren porque no se el idioma, o porque ahora limpio casas. Ya estoy cansada...algo que me hace sentir bien el sacrificio de venir a que es que por lo menos mi hija va poder contar aquí, con sus estudios, y va a poder ser parte de la comunidad americana de una manera que nosotros no podemos por no tener papeles aunque seamos mas educados que algunos de los maestros de mi hija.

Yo se que a ella si la van a aceptar cuando ella sea profesional. Mientras solo vivimos bajo los recuerdos de lo que fuimos y lo que pudimos hacer aquí...como profesionales que hemos sido ¡reducido al nada!

Alondra and Daniel's English Adaptation

Alondra and Daniel invited me to their house after a parent meeting in the school where their daughter went to first grade. The two of them stayed talking to me after a parent meeting; both always participated in after-school activities and the Parent Teacher Association. They were both highly educated in their country of origin.

At the brick, southern style house they rented, Alondra gave me a warm welcome and a tour of the house. There are pictures of their family in Guatemala, vacations, graduations from high school and college, as well as university degrees. A hallway was filled with degrees each had earned, as well as a gallery of the 7- year-old daughter's achievements: drawings, kindergarten and first grade awards, writings, and other things. We stood in front of it and she began to tell me all about her academic accomplishments. Alondra had a set of cups on the dining table and said that her visitors are always very well received.

Daniel came out to greet me with wet hair. He had just gotten home from work and just freshened up in order to talk to me. We all sat around the table and began to talk.

Alondra: Daniel and I were both born in Guatemala into middle-class families. My parents both finished high school; my dad was able to keep going to university and graduated as a pharmacist. My childhood was a normal childhood and beautiful. We were very fortunate that my dad made good money and we were able to take school trips and family outings. I never needed anything. *(She smiled.)* Sometimes I had more than I needed.

My parents had four children, and I was the only girl. I think that's why they always gave me everything. My mother and I always went shopping to see what was new in fashion. I was voted queen in my high school, queen of the carnival, and princess for a baseball team. My brothers all went to the university and I did as well. My parents opened up a pharmacy, and that's how we earned money. We were all educated and survived thanks to that business.

Daniel: I also lived all of my life in Guatemala City. My family didn't have any businesses, but we lived well. We lived well because both of my parents worked. Both of them graduated from high school and worked for the government for many years. I had five brothers, and I'm the middle child. Only two of us went to the university; the others didn't want to attend. While in the university, I would work on the weekends in order to make some extra money. This is rare because people who are enrolled in the university in my country don't usually work. Most students do only school.

I'm a civil engineer; I was able to graduate with high grades and was considered one of the best in my class. I met Alondra in the university; she studied education and I studied civil engineering. We would usually see each other during lunch in the house of a woman who cooked for us and sold food really cheap. That is how we met, eating. *(He laughed.)*

I finished my studies first, and my parents threw me a big party for finishing first in the family. Alondra came to that party as a friend and was very well liked by my family. Once out of the university, it was really hard for me to find a job as an engineer; I would say it took me about six months. Those six months I just stayed at home waiting for someone to call

me. When I started working as an engineer, I made little money, but I still lived with my parents and didn't have to pay rent, so all the money I earned was mine. I asked Alondra to be my girlfriend, and I waited for her to finish school. She had a year left. We got married when she finished a degree in education.

Alondra: After we got married, Daniel kept working and I began teaching. It went *mas o menos* (so-so) for us. We lived well because we lived in Daniel's parents' house and we didn't have to pay for rent. I wish everything could have stayed that way.

Things started to change when they cut Daniel's and other engineers' salary. His parents had retired and lived only on what they got from retirement. As a teacher I didn't make much. We were in bad condition. Squeezed economically more than ever. While all of these things were happening, two of Daniel's brothers went to Los Angeles to work. They were the brothers who didn't want to stay in school and couldn't find a good paying job in Guatemala.

Actually, for us the thought of leaving our country was very strange and inconceivable. We love our country and are proud to be from Guatemala. To leave our country was the last thing in our minds. We were so proud and devoted to our country that it was hard for us to leave. My husband even got upset with his brothers when they left because they didn't keep trying to get ahead by supporting our nation's economy. Who would have thought that we would be here today? *(Daniel lowered and shook his head in disappointment.)*

Daniel: Gosh! It is because we are treated as if we were from an inferior race or class. On the contrary, we are from good, prestigious families. We both have European ancestry, she from Spain, and I from France. With our educations, we were considered high class.

When they lowered my salary to almost half of what I had made, I still made more than Alondra, but the lifestyle we were accustomed to was going down the drain. First we had to let go of the lady that cleaned and cooked for us. I felt so bad that my wife was doing household chores—with her profession, she really should have had help at home. But our income was too low. Then we sold one of the plots of land that my father had left me, and we had to use that money to live on. Then it got worse: I got fired—me and 15 other civil engineers. (*He was quiet...took a deep breath.*) That was the last straw!

My brothers helped us financially from Los Angeles. I was so embarrassed that my brothers who were not educated yet, were providing for my wife, my parents, and me. They started to tell me that I should go to the United States, to just go apply for a visa. I asked for a visa but since I didn't have a job anymore, they didn't give it to me. But I also asked for a visa to Mexico, and it was granted. When I left Guatemala, I thought I would spend some time in the United States to make money and then come back to Guatemala. So, I decided that I was going to go, and I said good-bye to my parents thinking I would see them soon, without knowing it would take years before I saw them again. Then I traveled to Mexico City and from there to Tijuana. My brother was waiting for me with a coyote. We spent two days in Tijuana, and in those two days they prepared me to cross.

When I left Guatemala, I was well dressed like they had told me. I flew in first class until I got to Tijuana. I don't think anyone was suspicious or thought that I was going to cross the border. When I got to Tijuana they placed me in a nice hotel for the first night and then took me to a man's house where I changed, and where they started to prepare me.

In reality, I didn't think I would have to cross that way—me, the civil engineer, crossing as if I were uneducated, as if I were a *campesino* (farmworker). The coyote noticed my discomfort and was upset. He told me, “In the place you come from, you can be the president or engineer or whatever, but here (in the U.S) you're just like anyone else—a simple illegal” *un mojado*. (*He got teary eyed.*) That, for me, was a shot through my self-esteem, class, identity, and dignity.

I was so sad, but nothing prepared me for what was to come. During the night we climbed a hill and when I got to the top and saw the number of people who were waiting to cross, I was aware that he was right. I had just added myself to the list of immigrants who were trying to cross. It was a hard reality! *Una cachetada! Fue como el final del hombre guatemalteco de la vida de clase alta...y el comienzo de mi sombra...de lo mas bajo y lo que menos queria ser!* (It was a slap in the face! It was like the end of the high-class Guatemalan man and the beginning of my shadow—the lowest and the least that I wanted to be.)

Crossing was the worst. I saw everyone: families, kids, elderly, and many dead. It seems as if it happened yesterday. We ran for two days until we got across. On the other side (in the U.S.) a car was waiting for me and took me to a house where we changed and left for Los

Angeles. That is how I came here and that is how I started to demoralize myself. I was in a very low state of mind and it got lower when I started to work in a shoe warehouse, doing low-skill jobs like *un cualquiera!* (a nobody). I have to admit that in that warehouse I made more than what I was making in my country. And I felt so happy when I was able to send money to my wife for the first time. (*He stood up and got a small box.*) Look, here is the receipt for the money I sent! (*The receipt showed the date and amount: \$350.*) I told her to study hard and get her master's so she could make more when I returned—and she did.

I think that everything went well for me compared to others who came alone. I came to a community of friends and people from Guatemala who had already met my brothers. I had a job waiting for me, and the very next day, I was working, with people who already knew what to do in this country. They took me to get my license when I came, to take out a social security card. They had a car waiting for me, and they got me insurance for one month, until I could pay for it. All of this I was able to do because they were already here. I already had a network of people here that taught me about life here. I don't think I could have done as well without them. I don't know how my first brother did it when he came—that must have been hard.

Alondra: For me, it was really difficult to see him go and to be alone. But just like he had told me to, I was able to earn my master's and earn a little more money than I had made before. I still lived on the money he sent me, and his family lived on what his brothers would send them and their families.

We did not plan for him to stay here (in the U.S). Daniel called me one time and told me that schools were really good that if we had children they should study English. That it is the language of the present and the future, and that it would be better if they were born in the United States. For three months he tried to convince me to move and start a family—I would say, “No.” Until one day I gave in.

Since I was still working, I took the opportunity of a conference held in Los Angeles to ask for a visa, and they gave it to me because I had enough money in the bank and I didn’t seem to be a threat. The chances of my staying in the United States were low. The truth is that I really didn’t want to come here. Even today I will tell you that I prefer Guatemala.

I cried and cried for a really long time after I arrived here. I stayed home at first and then I started to look for work with my teaching degree. And that’s when I became very depressed. Everywhere I went, they would tell me that my education was not worth anything. Nothing, nothing, nothing!

That was quite a disappointment after studying so hard, to come here and they tell you that all your academic achievement and profession are worth nothing. In my county, that was a low blow and hard to swallow! (*She started to cry.*) It was and is a big humiliation! I was unemployed, staying at home and cooking for all those men that were living with us. When I got tired of that and looked for a job, I found work in a restaurant. I started in a restaurant cleaning restrooms. I did that for a year until I got pregnant with my daughter. After that I didn’t work doing hard labor anymore.

Daniel: In California, things were getting worse. My brother heard that in North Carolina they needed people to work in construction and people who were good with numbers. I went to the interviews and they gave me a math exam. I passed it and got the job. We didn't know anyone here in North Carolina, but they gave us money to move, so we got in our car and drove here to North Carolina. Once in North Carolina, we stayed in a hotel for two weeks until we got an apartment. After a few years, we rented this house. My daughter was born here, and she is now an American. That's how I wanted it. I wanted her to have the opportunity to go to school here and to learn English. After everything we have gone through with our careers, we want her to study here so that she can use her education anywhere she goes. An American degree is priceless!

What we didn't expect is the lack of attention teachers have given us even though we're educated. We thought if we told them that we both went to school, they would treat our daughter differently, but the reality was far from that.

Alondra: I think it was the other way around; the teachers seem not to care. They treat my daughter as if she didn't know anything. I speak a little bit of English and I try to speak to them, but it is as if they don't want to understand me. They have to understand that I am also educated and I believe that they will not treat my daughter badly, but it is hard to argue when one can't speak their language well and can't articulate an argument! Either way, I come to the school and I make sure the teachers see me, even if they don't care and ignore me.

They need to know that even if they don't want me there, I will be there for my daughter, not just today but always. At school they have to realize that even if I don't speak English, I am going to fight. Yes, I know we have rights. I am not ignorant. I'm not like many other parents.

Daniel: I believe that many teachers think that's what we are: ignorant. The reality is that many of them really don't know much about culture. For example, at the Latino festival at my daughter's school, and one of my daughter's teachers thought that Guatemala was a state in Mexico. I was so upset and I thought, this woman is teaching my child! I had to correct her and I noticed she was embarrassed. Even so, the harm was already done. Many teachers think that just because we are brown we are from Mexico. As if it is the only Latino country that exists. No, there are others, good ones—and mine, in my opinion, is really good. There are many differences among Latino countries. Many think that the culture is the same and that it is only about the folkloric dances, *charros*, *mariachi*...no, that's not it. This really bothers me. I know there are a great deal of Mexicans, but we are from many places. Our differences are what make us who we are.

The good thing is that at home we teach our daughter about the world and geography. It is sad that the schools are not teaching Spanish. In Guatemala when we were there you could learn English, at least at the private academies we attended, but here they don't know any Spanish. Not even the parents that speak it. This is not good because there will be more Spanish-speaking people, and it is necessary that they start learning different languages.

Alondra: We go to everything that has to do with school, even if they don't want us to. We go so that they can at least see us, even if we cannot communicate with them. Even if at times, they don't send information home or invite us. If we know, we go. We attend not only events for Latino people, but those for American people as well. I am tired of living as a transparent/invisible—feeling that my profession is worth nothing and being ignored because I don't speak English and because I clean houses here. I am tired. What makes me feel good about this sacrifice is that my daughter will be able to be heard here and with her studies she will be able to be part of the community in a way that we can't. Even though we are more educated than some of the teachers who teach my daughter.

I know that they will accept her when she becomes a professional. Meanwhile, we live under the shadow and memory of what we were and what we could have done here. As professionals we have been reduced to nothing!

Guadalupe, El Salvador

Guadalupe vivía en una casa blanca con ventanales negros. En un vecindario pobre donde la mayoría de los habitantes en este vecindario eran Latinos. Al llegar al vecindario no sabía cual de todas era la casa ya que ella no me había dado el número de casa, ella simplemente me pidió que si me perdía que le preguntara alguien en el vecindario y ellos sabrían dirigirme al lugar apropiado. Todas las casas se veían un poco viejas y casi todas eran blancas igual que la casa de Guadalupe. Al rondar unas cuantas veces por el vecindario decidí preguntar. Y me pparen en frente de una casa amarilla donde estaban algunas señoras sentadas afuera vigilando a sus hijos mientras jugaban. Al verme acércame, inmediatamente llamaron a sus hijos y les dijeron que entraran. Ellas se acercaron con un poco de

reservación pero a la misma vez amigables...Al escuchar sus acentos en español parecían que eran del Salvador y Guatemala. Yo les pregunte si sabían a donde vivía Guadalupe y la reservación cambio inmediatamente a alivio. Llamaron a los niños y les dijeron que me llevaran a la casa de Lupe, como le llama cariñosamente. Los niños salieron contentos porque podían salir otra vez y me llevaron.

Al acercarme a la entrada de la casa de Lupe había muchas flores, y una bandera del Salvador y otra de México colgado en la entrada de su casa. Los niños tocaron y se fueron. Al abrir la puerta sale Lupe con un sartén en las manos y una esponja en la otra. Lupe es una mujer morena maciza y baja. Tiene pelo largo lacio y una sonrisa radiante. Al yo entrar veo la fotos de sus dos hijas, en un altar para sus mama con una vela alumbrada por la virgen. Lupe me hace pasar al comedor donde ya tiene retratos de su familia en la mesa y comida típica Salvadoreña. Me ofrece un “fresco” de naranja y lo tomo. Y me comienza a contar...

Bueno mi familia ha vivido en el Salvador por muchos años. Mi madre era hija única que no pudo terminar la escuela...Bueno la vedad es que nada mas fue por cuatro anos, hasta el quinto año porque se tuvo que poner a ayudarle a su mama con las cosas de la casa. Ella tuvo un hermano pero se murió de fiebre. Nadie sabe la verdad que le paso y pues nadie tenia el dinero ni el transporte para poder llevarlo a que recibiera atención. Por eso mi mama quedo sola y pues cuando su hermano murió ella apenas tenía como ocho anos y se quedo sola y se puso a ayudarle a trabajar a su mama. Mi mama trabajo toda su vida para eso vino ella al

mudo decía ella. Era una mujer que alargaba el dinero para lo que se necesitaba...*Toma un suspiro profundo...Ahh...Si yo pudiera ser como ella!*

Cuando mi mama tenia como diez y seis años ella se iba al mercado a compra mandados para mi abuela y ahí un día decía ella cuando iba caminando fue que conoció a mi papa. El le hablaba y ello lo ignoraba, hasta que un día se apareció mi papa y ella, como secretamente le gustaba le dijo que si iba a ser su novia pero si que le dijo en frente de mis abuelos que “si no se portaba bien lo dejaba.” Ella dice que mi abuelo se rió y mi abuela la regaño...Ella solo lo repitió. Así era ella Juerte. Luego de un año de novios dice mi papa que ella era muy guapa y que el no se podía esperar y que le pidió matrimonio y que ella dijo que si. Pues se casaron muy humildemente solo con la familia y unas personas del pueblo en la capilla de la iglesia. *Me enseña una foto borrosa blanco y negra tomada por un fotógrafo afuera de la iglesia...*

Al año llegue yo. Mi papa era un hombre de pueblo y muy trabajador. También fue a la escuela muy poco. El me contaba que era porque no tuvo la oportunidad. El era el mayor y el responsable de su familia. Toda su vida mi papa trabajo en le campo o de ayudador en casas ricas. El también era comerciante. Compraba cosas y las vendía por más. Bueno el hizo de todo. Mi mama lavaba ropa de ves en cuando, y planchaba. Pero a mi papa no le gustaba pero no le decía nada porque sabía que el dinero se ocupaba.

Mi mama trato de tener mas hijos pero muchas personas pensaban que le habían dado mal de ojo porque los perdía y pues luego se opero y nada mas quede yo.

En mi casa se vivía felizmente. Mi papa era muy divertido y pues como no tuvo barones pues se ponía a hablar conmigo. Mi mama no se quedaba callada tampoco ella era mas estricta conmigo pero también era de buen humor. Ellos la verdad no me dejaban salir mucho, me hablaban de la escuela y que yo tenia que salir y ser profesional. Y pues toda mi vida ellos dician que tenia que seguir en la escuela. Ellos me dician que lo que pagara ellos iban a ayudarme para ir. Y yo siempre crecí con eso.

En la escuela nos enseñaban de todo pero yo era muy orgullosa de ser salvadoreña, de mi himno nacional y de lo que era ser salvadoreña. En la escuela me gustaba aprender acerca de la historia y pues como tuve la fortuna de poder ir yo sabia mucho acerca de la historia del país. Yo creo que si me hice hasta mas Salvadoreña al ir a la escuela porque ahí aprendí muchos de los símbolos que son parte de mi patria. Algunas personal en el pueblo a veces pensaban que yo era un poco rara porque era muy orgullosa y ellos decían cosas porque yo era así. Pero ellos no iban a la escuela y no aprendían lo que a mi me estaban enseñando. Pero bueno así crecí yo, creyendo en la educación.

Pero pues todo cambio para nojostros cuando un día mi papa se despidió de nojostros bien raro y me dijo a mi que me cuidara y que...*Se hecha a llorar*...Cuidara a mi mama y el me veía mas tarde...Le dio un beso a mi mama y ella se quedo también así como preocupada porque el estaba actuando raro...como muy cariñoso. Mi mama me llevo a la escuela y luego como a tres horas mas tardes me vinieron a sacar porque a mi papa le dio un ataque del corazón mientras trabajaba. Se lo llevaron al hospital y todavía estaba vivo. Cuando yo llegue

el estaba ya mal, ya no hablaba pero después se murió. Eso nos cambio la vida, nos dejo solas a las dos. Y pues nada más quedamos mi mama y yo.

Mi mama consiguió mas clientes para lavar y planchar y no me dejo dejar la escuela ella dijo que sea como sea ella iba ayudarme. Yo de mi parte, pues le ayudaba cuando llegaba al casa y en los días libres me la pasaba con ella planchando, yo planchaba la ropa pequeña y no tan delicada y ella las más pesadas y delicadas. Así pasamos por años. Pasando necesidades pero viviendo. Pero lo mas que pasaba el tiempo lo mas que se ponían peor las cosas. Había gente que le las estaban llevando mal por lo de la revolución y pues no tenia trabajo y pues no necesitaban gente para que les plancharan. Ya mi mama se estaba enfermando y yo no me sentía muy bien., Ya en ese tiempo ya yo me había graduado y estaba con eso de que no sabia que hacer. Y así fue que llegue a irme del Salvador. Y así fue que me paso todo lo malo y feo que me paso al irme de mi patria. Y sin saber como me iba a ir me fui a cruzar el Río Grande y fue una experiencia.

Llora...

La primera vez que cruce lo hice desde el Río Grande. Pues me fue más o menos. Me tuve que cruzar porque no teníamos nada para comer, y pues mi mama ya estaba viejita y tenia diabetes...y pues se estaba quedando ciega. Después de tantos anos de trabajo pues ella no se merecía estar así. Yo me sentía mal porque no era justo que estuviéramos así...*Toma una pausa larga...* Pero yo si fui educada, yo soy maestra de profesión... mi pobre madre lavaba ropa y cosía ropa para poder ayudarme con la matricula. Y hasta tenia las manos acabadas por haber pasado tanto tiempo lavando ropa. Pues yo también trabajaba, y pues nada mas

ganaba siete dólares al mes...no era mucho por con eso lo hacíamos. Para mi mama mi escuela era siempre muy importante. Era muy difícil porque las matriculas eran caras. Pero poco a poco fuimos pagando, la verdad yo no se ni como le hacia mi mama para poder conseguir el dinero para mi matricula pero lo hacia, y me gradué...

Yo fui la primera en mi pueblo que se graduaba de la universidad. Mi pueblito queda en como a dos horas de la ciudad, umm, pues estaba en el monte y yo tenia que quedarme en la ciudad por la semana y me iba a la casa en los fines de semana. Así pase toda la universidad en la ciudad y en la casa los fines de semana. Y mi madre era la que ayudaba y hacia todo para poder tenerme en la ciudad. Había que pagar el cuarto donde me quedaba, los buses, la matricula, lo libros, la comida. A veces no comía por comprarme algún libro o a veces nos tardábamos para pagar el cuarto. Una vez me cerraron el cuarto y no pude entrar hasta que pagara y me fui a vender libros y pedí dinero prestado y planche y mi mama me mando dinero y así fue que pague y me dejaron entrar. Fue muy difícil. Bueno pues, me gradué, y pues...uff... fue un festón. Todos ya me conocían y sabían que yo iba a la escuela. Mi mama les dijo a todos que yo ya me iba a graduar y pues, toda la aldea se reunió y me hicieron una fiesta que fue tan alegre. Toda la calle de mi casa estaba cerrada y pues la verdad no es de pavimento solo de tierra pero la cerraron y la gente le ayudo a mi mama y trajeron comida y bebidas y un vecino con otro consiguieron a unos amigos para tocar música. Y fue algo muy bonito. Todos sabían de mi graduación y hasta el gobernador del la aldea me ofreció un trabajo de maestra en la escuelita del pueblo, y pues por estar cerca de mi madre lo tome. Yo estaba contenta porque yo pensaba poder darle un descanso a mi mama, pero no fueron así las cosas...

¡Ganaba muy poco, y pues...mi madre ya no podía trabajar para ayudarme, y pues yo comencé a lavar ropa también, después del trabajo! Hasta pena me daba de ir a pedir ropa para lavar. Bueno mi madre pues, comenzó a trabajar otra vez, lavando ropa. ¡Yo pues con pena! ¡Ya educada y mas jodida que los demás! Tenia que ir a pedir trabajo a la casa de mis estudiantes y era vergonzoso. Yo les hablaba a los niños de lo importante que era la educación para salir adelante pero no pude salir yo adelante con educación. Dar clase no es nada fácil, tener un aula llena de niños toma mucha preparación y como docente pues era muy difícil cuando llegaba a mi casa a pedir ropa. Algunos de los niños comenzaron a traerme ropa de sus casas para que yo las lavara. Y no fue nada lindo ni agradable. Yo agarraba la ropa que los niños me traían la lavaba y la planchaba y la llevaba al siguiente día o dos días después. Los niños me preguntaban porque era que yo andaba lavando ropa y yo les decía que pues tenia que hacerlo y que no había ningún problema con eso. Pero los niños, saben y para mi era humillante pedirles que creyeran en la educación cuando yo estaba ahí lavando ropa. Yo tendría que haber sido el ejemplo de lo que era a educación pero lo que fui fue un ejemplo de cómo la educación los puede fracasar. De cómo la educación en nuestro país no vale nada. Yo estaba tan deprimida y triste, la verdad muy dolida, y humillada. Era la profesional fracasada. Tuve que tomar medios extremos. Decidí irme a la ciudad y una amiga oyó que alguien se iba a los estados y me preguntaron si me quería ir y pues me fui. No tenía ninguna otra opción ya no podía seguir aguantando como en mi país y como profesional el país me estaba jodiendo y fracasando.

Mi amiga fue la que arreglo todo para irnos. Ella me dijo que conocía algunas personas que ya se habían venido, y que si eras educada pues eso contaba en cualquier lado y que en los estados podía ganar mas dinero y pues yo le dije que si.

Nos fuimos por carretera, éramos un grupo de cómo quince de nosotros un busito (minaban) que era como para seis or siete personas. Íbamos como sardinas enlatados. El busito no tenía aire acondicionado y era tan caliente que a veces se me hacía difícil respirar. Era nada mas cuando paraban que eso pasaba porque no llegaba el a ir de afuera. Cuando llovía tenían que cerrar las ventanas porque el señor que era el dueño no quería que se mojaran las sillas. El decía que si se mojaban iban a joder. Y en eso momentos eran horribles porque no podíamos respirar y nojostros queríamos salir corriendo y no podíamos. Yo le tuve que pagar a este hombre para poder ir. Y le di lo que tenía el me dijo que cuando llegara y comenzara a trabajar le tenía que ir pagando en abonos.

Y así nos fuimos cruzando líneas...primero el Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, y México, y finalmente los Estado Unidos. Cuando crucé el Salvador nos bajamos del auto bus y nos dijeron que teníamos que cruzar separados y nos esperaban al otro lado de la línea. El dueño no quería que se mirara sospechoso. Al llegar a la línea me preguntaron si iba de viaje y les dije que si y me dejaron pasar...Así de fácil. Yo creo que era porque pues todavía venía limpia y me miraba más o menos bien. Además enseñe ni carné (ID) de maestra y trabajadora del gobierno.

En Honduras no fue igual y me fue mal...fue el comienzo de mi mala racha...*se echa a llorar*...me pidieron algo más...Ahh...si bueno...se los di. Los deje violarme. Eran cuatro que estaban de guardia y ya era noche. Yo estaba sucia y no me veía tan bien y no me estaban dejando pasar...comenzaron a preguntarme si es que me iba a cruzar para los estados y yo les decía que no... Ellos no me creyeron y pues... pues los deje. Ellos tenían pistolas y armas y Era eso o la pues la muerte ya a ese punto.

La línea de Guatemala con México la cruce, sin zapatos, sin haberme bañado por días y pues ya sin ningún centavo. Ya yo iba que parecía personal de la calle estaba extremadamente sucia. Por lo que me paso en la frontera el señor con el carro se fue y algunas personas se quedaron esperando incluyendo mi amiga. Cuando llegue pues ellos me vieron mal pero no me preguntaron nada...Mi amiga me dijo “no te preocupes un baño te va a hacer sentir mejor”...Puedes creerlo...No había a donde bañarse y la verdad no podía en los lugares que se podían porque te cobraban. Luego encontramos a un señor que iba con su familia y nos dijo que nos podía esconder en un camión, y le dijimos que si. La verdad en ese momento cuando estaba escondida en el camión pensé que lo mejor seria regresar pero luego pensé en la clase de vida que estuviera pasando en mi país y la vergüenza que seria para mi madre y decidí no regresar, y seguir. En unos momentos me echaba a llorar de la angustia, de no saber si estaba haciendo lo correcto o si no saber como estaba mi pobre madre. La pobre no sabia que me había venido. Le mande un mensaje con un muchacho del pueblo pero el no se si se habrá dado. Le mande a decir que iba a estar trabajando y ya. Bueno entonces iba escondida en la parte de atrás de un camión y pues nos cacharon y tuvimos que correr...y correr...sin saber a donde iba. Nos separamos y no pude encontrar a los demás. De ahí, pues camine

hasta la frontera. Comí basura, una vez hasta deje que me violaran por un baño. (She weeps)
Fue muy duro. Finalmente, después de cuatro meses cruce la línea de los Estados. Cuando llegue no tenía a donde ir. Un señor que me vio, me pregunto que si yo tenia a donde ir, y pues le dije que no. Tenia tanta hambre; y el estaba comiendo...me ofreció comida y acepte. Era un mango, hasta este día no te puedo comer un jodido mango. ¡Me saco a llorar! El debe haber visto mi cara de necesita porque me ofreció que si quería trabajar en el campo....Yo pues pensaba que quería que me hiciera prostituirá... y le dije que yo no era así... (Se sonríe)...Um...El me dijo que era trabajar en el campo picando tabaco y pues, le dije que si.(Pausa larga) Y así fue que llegue.

Al llegar aquí pues no sabia como iban a hacer las cosas la verdad nadie te dice. Llegue y comencé a trabajar en el campo con el tabaco. El señor que nos tenia ahí. Nos cobraba por el cuarto que compartíamos con diez otras mujeres. Era trabajar muy duro. Nos levantábamos a las cuatro de la mañana para ir a trabajar al las cinco y media. De cada dólar que ganábamos le teníamos que dar cincuenta centavos al dueño del cuarto. Era un señor huero. Cuando llegue la vedad que la gente no le importaba de a donde era. Los que no eran del Salvador pensaba que yo era Mexicana. Y me canse de explicarles y pues muchos hasta este día piensan que yo soy mexicana. Cuando llegas aquí es triste ver como la gente no sabe ni a donde están algunos países de Latino Americanos, especialmente los gringos te miran moreno y piensan que eres de México. Ni si quieran saben a donde queda el Salvador. Aquí pues no se encontraba nada Latino cuando llegue y poco a poco se han visto cosas Mexicanas y pues con me he hecho parte de la cultura Mexicana. Al comienzo si me molestaba porque yo era tan orgullosa de mi patria pero, ahora ya no. Yo seguí trabajando para mandarle dinero

a mi mama por muchos años hasta que conocí a mi marido. El es de México y nos enamoramos como locos. Primero nos daba risa las palabras que yo decía y a mi las que el decía y después no hicimos amigos y luego nos enamoramos. El trabajaba primero en el campo y luego encontró trabajo afuera del campo. Ahí fue cuando me dijo que si me quería juntar con el y yo le dije que si. Y me fui. Me case, y tuve a mis dos hijas. ¡Ya de eso mas de doce años!

Bueno como muchos inmigrantes pasamos muchas dificultades, pero hemos podido salir adelante, poco a poco. Para nosotros era muy importante que nuestras hijas fueran nacidas aquí para que no tuvieran que pasar por dificultades. Pero, desafortunadamente no ha servido de nada haber nacido aquí. Todavía han tenido que pasar muchas de las cosas que otros inmigrantes han tenido que pasar. La verdad es que es triste... Cuando la más chiquita tenía dos años, ósea, hace dos años, mi mama se enfermo y me decían las vecinas que ya estaba bien mal. Yo todavía no tengo papeles y pues me mi mama esta sola. Y las vecinas me decían que ellas la estaban cuidando pero yo me sentía mal porque ella es mi madre... Yo no quería que mi madre se muriera sola. Me fui con las niñas porque mi mama no las conocía y mi marido tenía que trabajar. Mi marido me decía que me fuera con mi mama como ya estaba muriendo. No tenía a nadie con quien dejar a las niñas y me fui con ellas ya que ellas son americanas y lo único que tenía que hacer era sacarles el pasaporte.

Viajamos a El Salvador y cuando llegue mi mama ya estaba agonizando....*Llora...y tira un grito fuerte de dolor...* Se murió dos días después que llegamos. Me dolió tanto...*Sigue llorando...* Cuando deje a mi mama ella todavía se miraba bien fuerte, y llena de vida, y

cuando llegue ya tenia el pelo todo blanco, estaba chiquita, y parecía niña. Fue algo triste. *(Llora)*. Cuando la enterramos de la familia solo estaba mis hijas y yo. Algunas personas del pueblo, pero casi no llego nadie. Nos quedamos ahí por cuatro días. Enterré a mi mama al lado de mi papa, su compañero de toda la vida. Ya no tenia nada en El Salvador. Fue triste dejar la casa la que tuve que rentar a otras personas, el pueblo, toda mi niñez. Ya yo sabia que no iba a regresar por mucho tiempo como mi vida ya estaba aquí con mi marido y mis hijas...ya en el Salvador no tenia nada. Pero decidí no vender la casa porque talvez algún día regrese. Le dije a los que estaban rentando que le dieran el dinero a las vecinas y ellas me lo depositan y se quedan con la mitad todos los meses. Ellas cuidan la casa y pues cuidaron a mi mama y es lo menos que podía hacer. Y pues me fui...

Mis hijas y yo viajamos a México, y le pedí a un familiar de mi marido que pasara a las niñas y me dijo que no. Les pedí a otras personas pero no había nadie que las quisiera cruzar. No había nadie que pudiera pasar a mis hijas...a su propio país...Yo no podía, no pude, pues no tengo papeles. Por eso le digo que comparado a la primera vez me fue peor la segunda porque iba con mis hijas. No tuve otra cosa que hacer tuve que cruzar a mis hijas por la línea. Nadie quiso cruzarlas. Y encontré unos coyotes que me habían dicho que eran buenos y baratos. Compre comida, pañales, y traje ropa.

Nos montamos en el camión de los coyotes y nos fuimos. Anduvimos por algunas horas en carro y después nos dejaron en el desierto. El coyote me dijo que iba a traer más gente y que lo esperara, y pues lo espere...y espere. Un día en le medio del desierto y estaba frío. No tenía a donde acostar a mis hijas. Me encontré una silla de carros y ahí puse a la mas

chiquita, me quite la suéter y se lo puse a mi niña mas grande y así durmieron. Alrededor de animales. El siguiente día, no llegaba nadie, no tedia nada de comer y mis hijas estaban tan sucias. Corte un nopal y lo corte y eso fue lo que comieron mis hijas. Así pasaron todo el día comiendo nopal. Las niñas se entretenían con cualquier cosa que encontraran y así paso todo el di a y yo seguía esperando que llegado el medico pollero. La segunda noche las puse a dormir, y comenzó a llover. Era como que nada me iba bien, y las cosas seguían peor. Corrí y conseguí hojas y les hice una casita. Todas estábamos empapadas. Mis hijas estaban enfermas, y pues yo me estaba volviendo loca. No sabia ni para donde ir. No sabia ni a donde estaba. Para donde ir cuando uno no sabe a donde esta y con dos niñas muertas del cansancio. .. El tercer día cominos otro cactus, pero a las niñas les dio diarrea y pues les deje de dar cactus...Me estaba volviendo loca...Que desesperación...Pasaron con hambre todo el día, no sabia ni que hacer. Me senti mal, mis hijas estaban mal, y yo sin poder hacer nada. El cuarto día no teníamos nada de comer. Y mi niña mayor me pedía comida “mamá tengo hambre,” “mamá tengo hambre.” ¡Hasta ahora me duele! (*Llora*). Mi niña seguía pidiendo. Y de la desesperación le grite. “¡Y ate dije que no tengo comida!!” La niña me vio, con lagrimas el los ojos. No era culpa de ella... (*Llora*) Me fui a disculpar con ella, pero ya el error estaba hecho. Nos fuimos a caminar y yo le rezaba a Dios, a la virgen que me ayudaran. Ya no podía....por la gracia de Dios encontramos una mochila...ahí...fue como que un ángel nos estaba cuidando...Va a pensar que yo soy tonta pero...para mi que fue mi mama desde el cielo. Pasamos dos días más en el desierto. Luego le pedí a una señora que si nos hacia el favor de pasarnos y mi marido les pagaba cuando cruzábamos. Ella dijo que si y nos pasaron. Estando ahí esperando vimos a muchas personas pero la verdad es que yo no le tenia confianza a nadie. Yo tenía miedo que me le hicieran algo a las niñas. A veces llegaban

camiones ya llevar gente pero no eran los míos., y tenia mucho miedo. Con dos niñas...no tenía la opción. Cuando vi a esta señora no se porque fue yo creo que fue la desesperación pero le pedí que nos cruzaran. Nos metieron en un camión, y nos cruzaron... A mi me tienen que llevar así a la fuerza y mis hijas las ciudadanas...Las que tuvieron que pagar el precio de por mi. Por eso no miro el benéfico con ser ciudadanas. Para los gringos siempre mis hijas serán inmigrantes aunque hayan nacido aquí. Y para mis hijas ellas ya saben no porque yo les había dicho pero porque ven como las tratan lo que le dicen en las escuelas que no son “americana gringas.” Que son hispanas, Mexicanas, y que nunca las van a tratar bien. Un día cuando mi hija estaba en la escuela una maestra le dijo que ella no era como todos los niños porque ella era inmigrante. Mi hija le dijo a la maestra que ella había nacido aquí la y la maestra le dijo que “su mama el dijo eso para que ella no dijera nada en la escuela.” Hay otros niños que la llaman “Mexican” (Mexicana) y ella dice que si lo es y que no le gustaría ser gringa si así van a ser con la gente. Ella mi mayor sabe como ella es de diferente y sabe que no es igual a las otras personas y que ella habla diferente, y que habla en dos idiomas. Y que no puede de dejar de hablar ninguno de los dos porque los dos los necesitan el español en la casa y las ingles en la escuela. Yo le trato de decir que ella tiene que entender que no todas las personas son así pero ella se pone mal. Ella ve como me han tratado en la escuela como me ignoran, como me hablan, como ella tiene que traducir y como me siento mal porque yo no la puedo ayudar. Ella cuando vamos a regiones trata de decirle a la maestra que yo no puedo hablar ingles y las maestras le dicen algunas cosas que ello no me dice a mi, yo lo se porque ellas hablan bastante y ella solo dice poquito. O cuando vamos a cosas que hacen en la escuela nadie nos traduce. Ella tiene que hacerlo y pues ella ya no quiere ir. Yo soy maestra pero si no entiendo lo que dice no la puedo ayudar. A mi hija siempre le acuerdo

que ella es Americana, le duele a quien le duela. Pero ella siempre me dice que ello no lo es porque como la tratan. Yo estoy tratando que ella no se recienta pero no esta resultando porque ella ve y siente como la tratan y como nos tratan cuando salimos al doctor, escuela, servicios sociales, y a todas partes. Ella esta creciendo muy resentida. Usted...dice que esto es para un tesis quiero que ponga en esa tesis que las personas tienen que tener cuidado...lo que están haciendo esta mal...ello deben acordarse de que los niños crecen...que no va a ser así siempre. Si es algo que quiero que se sepa es que la gente de....*Pausa larga*.....

Una cosa deben acordarse...Y eso es de que mis hijas ahora están chicas...uhm...pero van a crecer. ¡Ay! ¡Ay! ¡Ay! ...y cuando lo hagan lo van a lastimar porque ellos tendrán el poder de votar y hacer decisiones. La pregunta que le haría a los maestros, y personas en el gobierno es... ¿Quieren un futuro resentido? Uhm...Ay que lo piensen....Ustedes deciden...Ellos deciden...Que clase de futuro quieren en los Estado Unidos. ¡Hay que le piensen!

Guadalupe's English Adaptation

Guadalupe lived in a white house with black storm windows in a humble neighborhood of mostly Latinos. She did not give me a house number but told me to ask anyone in the neighborhood and they would know where to find her. After going around the neighborhood a couple of times I stopped to ask for help. I stopped at a yellow house (one of few non-white homes) where two women sat outside watching their children as they played. As I approached, they immediately called their children and asked them to get inside the house. They began to approach me with reservation but in a friendly manner. Judging from their accents I guessed that they were from El Salvador and from Guatemala. I asked them where

Guadalupe lived, and their reservation turned into a sigh of relief. They called the children and asked them to take me to “Lupe’s” house. The children, who had been staring out the window, ran out, happy to be able to get out of the house.

As I got closer to Guadalupe’s home, I noticed the flowers outside and the flags of El Salvador and Mexico hanging on the entrance of her home. The children knocked on the door and ran back to their games. Guadalupe opened the door with a pot in one hand and a sponge in the other. Guadalupe is a short, brown, strong woman with long black hair and a radiant smile. Once inside, I saw the pictures of her two daughters placed on an altar created for Guadalupe’s mom: a candle lit for the Virgin of Guadalupe. Guadalupe took me to her kitchen, where she has already pulled out photos and photo albums of her family on the table. She also made traditional Salvadorian food. She offers me “un fresco” (a refreshment). And she begins to tell me...

My family has lived in El Salvador for many years. My mother, an only child, could not finish school. To tell you the truth, she went only until fifth grade because she had to help her mother with the home duties. She had a brother who died of a fever. Nobody really knows what happened to him, as they did not have enough money for transportation to the doctor to get help. That is why my mother was left alone; she was only eight years old. She was left alone and had to help her mother with work. My mother worked her entire life. She used to say that she came into the world to do that—work. She was a woman who could stretch money to pay for our necessities. *(She sighs.)* I wish I were like her!

When my mother was about 16 years old, she used to go buy groceries for my grandmother. And on one of those walks she met my father. He used to talk to her, but she ignored him. Until one day he appeared [at the house] and since she liked him, she was going to say yes to him. And in front of my grandparents she told him that “if he didn’t behave well, she was going to leave him.” She said that my grandfather laughed and my grandmother yelled at her, yet she repeated it. That’s how she was, independent. After a year, my father said she was very pretty and that he could not wait any longer. He asked her to marry him, and she said, “Yes.” They had a very humble, small wedding with only family and a couple of friends from the village in the town chapel. *(She showed me a small, black-and-white, blurry picture taken by a photographer outside the church.)*

A year later I arrived. My father was from the village, very hard working. He also did not get very far in school. He told me that he did not have the opportunity. As the oldest child, he had the responsibility to help support his family. His entire life my father worked in the fields or in a rich person’s house. He was also a merchant; he used to buy things and sell them for more than what he paid for them. He used to do all sorts of jobs. My mother used to wash clothes and every now and then she would iron. My father did not like it but he would not tell her anything as he knew that the money was useful.

My mother tried having other children, but people thought that they had given her a bad eye because she would miscarry. Later she had her tubes tied, and so I was the only child.

Our home was a happy home. My father was very funny, and since he did not have any boys he used to always talk to me. My mom was not quiet. She was the strict one, but she still had a good sense of humor. They didn't really let me out of the house much. They used to talk to me about school and tell me that I had to become a professional. All my life they told me that I should stay in school. They used to tell me that no matter what, they were going to help me to go. I grew up knowing this.

In school they used to teach us all sort of things. I used to love learning about history. I knew a lot about Salvadorian history. I was really proud of being Salvadorian, of my national anthem, and what it meant to be Salvadorian. I think I even learned to be more Salvadorian in school because there I learned about the symbols that represent my country.

Some people in town thought that I was strange because I was really proud, and they used to talk about me because I was like that. But they did not go to school and they were not learning what I was being taught about my country. Anyhow, that is how I grew up believing in education.

But everything changed for us when one day my father said good-bye to us in a strange way, and he told me to take care of myself, (*She started to cry.*) to take care of my mother, and that he would see me later. He gave my mother a kiss. She was worried because he was acting strangely—more loving than usual. My mother took me to school and about three hours later came to get me because my father had suffered a heart attack at work. They took

him to the hospital. When I got to the hospital, he was not doing well; he could no longer speak and later he died. That changed our lives. We were left alone—my mother and I.

My mother was able to iron and wash clothes for people. She did not allow me to quit school; she told me that she would help me no matter what. I used to help her when I got home, and on my days off of school. I used to iron small pieces, and she ironed the heavier and less delicate pieces. That is how we survived for years. Suffering and needy but surviving. But as time went by things got worse. There were people who had a really hard time because of the civil unrest in the country. Some lost their jobs and did not need a person to iron their clothes. My mother was getting sick, and I was not feeling good about this. By that time I had already graduated and I was trying to figure out what I was going to do. That's how I came to leave El Salvador. That is how everything started, all the bad, ugly, things that happened to me after I left my country. And without knowing how it would turn out, I left for the Rio Grande, and it was an experience. *(She wept.)*

The first time I crossed, I forded the Rio Grande. It wasn't so bad for me. I had to cross, because we did not have anything to eat. My mom was very old; she had diabetes and was becoming blind. After working for so many years, she did not deserve this. *(She paused for a while.)* But I was educated. I'm a teacher by profession. My poor mom would wash clothes and sew in order to help pay my tuition. Her hands were worn out from washing so many clothes. I also worked, but I made only \$7 a month. It wasn't much, but we would get by. For my mother, school was always very important. It was hard because tuition was really expensive. Little by little we paid and truthfully, I have no idea how my mom was able to get the money together but she did. Then I graduated.

I was the first one in my village to graduate from the university. The small village is in the mountains about two hours from the city. I had to stay in the city during the week and I would go home on the weekends. My mom was my sole supporter and would do everything so I could stay in the city. She had to pay for the room where I stayed, bus fare, tuition, books, and food. At times I did not eat in order to buy a book. Sometimes we were late with the rent. One time I was not able to pay the rent, and they locked me out. I could not get into my room so I went to sell my books. I had to borrow money and iron clothes, and my mom sent me some money as well. When I was able to pay, they let me in again. It was really hard. So I graduated and they threw me a big party. Everyone knew me and knew I was going to school. My mom told everyone in the village that I was going to graduate, and they made me a party. Everyone was happy. The street in front of my home was closed. It was not paved but made out of dirt. The people helped my mom by bringing food and drinks and someone to play music. It was really nice. Everybody knew of my graduation. The village governor offered me a job in the small school in the village. I wanted to be close to my mom, so I took the job. I was happy because I thought I could allow my mom to rest, but things didn't turn out that way...

I earned very little, and my mom wasn't able to work any more to help me. So I started to wash clothes in addition to teaching. I was embarrassed to go ask for clothes to wash. My mom started to work again, washing clothes. I was embarrassed. I was educated and yet I seemed worse off than all the rest. I had to ask for work at my students' houses and it was embarrassing. I used to tell students how important school was so they could get ahead in

life, but I wasn't able to do that with my education. It is not easy to teach. Teaching a class full of students takes a great deal of preparation. It was really hard for me to go to homes and ask for clothes. Some of the kids started bringing clothes to me so I could wash them. It wasn't something I was proud of. I would wash and iron their clothes and return them a day or two days later. The kids would ask me why I had to wash clothes, and I would tell them I had to do it, that it wasn't a problem. But kids know. It was humiliating for me to tell them to believe in education as I washed their clothes. I was supposed to set the example of the value of an education, but I was showing them how education can make one a failure. How education in our country meant nothing. I was so depressed and sad, truly very hurt and humiliated. I was a professional failure. I had to take extreme measures. I decided to leave the village. A friend found out I wanted to go to the states and we planned to leave together. I did not have any other option. I couldn't stay in my country. I was a professional, but my country could not support me and was making me a failure.

My friend fixed everything for us to leave. She told me she knew some people who had been there already. I reasoned that my education that would count for me almost anywhere and I could make more money in the states, so I said, "Yes."

We traveled by road. About 15 of us rode inside a minivan made for only 6 or 7 people. We were packed like sardines in a can. The minivan was so crowded and hot. It didn't have air conditioning, and at times it was hard for us to breathe, for example, when we stopped and no air was coming in from the outside. When it rained, we had to close the windows because the owner of the minivan didn't want the seats to get wet. He said that if they got wet, they

would stink. At times like these, it was horrible. We couldn't breathe and we wanted to just run outside but we couldn't. I paid him what I had and he told me that when I got here and started to work, I had to pay him in installments.

This is how we crossed borders: first El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, and finally, the United States. When we crossed through El Salvador, they took us out of the minivan and told us we had to cross separately. They would wait for us on the other side of the border. The owner didn't want to seem suspicious. When we got to the border they asked me if I was just traveling, I said, "Yes," and they let me through. It was that easy. I think it was that I still was clean and I looked somewhat okay. I did show my ID as a teacher and government worker. It was not the same in Honduras. It went badly. It was the start of my bad luck. *(She started to cry.)*

They asked me for something else. Yes, I let them rape me. There were four of them. It was dark already. I looked dirty and didn't look so well. They weren't going to let me go through. They started to ask me if I was crossing to the states and I said, "No." They didn't believe me and so—so I let them. They were armed with guns, and it was this or death at that point.

I crossed the border between Guatemala and Mexico without shoes, without having showered for days, and without a single cent. I looked like a street person. I was extremely dirty. The owner of the car left and some of the people stayed behind, including my friend. When I got there, they looked at me in a wrong way but didn't ask me anything. My friend told me that

a shower would make me feel better. Can you believe that there wasn't anywhere to take a shower, and some of the places that had showers charged. Then we found a man that was traveling with his family and he told us we could hide in the truck. We said "Yes."

Truthfully, at that moment, I thought about going back home, but I thought about the type of life I was living in my country and the embarrassment my mother would feel, so I decided not to return. I kept going. There were moments I would cry out in agony. I did not know if I was doing the right thing and I did not know how my poor mom was. She didn't know I was leaving; I left her a message with a young man but I don't know whether he gave it to her. The message said that I would be working. Well, I was discovered in the back of the truck, and we had to run. We kept running without knowing where we were going. We got separated, and I couldn't find them anymore. From there I started walking to the border. I had to eat out of the trash; I even let somebody rape me in exchange for a bath. *(She cried.)*

It was really hard. Finally, after four months I crossed the United States border. When I got here I had no place to go. A man saw me and asked if I had a place to go to. I said, "No." I was so hungry, and he was eating. He offered me food, and I accepted. It was a mango. Up to this day I cannot eat a whole mango. He must have seen that I was in need, because he offered me a job working in the fields. I thought he wanted me to be a prostitute, and I told him I was not like that. *(She laughed.)* He told me that working in the field means picking tobacco and I told him I would. *(She paused for a long time.)* That's how I came here.

When I got here, well, I did not know how things were, really. No one tells you that. I came and started to work in the tobacco fields. The man that had us there would charge us for the

room we shared with 10 other women. We all worked hard. We would get up at 4 in the morning to go to work at 5:30. From every dollar we made, we had to give 50¢ to the owner of the room. He was a white man. When I got here, people didn't really care where I was from. The ones that were from El Salvador thought I was Mexican. I got tired of correcting them, and a lot of people to this day think I'm Mexican. When you get here, it is pretty sad how some people don't know where the Latin American countries are. Especially the whites—they see you are brown and think you are from Mexico. They don't even know where El Salvador is. Here, there wasn't any Latin stores, but little by little we have seen Mexican things, and I have come to like the Mexican culture. In the beginning it bothered me, because I was so proud of my country, but not any more. I kept working to send money to my mom until I met my husband. He is from Mexico, and we fell in love. At first, it was funny the words that he would use and the ones I would say. We became friends and then we fell in love. He first started working in the fields and then found work outside the fields. That's when he asked me if I wanted to get together with him and I told him I would. We left, got married, and I had my two daughters. It's been more than 12 years!

Well, like many immigrants, we went through a lot of difficulty, but we have been able to progress little by little. For us it was really important for our daughters to be born here so that they didn't have to go through difficult times. Unfortunately, being born here has not been all good. They have still gone through a great deal of things that other immigrants have gone through. The truth is that it is hard. When the youngest was 2 years old, this was 2 years ago, my mom got really sick and the neighbors told me. I still don't have legal papers, but my mom was all alone. I took my daughters, because my mom did not know them and

my husband had to work. My husband told me to go see my mother because she was dying. I didn't have anyone to leave my daughters with and since they were American, I took them with me. The only thing I had to do is get their passports.

When I got to El Salvador, my mom was really dying. *(She cried and yelled out of pain.)*

She died two days after we arrived. It hurt so much. When I had left my mom, she had still looked really strong and full of life. When I returned, her hair was all white. She was shorter and looked like a little girl. It was so sad. When we buried her, only my daughters and I were there. Some of the people from the village came, but there was hardly anyone there. We stayed there for 4 days. I buried my mom beside my dad, her life partner. I had nothing left in El Salvador. It was sad to leave the village, my childhood, and our home. I had to rent the house out to other people. I knew I would not return for a long time. My life was here with my husband and daughters. El Salvador had nothing for me. I decided not to sell the house, in case someday I can come back. I told the renters to give the money to my neighbors and to deposit it. The neighbors kept half every month. They take care of the house and they took care of my mom, and it was the least I could do. So I left...

My daughters and I went to Mexico. I asked one of my husband's family to take my daughters across and he said, "No." I asked somebody else, but I couldn't find anyone who would take them. There wasn't anybody that wanted to take my daughters to their own country. I couldn't, since I don't have legal papers. That's why I can tell you that compared to the first time, it was even worse the second time, because I had my daughters. I had no

alternative but to cross the border with them myself. No one could take them for me. I found some coyotes who were cheap and good, so I bought food, diapers, and clothing.

We got in the truck and left. We traveled by car for a few hours and then they left us in the desert. The coyote told me he was going to bring more people, so I should wait. I waited for him for a whole day. It was so cold; I didn't have a bed for my daughters. I found the seat of a car and I put the youngest one there. I took off my sweater and put it on my oldest daughter. This is how they slept around animals. The following day, no one came. My daughters were hungry and dirty. I cut a cactus plant, and that's what my daughters ate that day. The little ones would entertain themselves with anything they could find. The whole day passed, and I just kept waiting for the darn *pollero* to come. The second night they went to sleep, and it started raining. Nothing was going right; things kept getting worse. I ran to get some leaves and I made them a little house. We were all soaked, my daughters were getting sick, and I was going crazy. I didn't know where to go. I didn't know where I was or where to go and with two little ones dying of tiredness. On the third day, we ate cactus again, but my daughters became sick with diarrhea and I stopped giving them cactus. I was feeling bad, my daughters were doing badly, and I didn't know what to do. On the fourth day we had nothing to eat and my oldest daughter was asking me for food "Mom, I'm hungry! Mom, I'm hungry!" I still hurt today. (*She cried.*) My daughter kept asking. Desperate, I yelled at her, "Damn it! I don't have any food. Don't you get it?" The little one looked at me with tears in her eyes. It wasn't her fault. (*She kept crying.*) I went to apologize to her, but the harm was already done. We started walking, and I prayed to God and the Virgin to help me. I couldn't do it anymore. By God's grace, we found a backpack

there. It was like an angel was taking care of us. You may think that I am dumb, but I know it was from my mom up in heaven. We spent two more days there in the desert. Then I asked a woman if she could cross us and told her that my husband would pay her when we were on the other side. She said, “Yes,” and they did. When we were waiting there we saw a lot of people pass by, but I didn’t trust anyone. I was scared they would do something to my little ones. At times there were trucks to pick up people but they weren’t the ones I was waiting for. I was really scared. With two little ones, I didn’t have an option. Then I saw this lady and I think it was out of desperation that I asked her to cross us. They put us in a truck and they brought us over. They had to cross me over this way, but why my daughters? They were born here but because of me they have to pay the price. To the white people they will always be just immigrants, even if they were born here. My daughters know this, not because I have told them, but because others tell them that they are not white Americans. They are Hispanic and Mexican, and they are never going to be treated right. One day in school the teacher told my daughter that she wasn’t like everyone else because she was an immigrant. My daughter told the teacher that she was born here, and the teacher told her she was just saying that so that she wouldn’t have to speak English at school. There are other kids who call her Mexican, and she says that she is if that’s the way they are going to be with people. The oldest one knows that she is different from other people and speaks in two languages. She knows she cannot stop speaking either one because she needs Spanish at home and English at school. I try and explain that not all people are like this, but she feels bad.

She sees how they have treated me badly in school and how they ignore me. How they speak to me and how she has to translate and how I feel bad because I can't help her. When we go to meetings, she tells the teachers that I can't speak English, and the teachers tell her things that she doesn't want to tell me. I know because she speaks a lot with them and she only tells me a little bit. When we go to things that they do in school, no one translates for us. She has to do it, and now she just doesn't want to go. I am a teacher, but if I don't understand what she tells me I cannot help her. I tell my daughter that she will always be an American, no matter who says otherwise. She tells me she's not American because of the way they treat her. I am trying to help her not to feel bad, but she sees how they treat her and us when we go out to the doctor, school, social services, and everywhere else. She's growing up with remorse. You tell me this is for your dissertation, so I want you to write that people need to be careful. What they're doing is wrong. They have to remember that kids grow up, that they will not be like this forever. If there's something I want people to know, it is that people from... *(She paused for a long time.)* One thing they have to remember: my daughters are now young, but they're going to grow up. Ay! Ay! Ay! And when they do, they are going to hurt because they will have the right to vote, and make decisions. A question I would ask the teachers, and people in government is, "Do you want a future full of remorse?" I want them to think about that. You decide, they need to decide, what kind of future they want in the United States? Just think about it....

CHAPTER V

NARRATIVE INTERPRETATIONS

The narratives represent the stories of individuals or families, as told by them, from three countries: Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala. These stories re-affirm what Gloria Anzaldua (1987) once wrote about migrating. It is a story of long walks. Walks that are different depending on who is making the walks, where they have come from, and the path they follow. . Although geographically, ethnically, and culturally these participants are very different, they share many similarities in the process of migrating, establishing life in the United States, and encountering the U.S. educational system. In interpreting the life stories of these human beings, I began by looking at the similarities of all narratives.

They began their narratives by telling me about their country of origin and the *educacion y enseñanzas* (education and teachings) learned at home. In this, many participants spoke of the private messages passed down by parents or caregivers about life, success, and education. I have entitled this section “*Mensajes Escondidos: Valor (Valiant)—Gender Roles, Work, and Work Ethics.*”

Directly or indirectly, all participants spoke of their encounters with education. For some this was a choice, for others it was not. The section titled: “The Choice: *¿Educación Formal o Sobre-Vivencia?* (Formal Education or Survival?)” attempts to explore the issue of

education choice and its effects on the lives of immigrants both in their country of origin and on their lives in the United States.

All participants experienced migration, and some experienced multiple migration: each was a break from that which came before. Therefore, “Leaving Home” is the section that follows. In the process of migration, each sought different means to migrate to their destinations. For some, crossing was easier than for others, but all expressed a sense of loss and of punishment. Therefore “*El Castigo* (The Punishment)” is the section that explores some of the pain experienced in the migration process.

The majority of Central American participants in this study had to cross Mexico in the process of getting to the United States. In Mexico many encountered the most difficult stages of the migration process. I explore this in the section entitled, “Crossing Mexico.” After crossing Mexico, most participants had to cross the United States/Mexican border or *Linea* (line) as it is commonly called by many Latino immigrants. “*La Linea Final* (The Final Line): Crossing to the United States” explores the experiences of these immigrants in the process of crossing the United States/Mexican border. Once in the United States, immigrants experienced many changes, some by choice and some as a form of survival. In the section “*Pedagogía del Camaleón* (Pedagogy of the Chameleon): Indigenous and Latino Identity,” I explore identity shifts as a result of migration, and survival in a new country. Following with the topic of identity, I explore the identity changes/re-formation as they begin to make this new country their home. Finally, in “*De Aquí y de Alla* (From Here and from There): First-Generation U.S. Citizens Living under Illegality,” I explore the issues of first-generation U.S. citizen children of immigrants who live under the discourse of illegality because of their parents’ immigration status.

In interpreting these narratives in this fashion, I hope to highlight the sets of issues and experiences that define the Latino immigrants' lives. However, I remain convinced that the real story is not here in my interpretations but rather is in the narratives already presented. This interpretation is rather in form of translation. I translate these lives into an academic analysis for people who live different lives.

Educación y Enseñanzas (Education and Teachings)

The formal educational level for each participant varied widely and was in many cases secondary to the kind of education participants received at home. This home education was passed on dialogically and in many cases was unnoticed at the time. Borrowing from Conquerwood's (1982, 1983, 1991) concept of "dialogical performance" in which dialogue is the frame that brings self and other together for dialogical engagement. In the same way, in the case of these participants education was transmitted dialogically through parents and loved ones. This education involved morality, ethics, honesty, and good work ethics. The education they acquired by living life was just as important. Family members of many participants did not attend a formal school, but they had a great deal of knowledge that was greatly valued. They were educated by their life experiences in the transmissions of dialogic performance with their ancestors.

Deltado-Gaitan and Trueba's (1991) findings about education between Latino parents and their children form a framework for understanding the essential question of education—"What is considered education?" They found that:

What sustains children on a day-to-day basis is a solid sense of self through their ethnic identity, transmitted through values about language, collectivity, respect and emotional

support upheld by families and social networks outside of the family (Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba, 1991, p. 159).

Although Iza's family did not attend school, she felt her parents provided her with an ethical, moral, and cultural education that shaped her identity through values and language. For Iza, this was invaluable education—one that could not be reduced to the artificial and rigid institutional apparatus of the school. Rather, it is an education of heritage, pride, suffering, love, commitment to community, respect, and identity. This education provided Iza with a contextualized identity. Her self-identity formation included things she needed to know to survive as an Indigenous person in an oppressive and marginalized environment. She was taught to distrust others and to become aware of the vulnerability of Indigenous people in their country. As Iza claimed, "They taught us to be very careful with strangers and not to speak with people that would not speak to us first."

Although Iza's parents were not formally educated, they were educating their children for the school of life as an Indigenous person—the school of life as a second-class citizen: the school of the listener and not the speaker; the school of the marginalized and easy target. Further, Iza's family education included cultural maintenance among and in depriving situations. That is, she was taught the knowledge necessary to keep the Otomi culture and traditions alive in a marginalized environment. Iza's Indigenous family traditions and customs were passed down and taught through long traditions of narration. Iza's family engaged in conversations similar to cultural narratives of *consejos* (advice), as found by Delgado-Gaitan (1990) and Valdés (1996). As eloquently stated by Guadalupe Valdés (1996), "Consejos were important because mothers considered *la educación de los hijos* (the

moral education of their children) to be their primary responsibility” (p. 125). Talking, learning, and sharing was a huge part of their educational experience.

Consejos were sent dialogically through conversation. This rich oral tradition gave Iza an insight of what one ought to be doing at home and in public spaces outside. It also gave her a perspective on the unity of home, and the tightness of the *familia* (family).

Iza’s family lived in a very rural area and suffered from geographical, institutional, and socio-cultural marginalization. Yet, they valued the benefits that an education could bring to her family. This was important given that they did not have access to “traditional mainstream” education and could not continuously attend school; yet, to Iza’s family, any “access” to education was valued.

My dad always said that a kid that finished school could read and write well. He would do better with the owners and bosses. He would be able to get out of the village and so would his family and they say he would do really well. My dad would say that a lot, people were doing well and he wanted for us to do good as well.

Access was a privilege rarely acquired by members of Indigenous communities. It was a juggling game between survival and schooling. Overall, priorities were set depending on the necessities of the family—family came first before school, food before school, work before school. Therefore, as stated by Iza, many children were forced to leave their family homes to work at a very young age.

Like Iza’s family, Juana’s Guatemalan K’iche’ family was also academically uneducated. Her parents did not attend school and did not know how to read. Much like Iza’s family, they had a sense of what was needed to survive in marginalized environment. They lived in very impoverished conditions and did not have the opportunity to attend school.

Juana's mother was an artisan. She taught Juana to make beautiful embroidered clothing to sell. She knew that because of their financial situation, Juana would probably have to leave school to help the family earn extra income. Therefore, she taught Juana a skill to aid in her survival as an Indigenous woman in Guatemala.

Furthermore, she gave Juana an invaluable gift—the gift of caring. Juana's parents were explicit when expressing their feelings about her not attending school. They taught her that no matter what (with or without) schooling, they would always be there for her. Therefore, within Juana's home education she was provided with a sense of comprise, and sacrifice for children. She was taught by her parents that “a child is a gift from God that he sent from above, and one must live to be there as a parent, be there for one's children and help children become *troncos* [the trunks of a tree] who stand on their own.”

Sonia's family, on the other hand, was from Puebla, but moved to Mexico City when she was a child. Therefore, she had the benefit of access to formal schooling. Furthermore, Sonia's case was rare as her father had access to education as well; so, for Sonia's access to formal education was a matter of inheritance and location. She was socialized to go to school by her father, who, through his previous experience as a student was able to guide her education. “My dad would always say that I had to go to college so we could have more than he had. He always said he did not want any of his children to stop school.” Similar to Iza, the education of lived experiences—strength and resilience—was highly valued in Sonia's family. This education provided them with the necessary tools to survive as an Indigenous-looking person. In the case of Sonia, this education was provided to her by her father: “how to fix cars, to shoot a gun, to study and be strong.”

For Alondra and Daniel, a proudly educated couple from Guatemala, home education included and was embedded in the pride of having academic success and material goods—which also was the most important teaching they received from home. To this Alondra says, *“My childhood was a normal childhood and beautiful. We were very fortunate that my dad made good money and we were able to take school trips and family outings.”* Alondra grew up with privilege and an awareness of the importance of education to financial advancement and, most importantly, status. To her family, education provided them with an above normal quality of life. And while children like Iza worked from the age of 7—Alondra went to school and enjoyed the benefits of having money: going shopping and being “queen” of the carnival and school. Similarly, her husband Daniel received the same appreciation of education at home. Like Alondra, the most valuable gift he received was going to the university. For Daniel’s family going to the university was a choice, which they could take if they desired.

For Guadalupe, a Salvadorian woman, the education she received at home prepared her for life as a professional woman living in El Salvador. Her family was poor and uneducated. Yet she knew from her parent’s *enseñanzas* that she had to get an education to be successful. Guadalupe’s interpretation of how these *enseñanzas* shaped her life and life goals is that she was taught at a young age that as long as she attended school, she would have the support of her parents. She was aware that her parents would do almost the impossible to provide her with an education.

In Guadalupe’s case, family needs and economic struggles shaped her beliefs about getting an academic education. This was reinforced by her parents, who wanted her to have a better life and not work as hard as they had. Her everyday family life and parental support

provided Guadalupe with motivation to maintain focus and obtain an education. Although her parents were academically uneducated, they provided her with a type of motivational home curriculum to pursue and proceed with her academic and professional educational goals and “to get ahead.”

Conversations about family education with Francisco, an Indigenous Nahuat Pipil man from El Salvador, revolved around his identity. According to Francisco his parents did what they could—given their level of education, they did what they thought was best—so they sent him to school to be treated right. For this to happen, he had to learn to speak in ways his parents could not.

My parents always wanted us to be treated right, not like they were. Since we were little (small) they would tell us that we had to be like everyone else and not sound como Indios (like Indians). But they could not tell us how to speak. I think that’s why they sent us to school for more time than other families.

In this case, family education carried *mensajes escondidos* (hidden messages). His parents wanted him to be treated right and therefore, sent him to school to become “normal.” It was an education that provided Francisco with the realities of being an Indigenous man in El Salvador, and an insight on hybridity. He learned to “split” into a different identity depending on his location. He learned to wear a mask, to mute or change his speech, to become silent. At the same time, he learned that he should get involved in the community in order to gain voice for his people. He learned how to negotiate life as an Indigenous man in a country that marginalizes Indigenous populations.

All participants were very aware of the importance “home education” had on their identity and their beliefs. For many, their upbringing shaped their identity and beliefs. Yet, unlike *consejos* (advice) Delgado-Gaitan (1990), these *enseñanzas* (teachings) are the everyday chores, actions, language, routines, home rules, and teachings that constituted

socialization and led to survival. These *enseñanzas* carried *mensajes escondidos* (hidden messages), values, and ways of growing that prepared the participants for life in their country of origin.

In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, James C. Scott states: Here, offstage, where subordinates may gather outside the intimidating gaze of power, a sharply dissonant political culture is possible. Slaves in the relative safety of their quarters can speak the words of anger, revenge, self assertion that they must normally choke back when in the presence of the masters and mistresses (1990, p. 18).

Similarly, in the case of Iza, the *enseñanzas* were very much about teaching *mensajes escondidos* (hidden messages) and the creation of a dissonant political culture necessary for survival as an Indigenous woman in Mexico. These hidden transcripts or lesson or codes of conduct taught by her family were necessary in public spheres and included being quiet, looking down, and not talking to many people and not much in any case. Talking was safe only among family in the privacy of home. The hidden codes explained how to behave to avoid being vulnerable because of what you really believed. In the case of Juana these *enseñanzas* about financial survival were more explicit, as she was provided from a young age with the tools her parents felt were necessary to survive or help sustain her family financially. The hidden transcripts passed down to Juana prepared her to become a business woman—an entrepreneur, and to be able to contribute to her family's financial situation. For Sonia, an Indigenous looking woman who left Puebla as a child, hidden *enseñanzas* meant being tougher, and having skills necessary to not only barely survive but to be *la mas chingona* (the toughest), both academically and culturally. These *mensajes escondidos* (hidden messages) and *enseñanzas* included being able to fix a car, work with firearms for

protection, and attend school. *Enseñanzas* served as hidden socialization strategies that worked to prepare participants for survival, cultural maintenance, and “success” on their own terms. For Daniel and Alondra, a Guatemalan couple, *enseñanzas* carried *mensajes escondidos* (hidden messages) that included the importance of academic education, having money for status maintenance, and being financially well off. As stated by Scott (1990), “The least patrolled, most autonomous sites would presumably be the most likely locations for recovering the hidden transcripts” (p. 120). And in the case of the participants, it was the home.

Mensajes Escondidos: Valor (Valiant)—Gender Roles, Work, and Work Ethics

Mensajes escondidos (hidden messages) were not only for the purpose of street survival but also for the purpose of defining gender roles. Although all women came from different backgrounds, they received similar *mensajes escondidos* as cultural assumptions about the role of a woman in the privacy of the home. Iza received cultural assumptions about what a good family included—a hard-working father and a mother who took care of the home and raised the children. Yet, most importantly she was learning her role as a daughter and as a future wife.

Consciously assigning and applying gender roles served as a form of education. In the case of Iza, it served as an education and socialization of the role of an Otomi woman within her community. Her chores, everyday transactions, and responsibilities shaped her beliefs about the role of women as mothers. This is apparent in her narrative as she repeatedly discusses the importance of her role as a mother and her communication with her children. This is representative of the cultural assumptions transmitted through *mensajes*

escondidos (hidden messages) that she absorbed from her parents during private conversations at home. She was socialized to believe that good mothers maintained good communication with their children in order to assure their well-being.

The *mensajes escondidos* (hidden messages) passed down to Juana taught her about the important role of a couple's unity in the home. As Juana explains, her parents were one. Together in all matters of the home, they worked together to help their children and themselves. She was taught that no matter what, her opinion as a woman was valuable. She was provided with skills to let her know that she could contribute to the family if necessary. Juana's beliefs about marriage were shaped by the example and the *mensajes escondidos* (hidden messages) transmitted to her by her parents. It was through this that she learned the importance of everyone's voice in the family.

Sonia lived under different circumstances; yet, she also received *mensajes escondidos* (hidden messages) that socialized her to be a "good mother." A hidden message that became an assumption and an expectation. In order to be considered good, a woman had to enact a very specific gender role. For Sonia, another *mensajes escondidos* came from her mother who valued academic knowledge and "book" intelligence. She frequently told Sonia that she was really impressed by her husband's intelligence. Sonia internalized these messages which are reflected in her actions and her drive to attend school and pursue higher education. Furthermore, *mensajes escondidos* transmitted to Sonia provided her with strength and voice that made her *la más chingona* (the toughest). This served to ensure that academic or book intelligence would not intimidate or weaken her. She was given the message that she should never be demoralized or crippled by those who possessed an education. This was lived and practiced by her mother who was *fuerte* (strong) and not overly impressed or persuaded by

those who were educated except her husband. Parents, particularly mothers, played an important role in the lives of these two Mexican compatriots. Both were influenced by their mother's resilience, determination, and strong work ethics.

That same work ethic has sustained the lives of these women here in the United States. These mothers work constantly. They make and sell food. They clean houses. They make and sell clothes. They wash clothes. For Sonia, working and having a job occurred as an adult. However, for Iza, it became a part of her everyday life at an early age. Iza's life was consumed by work: making wristbands in the village and cleaning cars in Mexico City. Similarly, for Juana, work was seen as integral to keeping her family together. These learned skills were necessary for survival; these women still carry the values with them in their hearts and in their actions. As stated by Madison (2005), "The unconscious is central to the formation of the self, the subject, and subjectivity" (p. 61). For both Iza and Juana, work became the unconscious assumption and performance mandated upon them by necessity. It became a subjective must.

In contrast, Alondra and Daniel from Guatemala had different experiences. Their educational status excused them from hard physical labor. For Alondra, work gave her opportunity to have "luxuries"—a maid at home to take care of the house. For Daniel, work meant being able to have all the necessities at home but also other luxuries such as having a cook. Attainment of class and status was part of the upbringing of both Daniel and Alondra. The message she was transmitted as a child was that an honorable woman of status did not cook or clean. Instead, she would have a maid do the chores for her and would marry a man with class and money who would maintain her status.

To be *valiente* (valiant) was one of the *mensajes escondidos* (hidden messages) transmitted to all participants from their parents. Alondra and Daniel's experience is unique in that being valiant meant going to school and working and accruing material goods. The others were taught to be strong, rely always on their work, to have good work ethics, and to always do what is best not just for the individual but for the family as a whole—to be unselfish.

The Choice: ¿Educación Formal o Sobre-Vivencia? (Formal Education or Survival?)

To have the necessities of life, many participants had to make a choice, even if it seemed that the choice was already made for them. It was a choice between survival and education. Iza and her family constantly had to work. Iza had the chance to go to school only when visiting her home town after the work season had ended. Her brothers, on the other hand, received no formal education. For them, there was not a choice at all; they had to work. Juana was able to attend school only until 2nd grade, and Patricio attended only until 3rd grade. Both had to stop school to work and survive—they had no choice, the family's well-being came first.

In his book *Ideology and Curriculum*, Michael Apple (1990) states that education is a choice that has been made by “powerful segments of our social collectivity” (p. 8). But what happens when a person is not even given that choice? When that person does not belong to those powerful segments? In the case of Iza, Juana, and Francisco, the powerful made them vulnerable targets for exploitation and domination. They (Iza, Juana and Francisco's communities) became the “tools of power” used to build capital on the backs of others.

For Daniel and Alondra, working was a choice, not a necessity. It was a way to maintain status, a way to acquire material goods and to gain status. Both had worked in their native country in order to keep their level of comfort, their upper middle-class status. For Daniel, working was a way to have extra income, to live better, and to be independent of his parents. Yet, he was fully aware that, if necessary, his educated parents would provide him with what he needed.

For both Alondra and Daniel, *educación formal* (formal education) provided them with not only *sobrevivencia* (survival), but also maintenance of social status and prestige. Alondra as a teacher (who does not earn much money) benefited from her husband's income as a civil engineer. They still made the choice to work—"to keep busy." They were anomalies in their country. To many in their community, they appeared to be living the Guatemalan dream. Education provided both Daniel and Alondra with a good life: the status necessary to maintain their name and honor in society. It was as if they had fulfilled a requirement for societal acceptance. This was evident during our private conversations, when Daniel told me that he got "top of the line" education from the best private schools in Guatemala, and that unlike others, he did not attend mediocre schools that educated those who want to acquire a "name for themselves" and gain prestige. In other words, he did not attend schools designed for "wanna-be's." Daniel and Alondra's situation changed during the civil war that took place in the late '80s in Guatemala. The economy slowly deteriorated, and Daniel was left unemployed. His parents could not afford to support all of them, and he began contemplating moving to be with his brothers in the United States, even though this meant leaving his beloved country. For Daniel, it was a temporary move that turned out to be permanent.

For Francisco from El Salvador, education was a choice already made for him. It was the way it was going to be because, according to his parents, it was for “his own good.” His parents wanted him to be “treated right” and not like an *Indio*. School attendance was a way of deIndianizing him to seem less Indigenous and more like everyone else. It was clear to Francisco that he was in school to assimilate and acculturate—similar to the schooling his children would experience later in the United States. Ironically, Francisco is perpetuating this form of education. He is providing his children the same general form of education his parents provided him—education to assimilate. In some ways Francisco is trying to deIndianize his own children.

Guadalupe from El Salvador had no choice—she had been socialized by her parents to believe that she had no other choice but to get an education. Like Daniel, and Alondra, Francisco, and Guadalupe also had a choice (one that was made for them). The way in which they were socialized to work/make money to survive had largely taken away the choice. The most used and perhaps most efficient form of socialization was that of dialogue—the constant repetition of what ought to be done fill a societal role. For Alondra and Daniel, it meant remaining in their social class. In the case of Guadalupe and Francisco, it was the socialization of *sobre-vivencia* (survival).

Regardless of the education they received in their countries of origin, many immigrants are forced to live underground lives and are erased from history. For many immigrants this is a reality, NOT a choice. This is a reality brought about by their migration—even while searching for a better life by *cruzando lineas* (crossing lines).

Cruzando Lineas y Haciendo Marcas (Crossing Lines and Making Scars)

Although those who participated in these narratives came from different places, they all shared the politics of geographic movement. Although there are demographic differences when *cruzando lineas* (crossing lines), all suffered in one way or another. The experiences of all participants were dependent on economic and educational access in the new nation. As stated by Donato and Patterson (2004), “Mexico is well known as a nation that has long sustained high levels of out migration to the United States. Mexican men, in particular, have migrated for more than a hundred years, especially from traditional sending areas in the western central part of the country” (p. 111). Although several studies concentrate on the migration experience of Mexican immigrants, there is a lack of research on the migration experience of Central and South Americans, particularly Central/South American Indigenous migrants. I found that for all participants in this study, *cruzando lineas* (crossing lines) seemed to be the major connecting point. This topic of intersection was divided into several parts: 1) leaving home, the internal struggles many immigrant go through before making the decision to migrate; 2) *cruzando lineas* (crossing borders), the geographical and emotional borders some immigrants have to overcome; 3) the final crossing point, the Mexican-U.S border; and 4) crossing immigrant lines or lines of struggle once in the United States.

Leaving Home

All the participants first experienced crossing lines the moment they left their homes and their loved ones. Many were leaving behind not only parents, but also children and their past lives as they had known them. All left in search of a better life, not knowing where *cruzando lineas* (crossing lines) would lead them. They knew only that they had to get to the

United States. All participants blindly hoped for a better life. Estela Rivero-Fuentes (2004) found that migration is influenced in multiple ways by 1) economic conditions; 2) policy factors; and 3) cultural influences. These factors feed a cumulative causation of migration to the United States not only from Mexico but also from other parts of the world. During this traumatic first (physical) border migration, many expressed doubt and *angustia* (anguish) about leaving. Previous migration studies have concentrated on the migration of men but,

A variety of studies, however, suggest that patterns and process of border crossing for men and women may be quite different. Several studies have described how migrant decision making is constrained by patriarchal norms and gender-linked differences (Donato & Patterson, 1994).

This was particularly the case for Iza, whose patriarchal *enseñanzas* about her role as a mother made the decision of leaving home and migrating even more difficult—“a bad dream.” Similarly, Juana’s belief in family unity, constant family dialogue, and immense sense of responsibility to help her family made the decision to leave the “most difficult one to make.”

For other women, such as Sonia from Mexico, leaving home, crossing that first border was one of the most definitive moments of loss in her life. This loss paralyzed her. It was a devastation of her heart and soul. As Sonia was leaving, she did not anticipate the forthcoming events that would change her life. She did not know that it was the last time she would see her child.

As stated by Donato and Patterson (2004), “female undocumented migrants were more likely than their male counterparts to cross with family or friends, but just as likely to cross with coyotes” (p. 120). This was the true for Sonia, who had to choose between her two

daughters. She had to decide which child to bring to the United States, because her sense of responsibility would not allow her to take both children as it was dangerous. All participants left *hijos y familia* (children and family) and felt the same sense of loss, abandonment, and despair. Iza was an Indigenous woman from Puebla whose upbringing, and cultural and religious beliefs are closely tied to her womanhood and her role as a mother. Leaving her children was a decision that had to be made collectively, and one supported by all who were part of her community. And although she got support from her community, leaving her children with her elderly parents was particularly difficult. For Juana, whose identity had been shaped by her belief in family unity and democratic dialogue, leaving home was a decision that had to be made after a long dialogue with her family. They had to explore what everyone thought and the effect on each member of the family. For her, leaving her child with her neighbor in a relatively unsafe community was particularly disturbing and painful.

For others, such as Alondra and Daniel, leaving home meant betrayal of their country and nationality—of their own national identity as *Guatemaltecos* (Guatemalans). During one of my visits to Daniel and Alondra's house for a follow-up interview, he stood up and suddenly began to sing the Guatemalan national anthem—word by word, with tears in his eyes. Telling me that *todavía me duele* (it was still painful) to no longer be the valiant son of the nation. He stopped and cried several times along with his wife, who also stood facing her flag. When faced with this sudden moment of intensity, I decided to look up the lyrics and bring them back to Daniel. He said that it was *simbólico* (symbolic), his land, what he left behind, yet he still carried with him. It was also a symbol of how he felt he had betrayed his nation. (Figure 1) contains many hidden transcripts (Scott, 1990) or *mensajes escondidos* about who and what represents a good Guatemalan citizen.

Figure 5.1

Himno Nacional de Guatemala

By José Joaquín Palma

*¡Guatemala feliz...! que tus aras
no profane jamás el verdugo;
ni haya esclavos que laman el yugo
ni tiranos que escupan tu faz.*

*Si mañana tu suelo sagrado
lo amenaza invasión extranjera,
libre al viento tu hermosa bandera
a vencer o a morir llamará.*

C O R O

*Libre al viento tu hermosa bandera
a vencer o a morir llamará;*

*que tu pueblo con ánima fiera
antes muerto que esclavo será.*

*De tus viejas y duras cadenas
tu forjaste con mano iracunda
el arado que el suelo fecunda
y la espada que salva el honor.*

*Nuestros padres lucharon un día
encendidos en patrio ardimiento
y lograron sin choque sangriento
colocarte en un trono de amor.*

C O R O

*Y lograron sin choque sangriento
colocarte en un trono de amor,
que dé patria en enérgico acento,
dieron vida al ideal redentor.*

*Es tu enseña pedazo de cielo
en que prende una nube su albura,*

*y ¡ay de aquel que, con ciega locura,
sus colores pretenda manchar!*

*Pues sus hijos valientes y altivos,
que veneran la Paz cual presea,
nunca esquivan la ruda pelea
si defienden su tierra y su hogar.*

C O R O

*Nunca esquivan la ruda pelea
si defienden su tierra y su hogar,
que es tan sólo el honor su alma idea
y el altar de la patria su altar.*

*Recostada en el ande soberbio
de dos mares al ruido sonoro,
bajo el ala de grana y de oro
te adormeces del bello quetzal.*

*Ave indiana que vive en tu escudo
paladión que protege tu suelo;
¡ojalá que remonte su vuelo,
más que el cóndor y el águila real!*

C O R O

*¡Ojalá que remonte se vuelo,
más que el cóndor y el águila real,
y en sus alas levante hasta el cielo,
Guatemala, tu nombre inmortal!*

Translated version

Blessed Guatemala

By José Joaquín Palma

Blessed Guatemala, may your altar
never be trampled by the executioner;
nor slaves who lick the yoke
nor tyrants that spit in your face.

If tomorrow your sacred ground
is threatened by foreign invasion,
Freely against the wind your beautiful
flag
to victory or death it will call.

CHORUS

Freely against the wind your beautiful flag
to victory or death it will call;
Since your people with fiery courage
will die before becoming enslaved .

Of your old and hard chains
that you forget with your own hands
the plow that the fecund ground
and the sword that saves the honor.

Our parents fought a day
ignitions in patriot burning
and they obtained without bloody shock
collocate in a love throne.

CHORUS

And they obtained without bloody shock
Place you in a love throne,
that it gives mother country in energetic
accent,
they gave life to the redentor ideal.

It is your standard piece of sky
in which its whiteness pledges a cloud,
and ay of which, with blind madness,
their colors try to stain!

Then its brave and proud children,
that venerate the peace that it has,
they never avoid the robust fight
if they defend his earth and its home.

CHORUS

They never avoid the robust fight
if they defend its earth and its home,
that its soul is only the honor devises

and the altar of the mother country its
altar.

Leaning in walks magnificent
from two seas to the sonorous noise,
under the wing of it seeds and gold
you become sleepy yourself of the
beautiful quetzal.

Bird Indiana that lives in your shield
the firmness that protects your ground;
hopefully that overcomes its flight,
more than the condor and the real eagle!

CHORUS

Hopefully that overcomes flight,
more than the condor and the real eagle,
and in his wings it raises until the sky,
Guatemala, your immortal name!

For both Alondra and Daniel, leaving their *patria* (country) was the hardest thing they had to do. It was like turning their back on their country and their identities while in their country. Their economic status was closely related to their social status. That is one of the reasons they loved the *patria* so much—because the *patria* was good to them. They were part of the elite. For most of their lives they did not suffer from the marginalization experiences that many in Guatemala did. They had access to education, well-paying jobs, status. They were privileged and, for the most part, had a good life. For both of them, leaving patria felt like an act of giving up, not trying hard enough, and not being willing to scale down their lifestyle.

For Daniel, the decision to leave Guatemala was also closely tied to the social networks (Massey & Garcia-Espana, 1987; Massey, 1990; Goldring & Durand, 1994; Massey & Espinoza, 1997; Massey & Zenteno, 1999; Hamman, Murillo, & Wortham, 2002; Trueba, 2004; Rivero-Fuentes, 2004; Durand & Massey, 2004) that were put in place by immigrants who had previously migrated to the United States. These social networks made it easier for immigrants to migrate and adjust to life in the United States. This was the case of Daniel, whose final decision to migrate was influenced by the success his brothers had after migrating to the United States. These social networks made it possible for Daniel to be guaranteed a job and reliable transportation upon his arrival—rare commodities for many newly arrived immigrants. Guadalupe from El Salvador also migrated to the United States because her friend had already established a social network of people in the states. Both were told prior to coming to the United States that they would be able to obtain jobs and housing.

The politics of geographic change were experienced by each participant in different ways. Although their individual experiences varied, they were all affected when *cruzando*

lineas (crossing the borders). These crossings were experienced physically in different ways, but many participants shared similar emotions. Those with few resources, both financial and social, found that once they got to the border, more lines had to be crossed.

El Castigo (The Punishment)

For Iza, the Rio Grande's power and coldness felt like vengeance for leaving her children, family, and community behind. It felt like punishment. Iza's husband was her only connection to the United States. He did not have a well-paying job and was unable to pay the full cost of her crossing. Therefore, Iza suffered the consequences of migrating without money. For Juana, crossing the border without sufficient financial capital was a risk that almost took her daughter's life. Juana felt like she was receiving a beating, like someone was hitting her.

For Francisco, a Salvadorian Indigenous man, the politics of change of geography entailed long and rigorous physical movement. Like all other participants, his migration experience was also tied to lack of access to money. Francisco had lost his entire family during the civil war. He had saved some money, and tried to stretch his resources as far as possible during his long trip to the United States. It took Francisco about two weeks to cross Guatemala. He had to work odd jobs in order to make it across. His limited financial resources forced Francisco to take the "cheaper" route, therefore risking his life at each crossing, at each line he encountered.

Similar to Francisco, Guadalupe had to also migrate several times and cross several lines in order to make it to the United States. Crossing the border for Guadalupe meant giving up her "physical" self and seeing herself, particularly her body, as a commodity, an

object to be used for staying alive. As she crossed lines, her situation got more and more difficult. With the changes in geography and her physical progress toward the United States, she was losing more and more, making it difficult to stay focused and motivated.

For many Central American immigrants, crossing lines means repeatedly risking oneself, hoping that the next crossing will be easier. It is living under hope that the final geographical border to cross (Mexico) will bring better luck. Unfortunately, this is not the case, for many find Mexico to be *a un paso a la muerte* (a step away from death).

Crossing Mexico

For most Central and South American immigrants who do not migrate by airplane into the United States, Mexico is an important part of the migration process. For them, getting to Mexico is being *a un paso* (just a step away) from the United States. It is almost making it. But unfortunately, it also means dealing with various forms of corruption aimed at Central and South American and even Mexican immigrants wanting to cross the border into the United States. This corruption is most visible in *ciudades entre lineas* (cities in between lines), or border towns where a mix of Mexicans and non-Mexicans who did not make it to the United States are trying to cross the border. In these towns, many know it is easy to take advantage of immigrants, especially if they don't have a coyote, and particularly if they are poor or Indigenous and/or naïve about the corruption in border towns.

This was Francisco's case because he did not know how he was going to cross. He only had the hope that he would be all right. For him Mexico became the line that left him with a scar. A series of events made his arrival in Mexico the most difficult yet. He was robbed and beaten and he was unable to find work. He was forced to beg. For Francisco, this

was degrading because work had been such a part of his life—his upbringing. He was ready to work, but was unable to find a job.

Juana's journey through Mexico meant regression. She did not take enough money; therefore, she had to stop in Mexico to work. Mexico also meant betrayal by those who provided her with a home in Mexico. She began working at the home, but they gave her only a portion of what she earned. Her husband was sending her money, and they were stealing it. She was betrayed by other Guatemalans who became aware of immigrants' vulnerability while crossing Mexico and proceeded to exploit them.

For Guadalupe, also from El Salvador, crossing Mexico was also one of the most challenging steps of migration, a step that left a scar. By the time she got to Mexico she had already been raped and had no money. She was vulnerable to those looking to harm immigrants crossing the border. Yet, Guadalupe suffered from "invisibility" as those around her chose to ignore her suffering in her most crucial moment of need. She did what she could to survive, to make it to the U.S. border.

Unlike the others, Daniel, Alondra, and Guadalupe were educated. Daniel and Alondra both came from "good" middle-class families who had not experienced financial difficulties until recently. Daniel had family in the United States who eased the process of crossing. Having access and money provided Daniel and Alondra with the benefit of a better experience *cruzando lineas*. Unlike others, Daniel crossed into Mexico by plane, flying first class. Yet, although Daniel got to Mexico via first class, he was soon "downgraded" in class at the Mexico/U.S. border. At that moment, at that border, between those lines, he was seen as what he feared—a low-class, nation-trading immigrant.

For many Central and South American immigrants, Mexico also becomes a place where they find hope after a series of line crossings. For many, this hope is found in the generosity of Mexican citizens who lend a helping hand. This was true in the case of Francisco, who, after crossing several *lineas*, was left homeless, hungry, humiliated, and almost hopeless. Then he found a priest who provided Francisco and other immigrants with refuge and a ray of light amidst so much darkness.

Many immigrants from Mexico and from Central and South America don't know what they will find in the process of crossing Mexico. Yet, some find solace and refuge from a helping hand. In many cases the help becomes friendship, and in some cases becomes an extended family, as happened to Francisco. He had lost it all, including his family, but found an extended family of immigrants in Mexico attempting to reach the American dream. Francisco's case is similar to the case of many immigrants who are provided with an opportunity to "re-gather," rest, and prepare for the *la linea final* (the final line)—crossing over to the United States.

La Línea Final: Crossing to the United States

Daniel's crossing involved geographic physical movement, but it also meant crossing "down" class lines, from his status as an educated man to being just another *peon* or worker searching for the American dream. So for Daniel, crossing the border was an identity-stripping process. For Daniel *cruzar la linea* was a demoralizing act that took away his dignity, profession, status, and most importantly his social class. Because Daniel was already in the United States making a living, Alondra's crossing experience was quite different. She had access to money and education and she was able to obtain a visa to travel via airplane,

making her migration less strenuous than others'. She took advantage of an invitation to attend international teachers' conference to get a U.S. visa, and to come to the United States and stay. As a result, she lost her visa and became an illegal/undocumented immigrant.

Crossing the Mexican-U.S. border is difficult not only for non-Mexican immigrants but also for Mexicans who seek for a better life. In the case of Iza, crossing the border was just as hard and intense as it was for most non-Mexican participants. Iza's journey from her hometown to the border was difficult both physically and psychologically. It was very much related to money and access. Crossing groups were divided into two categories: 1) those who had paid, and 2) those who planned to pay once in the United States. Iza was in the "I owe you" group, therefore getting the lower end of the deal.

Similarly, Juana and Patricio did not have sufficient financial resources to pay a coyote to guide them. Therefore, they were forced to look for signs to guide them to the other side.

For Sonia, *cruzar esta linea* (crossing this line) meant much more than what she was willing to give up. It meant letting the waters of the river take a piece of her soul, heart, and essence. For Sonia, a mother who had no choice but to take her child with her, to *cruzar* this *linea* became a moment of darkness, sorrow, and remorse. This incident marked the beginning of her stay in the United States, the land of opportunity, the land of the free. A land that required a "down payment" to cross, collateral in exchange for access—her daughter. The United States for Sonia became the land of *esperanza* (hope) and the land of death.

For those such as Iza, Juana, Patricio, Francisco, and Sonia, having insufficient monetary resources meant risk, danger, and in some cases abandonment. The experiences

these immigrants had were and are still very closely tied to access to money. Nevertheless, for many, making it across the border *la linea* meant a new beginning. It meant having the opportunity to change, to fit in, to redefine their identities as immigrants in the United States.

Pedagogía del Camaleon (Pedagogy of the Chameleon): Indigenous and Latino Identity

As research has shown, identity is complex and intricate. Identities of the participants in this study were shaped through their life experiences. Therefore, their identities were very much tied to their ethnic group status, economic status, and national identity. The spaces they navigated in life shaped their identities. Three major categories of identity emerged out of this research.

- 1) Indigenous and community identity,
- 2) National identity in country of origin, and
- 3) Identity re-formation after migrating to the United States.

Iza's identity as an Otomi Indigenous woman was shaped by her Indigenous group and community. For many people like Iza, Indigenous identity came first, as it was the place where they were accepted, at home, and in tune with themselves. Her strong ties to her Indigenous identity were intensified by rejection by other Mexican citizens who did not consider themselves Indigenous. According to Iza, being Indigenous was a constant cause for dismissal by others. The dismissals experienced by Iza and her close community led them to embrace their Indigenous and community identity. For many of them, belonging did not come from nation (Mexico) but rather it came from their Indigenous tribe, the Otomi.

This feeling of non-belonging to the mainstream community was a consequence of actions against them because of their Indigenous identity. Iza explained that some of the

actions against her that contributed to her non-identification to Mexican mainstream society were related to skin color (the darker the color, the worse they were treated), lack of formal education, their appearance (clothing, etc), and because of geographical identification (her hometown is recognized as a town of people of Indigenous decent).

As demonstrated by Iza's narrative—Indigenous people were racially coded in their own country of origin. This was not an isolated case among participants in this study. Francisco from El Salvador, a Nahuatl Pipil Indigenous man, also had similar experiences of non-belonging because of not fitting the mainstream idea of a "normal citizen." As stated by Francisco, they were treated like *Indios* (Indians). Negative racial coding was taking place in El Salvador within an Indigenous population at the brink of extinction (Gordon, 2005). Gordon adds that Nahuatl Pipil communities were already extinct in Honduras and they were continually decreasing in El Salvador. As a matter of fact, Gordon states that the only remaining speakers of Nahuatl Pipil in El Salvador are older adults. Francisco's experience as a man displaced by the civil war in El Salvador (which officially ended in 1992) supports Gordon's research on extinct languages. The *Indios* were the enemy, and their lives and language were largely exterminated.

Juana's identity as a K'iche' Indigenous woman was shaped by a rich tradition of craftsmanship, family unity, and democratic dialogue. Her life was shaped by a rich culture filled with pride and respect for ancient traditions transmitted to her by her ancestors. The dance, craft, spirituality, language, dialogue, and unity of the K'iche' shaped her identity—it was her identity *tronco* (trunk).

Iza's, Juana's, and Francisco's identities were shaped by their experiences as marginalized. They were marked by language, group identity, physiology, and beliefs. Their

identity was shaped around invisibility and survival. Iza, Juana, and Francisco experienced rejection by mainstream society, even though they worked to try to “fit in” to their country of origin. This included learning a new language. Francisco learned Spanish by going to school. Iza and Juana learned it for commercial purposes. But even with this survival skill, they were rejected by mainstream society.

Iza, Juana, and Francisco, unlike the other participants, were not formally educated in their countries of origin. Those participants who were formally educated seem to have a different opinion about identity: their national identity was their main source of identification, even when some lived under impoverished conditions and were also marginalized by racism. This was the case of Sonia, a Mexican from Puebla, and Guadalupe, a woman from El Salvador.

Sonia had the opportunity to go to school in Mexico City, but even in school she was racially coded by teachers who treated her differently because of her appearance and physiology. As a child, Sonia experienced racial coding by teachers who would tell her that she was dark-skinned and short—features that many link with poor, Indigenous people. Her experience as a small child attending school is not unusual. For Sonia, vivid experiences of prejudice and racial coding were not sufficient reasons to challenge her national identity as a Mexican woman. To her, identity was national—it meant Mexican.

Similarly, Guadalupe’s identity was also tied to nationality—to El Salvador. She was an educated woman who learned at school to love her country. She loved being able to attain an education. Guadalupe wanted to teach. She wanted to give back to her community. She wanted to go back to her hometown and teach. She wanted to share her love for her country

and show others that even if you come from situations of extreme high poverty, you can still make it.

Daniel and Alondra had much in common with Sonia and Guadalupe when it came to matters of identity. Although they were from different socio-economic backgrounds, their nation was central to their identity. For Daniel and Alondra, their nationality was tied to their social class within society. They are *Guatemaltecos*—educated and financially comfortable. Indeed, they still lived their national identity in the U.S. They felt superior to others because they were educated; they made a point to let others know that they were not like everyone else. Daniel and Alondra felt they were in a higher social class than other immigrants around them. They were maintaining class within an underrepresented group. The thought of leaving their nation brought them pain. They felt they were acting as traitors. They worried that leaving their country would mean leaving their identity behind. Regardless of the source of identity, everyone experienced great uncertainty in their migrations. What they did not expect was that they would re-form their identities once in the United States.

Identity Re-formation: Life after Migrating to the United States

The process of migration is a turning point—a pivotal time in an immigrant's life. It is for many the first time they have left their countries of origin and the first time they have to re-discover themselves as immigrants in the United States. There are many factors that influence the experience an immigrant has in the United States. As expanded by Portes and Rumbaut (2001):

Immigrants, even those of the same nationality, are frequently divided by social class, the timing of their arrival, and their generation. American society is not homogenous either.

Depending on the timing of their arrival and context of reception, immigrants can find themselves confronting diametrically different situations, and hence the course of their assimilation can lead to a number of outcomes (p. 45).

This was the case for the participants in this study. Their lives were shaped by many factors: their social class in their home country, their mode of entrance, access to a decent job, and the social networks established in this country once here. In the United States, participants experienced many obstacles and many forms of discrimination. Their experiences differed though.

In the case of Iza and Juana, keeping their Indigenous identities in their home countries was not a choice, but a necessity. Yet, once in the United States, Iza finally felt as though she belonged to the Mexican mainstream society. In the United States there was not much distinction between the Indigenous and the Mexican. They were just Mexican. Iza and her family were finally Mexican. Particularly for Iza's husband, this meant belonging to a group that previously did not accept them. Iza and her husband found it important to try to "fit in" as Mexicans and they took measures to learn Spanish. Furthermore, they encouraged their children to learn Spanish as well. Iza and her family were repeating a cycle that many other immigrants encountered in the United States, in part due to their desire to belong. Borrowing from Portes and Rumbaut (2001), assimilation became a master concept because "the concept conveys a factual prediction about the final outcome of the encounters between foreign minority and the native majority and, simultaneously, an assertion of a socially desirable goal" (p. 44). But for Iza and her family, assimilation was not to the majority group of the U.S. (whites) but rather to the majority group of Mexico. In Mexico they were

historically a subordinate group; however, in the U.S. they became Mexican in ways not imaginable in Mexico.

While Iza and her family members were trying to “fit in” to the Mexican immigrant group, they still were part of their own Indigenous group as they adjusted to immigrant life in the United States. They were able to maneuver different social spaces in order to navigate their lives in the new country. This attempt to “fit in” led them to a versatile form of survival as marginalized immigrants in the United States. Using the framework of Dubois (1986) on moments—Iza and her family as immigrants live by moments. That is, they perform and redefine these moments as they navigate from place to place. They speak Spanish only when outside the home and Otomi when inside in the comfort of their own home. As in Mexico, Otomi language and culture is hidden inside the home. The irony is that they recreated the invisibility of Otomi culture in the United States similar to the way it was in Mexico.

Similarly, Juana feels that her identity as a K’iche’ is not questioned in the same way here. Much like Iza, Juana also lives by moments. For those outside her home she is a *Guatemalteca* (Guatemalan). But for others who know her in the community and in her home she is proudly a K’iche’. In her home she speaks K’iche’; she is also fostering awareness and maintaining the cultural traditions of the K’iche’ by creating a dance group that performs within the community. She is aware that this is an important part of her identity that has to be protected.

For Francisco and his wife, both Indigenous Nahuatl, their language and Indigenous identity was a reality they did not want to lose. But they too were faced with what I like to call “the pedagogy of the chameleon.” That is, he had to live by moments, transforming himself as he maneuvered and moved from one place to another. For both Francisco and his

wife, losing their native Nahuatl language was not an option, and maintaining the Spanish was a requirement. They both made aggressive efforts not to lose dual realities in the United States.

For Daniel and his wife, life in the United States meant a devaluation of themselves. Both were forced to work as *peones* (manual workers). Yet, they felt that because they were educated they deserved better. In some ways both Daniel and Alondra felt that in the process of crossing the border (either by plane or on land) they were stripped of their class, and that they had to learn to perform and live as marginalized people. Both faced barriers in their attempts to use the educational training they had received in their native country. They too had to learn and live the pedagogy of the chameleon. That is, they live moment by moment as they maneuver new social, linguistic, and cultural spaces.

***De Aquí y de Allá* From Here and From There:
First-Generation U.S. Citizens Living Under Illegality**

A common theme among all the narratives was the desire of participants to see their children succeed in the United States. Borrowing from Luis Urrieta (2004b), they wanted their children to learn how to play the “game”—a game that they feel excludes them. Given that all participants had children who were born in the United States, all felt that their children had the tools necessary to “play the game” and win. Unfortunately, many were faced with the sad and disturbing reality that being an American citizen is not sufficient. The fact that parents are for the most part undocumented immigrants makes the children suspect as well in the eyes of many. The children are forced to live under the discourse of illegality, even though they are U.S. citizens.

All parents in this study felt that their children should not experience the same kinds of prejudice that they encountered themselves. They all felt that because some of their children were U.S. citizens, they had a door of opportunity, a right. For many, it meant the opportunity to have voice and to be counted in the United States. For those whose children were not U.S. citizens, receiving an education in the United States was imperative, as it would provide them with better tools for success in the United States, including the language and social capital gained from growing up in the United States. According to Portes and Rumbaut (2001), ethnicity will be a matter of personal choice for second-generation descendants of immigrants. Contrary to these findings, these parents feel and see that because their children are so closely related to the migration experience of their parents, and because they are living under the discourse of illegality lived by their parents, these children are still very much connected to both sides of their transnational identities.

Although most children of immigrants in this study were U.S. citizens, the children were treated as if they were undocumented. Participants felt that the U.S. education system discriminated against them due to language, ethnic background, and physiology. Several participants complained that they were purposely excluded from school events. And when they attended an event, they were not provided with adequate translation. As stated by Daniel, they were just *titeres* (puppets), who were manipulated by a more powerful entity. Furthermore, children experienced racial coding not only from other children, but also from school officials who used derogatory racial remarks.

All parents recognized that this is not a phenomenon that will last a lifetime. Rather, they are aware that those children who are U.S. citizens, United Statesians will be able to have their voices be heard. They won't forget the experience of their families and the way they

have been treated here. They are aware that immigrant children will someday play an active role in American society. They will be politicians, nurses, educators, and entrepreneurs. They will be in positions of power, and will have *voz y voto* (voice and vote). Even though they are the future of this country, to many they remain unwanted American citizens.

CHAPTER VI CONCLUSION

Latin American Crisis: Migration and Cutting the Umbilical Cord

Making the decision to migrate is one of the most difficult decisions a person can make. It is a decision that takes a person out of the known into the unknown. It is like cutting one's own umbilical cord. Although it is a difficult decision to make, staying home often is not an option. All participants in this study had to make the decision to leave their Latin American countries. As Latin Americans, they shared histories of poverty, political unrest, and persecution that pushed them out.

Latin America has been an axis of migration to the United States. Many people leave following their desires for better work, food, education, and a better life—*el sueño Americano* (the American dream). Several countries have high levels of emmigration. Mexico, with 67% of its population migrating, and El Salvador, with 20% migrating, are among the highest. Other countries such as Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua also have a long and extensive history of migration. Immigration patterns have not remained static; rather, they are ever changing. Recently, it has been reported that immigration is not only increasing, but also migration destinations are changing (Passel & Suro, 2004). Singer (2004) reports that immigrants are now moving to states termed pre-emerging states—states

that have not had a recent history of Latino migration, such as North Carolina. This new migration has had an impact on these states.

Mexicans have always been a part of the United States as a result of U.S. colonization of the Southwest. As a result of this colonization, many Indigenous communities were dispossessed and moved, or were removed, to the remaining Mexican nation. It was this same colonization that led to the current state of the Mexican economy, which in turn has led to the migration of Mexicans to the United States. Anzaldua (1987) states that “today we are witnessing *la migración de los pueblos Mexicanos*, the return odyssey to the historical mythological Aztlan. This time the traffic is from south to north” (p. 11). It is a reverse migration from those of colonial times.

There are many factors that have influenced Mexican migration to the United States. The Pew Hispanic Center reports that “The Mexican economy went through a severe crisis that produced a dramatic 6.2% drop in the country’s Gross Domestic Product” (Passel & Suro, p 11). This economic crisis, along with persecution of Indigenous communities, low-paying jobs, industrialization and mechanization of agricultural communities (Martin & Meidgley, 1994), and social networks in the U.S., have influenced the increase of Mexican migration. As a result, Mexicans have an enormous impact on the U.S. economy today. For example, it has been reported that Mexicans send home \$45.5 million a day and \$16.6 billion a year back to Mexico (IRC, 2004). Mexicans make up much of the economic force driving the United States. Because of Mexico’s proximity to the U.S., Mexicans have had a history of cyclical migration back and forth. This pattern is beginning to change as the border becomes more and more militarized, forcing many immigrants to stay in the U.S. Others find creative ways of crossing to the United States (Singer & Massey, 2004). The use of coyotes

is decreasing as they become more costly, as people become familiar with crossing patterns, and as social networks in the U.S. increase.

For those participants such as Iza and Sonia their reasons for leaving were a combination of many of the factors mentioned above. For Iza and her husband, Adrian, both Indigenous Otomi, the decision to leave home was made out of desperation. Adrian migrated back and forth, but Iza stayed behind until they made the final decision to reunite in the U.S. For both Iza and Adrian, leaving was a difficult decision to make. They left their children in the care of their grandparents, leaving behind their roles as active parents. They were not making enough money doing what they were taught to do—making *chakiras*. Iza and her husband both had been making and selling *chakiras* since they were young children. They were hired by business people from the capital, stayed in work camps, and returned home during slow seasons. For Sonia, also from Mexico, leaving meant choosing between her two children. A choice that was crucial—one that determined who would live and who would die. These Mexican immigrants described leaving home as one of the most difficult acts/decisions they had to make in their lives. One that changed their roles, rights, and identities—one that caused undesired pains, and helped them transform into the transcendent beings they are today. Oppression has been a part of their lives since they were children. And for many, migration became another form of oppression. The experience of migration is lived not only by Mexicans but it is an experience that is also shared by other Central American immigrants.

Central Americans have been resettling to the United States since the 1800s (Cordova & Del Pinal, 2004). Central American migration to the U.S. accelerated during the 1980s due to political unrest in countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua.

Additionally, as stated in Chapter I, during the 1990s, Central American populations increased drastically. Therefore, it is clear that Central American immigrants compose a significant number of the immigrants in the U.S. Much like Mexicans, Central Americans also contribute a considerable amount to the U.S. economy. Yet, unlike Mexicans, close to half a million Central American undocumented immigrants are protected from deportation and receive work permits under special Temporary Protected Status (TPS). All who participated in this study, both Mexicans and Central Americans, were undocumented.

Indigenous communities in Latin America have suffered from much discrimination and persecution. Indigenous populations in countries such as Guatemala, where 60% of the population is of Mayan descent (England, 1996), have been affected, and many Indigenous peoples have no other choice than to migrate. This was the case of Juana and Francisco, who were forced to migrate because of persecution and poor living conditions. Juana also left because of her desire to provide her child with a better life by sending him to school, something they could not do as an Indigenous family in Guatemala. The situation in Latin America does not show signs of improvement and, all predictions aside, it has actually worsened.

All the Central American immigrants who participated in this study, Alondra, Daniel, and Juana from Guatemala, and Guadalupe and Francisco from El Salvador, had one thing in common with each other—the difficulty of leaving home. Much like those participants from Mexico (Iza and Sonia), these Central American participants felt that one of the most difficult decisions they had to make was leaving home. For both Alondra and Daniel, leaving home meant betraying their *patria* (nation). For Francisco, leaving meant a better life and making money to be able to find his displaced family, even though by leaving he would

lessen his chances of finding them. For Juana, who was running away from the persecution of her Indigenous community and hoping to be able to earn money to pay for her child's education, leaving meant taking the chance of never seeing her child again, but it also meant preserving her child's future. Guadalupe left El Salvador in search of work in order to help her sick elderly mother—without telling her. All of these participants made the decision to leave knowing that they were losing a large part of their lives by doing so. Yet, the hope of a better life in was all that was left to them.

Immigrants leave their homes with the hope that once in the United States their lives will be different. Unfortunately, in the U.S they find themselves living under a different kind of marginalization and scrutiny. Many immigrants find themselves living under the discourse of illegality because of the country's anti-immigration policies.

Institutional and Societal Chains: Revisiting Immigration Policies and their Effects on Immigrant Life

The life of immigrants has always been bound by institutional chains that either grant or deny access to lawfully approved life, to societal approval, and ultimately to visibility. Many immigrants do not have opportunities because current institutional policies (immigration, education, law and order) that do not allow them access. Without this access, the American dream is much more difficult to achieve. Levinson and Sutton (2001) argue that policy is a “complex social practice, an ongoing process of normative cultural production constituted by diverse actors across diverse social and institutional contexts” (p. 1). They go on to assert that “authorized policy is a form of governance, to be sure, but one that is constantly negotiated and reorganized in the ongoing flow of institutional life” (p. 1). Immigration policies have been at the forefront of this ongoing flow of “accepted”

institutional life. Because undocumented immigrants do not “fit in” to a legalized category, they are more vulnerable to exploitation and marginalization. Being documented or undocumented has a history of harmful immigration policies (Operation Wetback (Calavita, 1992), and the National Immigration reforms that were established with the termination of the Bracero program in 1964.

As a result of these immigration policies, there has been an increase in the militarization of the border, which made it more difficult for immigrants to continue their cyclical patterns of migration. This led to Latino immigrants staying in the U.S. and forced many immigrants to find other creative ways to cross the border, risking their lives in the process. These institutional chains or policies have contextualized immigrant life and have resulted in newly arrived immigrants being forced into a form of restricted slavery of invisibility, muteness, and abuse.

All the participants in this study were living under the shadow of illegality, living in fear of the nation-state, under public policies that made it difficult to live and survive. Therefore, immigrants had to be creative to survive. They were forced to break the laws in order work, eat, and live. Their situation was similar to that which made them leave their home countries. The difference here is that, although they are underpaid, they still make more than they could in their home countries. All participants but Alondra and Daniel felt that their lives here were better materially speaking than in their countries of origin. But then, except for Alondra and Daniel, they came from extreme poverty. Surviving here seems better than dying there. Furthermore, for all participants, making money in the United States was an opportunity to send money back home, which would give their family members a way to survive as well. Many participants in the study stayed in the United States because they

felt that their children would have better educational opportunities here than in their countries of origin. For all participants, the decision to leave was linked to the future well-being of their families, and especially for any children. Once here, their encounters with the United States education system were not what they had expected. Many found the same kinds of institutional denigration they found in their countries of origin, while others, such as Alondra and Daniel, experienced denigration in their status.

Because of the South's bi-polar/black and white history, the South presents new and old challenges. One old challenge is that African Americans who pioneered civil rights still have limited access and voice. In the context of the South, Latinos enter an unresolved bi-polar racial history and much like African Americans in the South, Latinos too are subject to white privilege.

Although some reforms have been made in educational policy in the South, many of these changes duplicate policies that have failed in post World War gateway states such as California. The South is suffering from a lack of bilingual education and other services for non-English speaking children. Many school officials are closed to the idea of having alternative forms of bilingual education. Many school officials share the apparent national goal of not supporting the first language and teaching only in English. In the South, some feel that current educational policies grant to unauthorized immigrants rights that should be given only to American citizens. Current educational policy denies unauthorized students access to higher education. One policy that would help unauthorized students is the "Dream Act," which has languished in congressional committees. These educational policies are hurting and will continue to hurt the inherited generations of Latino Diaspora students in search of a better future through education. They are being tracked into failure.

Polos Opuestos (Opposite Poles): Latino Home Education and Schooling

With a reported population of 38.8 million in 2002, Latinos are the largest ethnic-minority group in the nation. Latinos will make up over a quarter of the U.S. population by the year 2050 (Banks, & Banks, 2001; U.S. Census Report, 2001). This is apparent in the K-12 population, where the population of Latinos under 18 has increased more than any other racial and ethnic group. It is projected that by the year 2050 1 out of 4 children will be of Latino origin (Lewis, 1994). This seems a low estimate given that Latino children currently account for more than 22% of all children under the age of 5 (Calderón, 2005, p. 2). Yet, the education of Latinos in the U.S. is one with a history of racial prejudice. This prejudice has much to do with the difference between Indigenous/Latino families' backgrounds and whitestream (Grande, 2000; Urrieta, 2004) forms of involvement and engagement.

All participants in this study had children who were currently enrolled in school. Of the six families involved, the parents of four families completed formal K-12 education. Of those families one had a K-12 education, two families had college education, and one had graduate-level education in their countries of origin. Those who did not have formal K-12 education were mostly of Indigenous descent. For them, school was a luxury. All Indigenous participants had to work from a very young age and therefore were unable to attend school regularly. Because of the diverse educational experience of these participants, their interactions with schools varied. Some, such as Alondra and Daniel, were able to adjust fairly well to U.S. schools. Both had the educational capital necessary to maneuver within the school system. Other participants struggled as their presence was ignored by schools and school officials. That is, newly arrived Indigenous/Latinos families are expected to

automatically have the cultural capital required to be successful in schools. Schools expect parents to change and fit into the school. Yet, schools are not willing to change themselves. Furthermore, they are not willing to recognize and respect the cultural capital that Indigenous/Latino parents bring to school. Assimilation becomes the criterion to distinguish “good” from “bad” parents.

There has been an array of research on Mexican and Central American families (Trueba, 1988, 1989, 2004; Vazquez et al.; 1994, Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995, 2000; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990, 1992, 2004). This body of research argues against the notion of Latino parents and families as deficient. These studies show that Latino families have strong cultural values such as *familism*, *confianza* (trust), *respeto* (respect), and *dignidad* (dignity) (Valdez, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999). These values are not appreciated when schools work with Latino families. Instead, they are seen as subtractive (Valenzuela, 1999) rather than additive (Murillo, 2004). These values are strengths brought by parents but not understood by schools and educators. Families’ values and strengths are passed down to children as forms of socialization which greatly influence children’s experiences. Children’s socialization is closely tied to parents’ educational and economic situations (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991). Therefore, children’s interactions with schools are tied to their parents. These cultural and moral values are passed down to children through strong oral forms of communication (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994). This is apparent with all the participants in this study who used oral communication as their primary form of imparting knowledge. All participants used *consejos* (advice) (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; and Valdez, 1996). Some *consejos* carried *mensajes escondidos* (hidden messages) about what to do and believe. For Iza, Juana, Francisco, and Guadalupe, oral communication was the only way they could

communicate with their parents. It was the way they learned knowledge and values. One of the hidden messages that Iza and Juana both received included how to maintain their Indigenous cultures. They also included *mensajes escondidos* (hidden messages) about how to survive as Indigenous women. For Sonia, those *mensajes escondidos* (hidden messages) were oral forms of communication provided by her father who wanted her to be *la mas chingona* (the toughest). He was preparing Sonia for life as a woman in a historically patriarchal, male-dominated environment. For Alondra and Daniel the *mensajes escondidos* (hidden messages) had an academic dimension. That is, they were to get an education in order to maintain their class status. Guadalupe's *mensajes escondidos* (hidden messages) had much to do with her socio-economic experience. She learned from her mother that she had to go to school and get an education in order to "be someone." These *mensajes escondidos* prepared these participants for their lives as citizens of their communities, as immigrants in a foreign land, and for the way of life they would provide their children.

These *valores* (values) passed down to Indigenous/Latino children the ability to see the world through multiple lenses. Yet in school, they were not given with the opportunity to use their cultural beliefs when participating in mainstream culture (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991). Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, and Shannon's (1994) ethnographic studies on language socialization skills found that schools do not take into consideration many differences within ethnic groups: language spoken, family organization, family size, and different forms of language socialization. Parents and children communicate to create and co-construct meaning and children's language acquisition. This makes parents good language models, and second-language acquisition can come as knowledge transfer (Thomas &

Collier, 1992). Sadly, schools' and communities' rejection of these new families seems to be creating a negative ripple effect, leading to children's loss of identity and language.

Identity Re-formation: Making the New Country a New Home

Yet in leaving home I did not lose touch with my origin because *lo mexicano* is in my system. I am a turtle; wherever I go I carry "home" on my back.

By Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera* (1987, p. 21)

Immigrants transcend barriers, and many times defy death. In the process of making a new country their new home, many immigrants begin to redefine their identities accordingly. Hamann, Wortham, & Murillo (2002) assert that:

Many newcomers resist both the virulent and "benevolent" forms of racism they encounter by affirming their own identities as immigrants or minority group members. (Benevolent racism refers to the policies and practices of those who allege good intentions but whose actions have discriminatory consequences) (p. 7).

Immigrant identities in the new country are very much tied to their ethnic group status, and/or national identity. However, migration itself has shaped the identities as well. Several identity categories emerged out of this research study: 1) Indigenous identity, 2) national identity, and 3) identity re-formation after migrating to the United States.

For those of Indigenous decent such as Iza, Adrian, Juana, and Francisco, their identity was their Indigenous origin. Their identity was shaped by racial coding and marginalization. Yet, when in the United States, their identities began to transform. For Iza, her language was very much a part of her identity; therefore, maintaining that at home was imperative. For both Iza and Adrian, feeling that they were making this country their new home had much to do with feeling like they finally fit into the Mexican mainstream community in the U.S. Here they were *Mexicano*. They were no longer *Indios*. Iza and her

family did not assimilate to the white majority group, but rather to the largest minority group—Mexicans.

Similarly, Francisco did not want to lose his language, as he felt this was an essential part of his identity. He also lived by moments—using “the pedagogy of the chameleon,” he transformed himself as he maneuvered in his new country. Juana from Guatemala made this new country her new home by incorporating her Indigenous culture into the life of her immigrant community. Yet, when with strangers, she was Guatemalan, not K’iche’. Juana stated that she had two truths, the outside truth and the inside truth. They were both necessary, complex, and important when making a new country a new home.

Alondra and Daniel saw migration as devaluing, and therefore they sought to assimilate to the mainstream culture. They were not just *peones* (workers) like other immigrants; rather they were highly educated individuals who were different than other newly arrived immigrants. They felt that they deserved better, yet they faced difficulties as they realized that their education was not valued here. They too lived by moments—they, too, had to perform the “pedagogy of the chameleon.”

Pedagogy of Disconnection

Indigenous/Latino students and parents are being treated like blank slates—as if arriving in this country magically erased all prior knowledge and experiences. In most cases, students and parents are treated as “savages akin to the British naming of Natives in India” (Willinsky, 1998). Language is an excuse used to justify the unfair treatment of Latinos in the United States. In schools and classrooms, children are prohibited from speaking their home language (with the exception of those children who are placed in one of the few Dual

Language programs). This sends the message that their home language, the language they inherited from their loved ones, is not good enough and must disappear in order for them to achieve academic success in the United States. This destructive pedagogy is justified by teachers, school officials, and administrators, who say that it is for students' "own good," when in reality it creates conflicted identities, self-doubt, and a dislike of school.

Connections between schools and Indigenous/Latino students and parents are almost non-existent. Funds allocated for parent involvement seem not to get to parents. Out of the six schools with which I currently work, only one has mentioned that funds were provided to them by NCLB. Most count parent teacher conferences, PTA meetings, and other small events as parental involvement. Of course, these events fail to involve Indigenous/Latino Diaspora parents with the excuse that schools don't have necessary funding to pay for translators. The majority of the parents in this study experienced this explicit form of racism. Most participants indicated that in their interactions with schools they had been ignored, ostracized, laughed at, and humiliated. As a result, many feel their presence in these schools is not desired and doesn't seem helpful for their children.

The Bridge to Home and School Connection

As mentioned above, schools have been spaces filled with reductionist-subtractive thinking models and stereotypes. Part of my journey as a Latino immigrant researcher and a cultural broker is to take stories and experiences told to me and use them to build a bridge between immigrant communities and schools. I aware that building a bridge cannot be achieved only by telling stories, that I must also provide schools with useful recommendations for incorporating these communities into the everyday life of schools.

Several research studies have determined that schools see Latino parents as a deficit to their children's education, and that often they do not "fit" the whitestream middle-class model of a good parent. Furthermore, home and school practices are not consistent with what schools expect parents to do (Valdez, 1996).

I have had the opportunity to provide professional development sessions for teachers and administrators. During these sessions I have questioned teachers about what are their definitions of parental involvement. These are the answers I consistently get:

- Attends PTA meetings and other school functions
- volunteers for school field trips
- helps his/her child with homework
- talks about school work or grades with his/her child and child's school
- talks about projects in schools

These answers are pretty consistent with literature on parental involvement beliefs (Valdez, 1996), yet they do not reflect the realities of many brownstream populations in their encounters with schools. Several participants have stated that they have attended PTA meetings; however they have fallen victim to the "Pedagogy of the Puppet." Many parents cannot volunteer for school events, not only because of work obligations, but also because they are unable to communicate with children and teachers. Contrary to the beliefs of many, Latino parents do help their children with homework to the best of their capabilities. Yet, many are confronted with language barriers, subjects that they may not understand, and/or lack of instructions for how to do particular homework assignments.

The reality is that schools are not communicating effectively their expectations of parents, and they are not providing opportunities for parents to communicate their

expectations of schools and teachers. Furthermore, schools are not acknowledging that newly arrived immigrant populations have particular needs that are not pertinent to other parent groups. That is, immigrants come with different educational contexts; some have had no experience with formal schooling. Others have had experiences in their country of origin with very different organizational structures. Additionally, Latino immigrant parents have different ways of communicating in meetings. A communal style of interaction is preferred rather than the business-like interactions that dominate PTA meetings.

Because of the complexity of immigrants' legal status, schools are threatening places. Therefore, if schools want genuine interactions and true dialogue, they should offer a safe and comfortable environment. That is, they should provide sessions for only Latino immigrants that are led in Spanish. The use of simultaneous translation is becoming more used within schools, which is an improvement. Yet, they should realize that it is very difficult to do simultaneous translations. Simply knowing Spanish is not sufficient to be a good simultaneous translator. Moreover, translators should be carefully screened, and teachers as well as translators should be provided with training about their roles when translating. That is, teachers should speak directly to parents, not to the translators. Both teachers and parents should talk to translators about their expectations prior to the meeting. Translators should provide direct translations and not interpretations of translations, following recommendations aimed at improving immigrant parent–school relations:

- Make schools a welcoming space by including them in school events.
- Provide teachers with staff development that includes parents and their stories.
- Send information properly translated (this should be verified by native speakers).
- Create a newly arrived Latino PTA

1. Provide information about:

- Schools policies
- Their rights as parents
- Their rights even if they are undocumented
- Assistance with filling out lunch and bus forms
- The U.S. educational system
- End-of-the-year exams
- What children need to know by grade level
- How to help their children at home in their native language
- An academic phone tree for parents who have children in similar grade levels to help each other.
- Playing active roles in meetings.

2. Provide services that:

- Support parents' leadership when they do get involved.
- Let parents define meeting agenda based on their immediate needs, and let them take control. It is their meeting.
- Allow parents to give presentations about their culture or special gifts they have.
- Include multilingual family literacy within the group.

These parent meetings can be held once a month for about an hour and a half to two. Take into consideration times for meetings; they should not be too early or too late. Lastly, and most importantly—schools need to welcome parents' stories and see them as additive and not as subtractive (Valenzuela, 1999). They need to recognize that newly arrived immigrant

parents do care about their children and that they should be partners in their children's school experience.

Losing to Gain: Walking Immigrant Lines

For many, physically crossing the border is one of most traumatic experiences they will encounter in their lives. Crossing the border involves a removal of one's umbilical cord (home) to be taken to an unknown place. Immigrant men and women cross the border leaving not only their homes behind but also leaving their children and loved ones behind. In many cases, they are pushed out and must leave empty-handed, both emotionally and financially. Hence, many immigrants are faced with trying to cross the border without money. Crossing the border means denigration, loss of self and other (both Sonia's child; the families left behind). Crossing several borders means leaving a piece of their souls at each border. However, not all experiences are alike and some immigrants are spared from physically crossing the border. Some fly directly to the United States or to Mexico where they encounter the U.S./Mexican border and get a glimpse of what their lives will be like as unauthorized immigrants.

One of the major differences lies with class and family economic access. Those who flew to the U.S. or to the Mexican border did so because they had the financial capability to do so. Nonetheless, crossing the border for many is an identity-stripping, heart-wrenching process. It means giving up physical self and doing whatever is necessary to reach the border. Immigrants are robbed, tortured, beaten, abused, unable to work, and begging in the streets, all to reach the border. Yet, amid this misfortune, some are able to find kindness and regain hope. Crossing the border meant carrying hope in their hands and then losing hope—with the

realization that the American Dream is that one may work and survive physically but at the cost of continued marginalization. Immigrants ironically replicate some of their cultural patterns of being marginalized there when they are marginalized here in the U.S. These stories touched my heart as an immigrant search and made me realized that WE immigrants share a pain, a struggle, and a connectivity—migration.

Migration and its Connectivity: Immigrant Researcher and Community Member

During this research study, I have played two roles: one of an immigrant who can relate to the stories of others, the other of the researcher who is trying to investigate and understand the issues affecting Indigenous/Latino newly arrived immigrants in North Carolina. In that process I had to ask myself, Which side am I on? Am I the colonizer or the colonized? Or both? (Villenas, 1996). Can I truly be part of that community, while at the same time research the community? Can I publish findings—in this case, personal narratives—if every time I narrate a story, I re-cross the border with them? As I heard their stories, I felt the emotional rape, the anger, the suffering, and the transcendent strength of these participants. Could I be fair if my own migration experience was at times in the way? These are questions that other researchers have previously explored. Christine Webb (2001) points out that at times one needs to question one's motives and clarify: Whose side am I on? To answer these questions, I decided to include them in the retelling of their stories and mine. I did this by an exchange of information. One that includes researchers telling our stories to the participants. Denise Segura (1989, 1994) stresses the importance of relationships when working with immigrants. Given their vulnerability, interviewees feel more comfortable talking to someone like them rather than a researcher who could not relate

to them. This was particularly true in my experience with these participants, which led to relationships of trust, confidence, and accountability. They agreed to tell me their stories because they felt I was someone who would represent them responsibly. We had a relationship that was based on these stories, and a deep connectivity. As participants told their stories, I re-walked borders with them. We re-crossed the border together, following the footsteps of past immigrants, creating from our commonness a new connection—of shared stories.

As stated by Ruby Dhunpath (2002), “narrative research emphasizes the intensive nature of each person’s experience” (p. 545). This is why narrative research is especially appropriate for this type of study because, “understanding ourselves and our world narratively, our attention is turned to how we are engaged in living, telling, retelling, and reliving our life with particular social and cultural plotlines” (Huber, 2002).

As an immigrant researcher, I had to constantly fight and struggle with these questions. I knew how important, delicate, and precious these stories were. I knew how much the tellers were entrusting me. They were entrusting me with their hearts, their sorrows, their mistakes, their hopes. I had their vulnerability in my hands. As a result, the narratives are a form of social promulgation. I am the storyteller. I represent these lives and their meaning in wider discourses. I am on another border—between immigrant and academician. I am on their side but stand on this border to speak to others.

I was naturally compelled to investigate these stories, to tell them, to give them voice. In the process, I used my own story in order to contextualize some of the issues affecting Latinos socially and educationally. My story helped me to understand some of the issues affecting the Indigenous/Latino newly arrived immigrant community.

A Life Defined by Border Crossing and Migration

This journey is one that I share with many of the participants. As a woman of color, a black-Indigenous-Latina, I can truly say that migrating and adjusting to this country without losing a sense of self has been one of the most difficult experiences I had to encounter in my life. My father was born in Nicaragua, and my mother was born in Panama while my grandparents were traveling. My mother left to Nicaragua at 3 months of age and did not return to Panama until she was a young adult. She was a Panamanian citizen by birth, but a Nicaraguan at heart. Both my mother and father came from middle-class families, and both graduated from high school. My father's father was killed when my father was only 13, so he was forced to work from a young age. This discipline provided my father with a strong work ethic and strong survival skills, which he passed on to me. I lived through the hidden messages that were passed to me as a result of my parents' struggle. In Nicaragua, we lived a pretty comfortable life before the civil unrest in Central America in the 1980s. My father worked all the time and my mother helped out in her father's shop. I was really too young to realize what kinds of struggles they experienced on a day-to-day basis. I'm the oldest of three siblings who include a brother and a sister. My extended family was very mixed, a combination of Indigenous and Afro-Latino, which is very common in ethnically and culturally heterogeneous hybrid spaces, such as Bluefield. Bluefield is a place like no other in Nicaragua. Bluefield was conquered by the British who brought slaves from Africa and Jamaica. It is the only *Creole*-English and Spanish region in the country. It is a region that has mixed Nicaraguan traditions with Afro-Latino traditions. It is also the "black" region of the country, and to many it is considered "the other side of the tracks."

As a child, I was raised by my entire family. I was close to my parents, grandparents, and uncles. All of them provided me with unique perspectives on life and points of view. My grandfather (mother's father) provided me with exposure to *Creole*-English, a language I never got to speak fluently as he was the only one who attempted to teach me. Therefore, I grew up knowing basic English, which was a blessing as I was able to use these skills later on in my life.

Civil unrest forced my family to migrate. My father was jailed when he refused to surrender to the government the business his father had worked so hard to build, and he worked so hard to maintain. As he was jailed, we were in danger of persecution so we fled with the help of our family. Because my mother was an accidental Panamanian citizen, and because my grandmother had family in Panama, it seemed as the safest place to go. So at 7 years of age, I experienced the pain of migration, of cutting one's umbilical cord. I remember vividly saying good-bye to my family members in Bluefield, and to those who gathered in the airport. I remember walking down the runway, going up the stairs of the airplane, getting to the top, and looking back at the airport, knowing that it would be a while until I saw them again. I remember my mother's tears, my uncles' sadness, and our void because my father was not with us and we did not really know what would happen. Indeed, my life was defined by border crossing and migration.

Panama changed my life. It opened my eyes to poverty, struggle for basic necessities, and it also exposed me to happiness. Indeed, I was the happiest in Panama. When we arrived in Panama, our living conditions were considerably worse. We had no running water, no easy access to clean drinking water, and no running toilets. Basic necessities were a luxury. After we had been in Panama for a couple of months, my father was released from jail and was

able to join us. Upon my father's arrival, both my father and my mother were able to begin working full time. Soon afterward, my grandmother (mother's mother) was able to join us, and she took care of my siblings and me. So, I was partly raised by grandmother, who taught me to survive, cook, clean, wash clothing, sew, and be self-sufficient. She also taught me to love reading. She gave me old magazines and National Geographic books to read. She also told us many stories, and used to have us listen to *radiocuentos* (radio stories) that detailed old life stories, myths, dramas, and love stories. Because we lived next to my great-grandmother (*abuela* Chonga), and my uncle and his family (four daughters and a wife) I grew up in the company of my extended family members. *Abuela* Chonga was Seventh-Day Adventist, and we had to attend *cultos* (prayer sessions) every Wednesday at her home. We had to read passages from the Bible and sing songs. We used to love going to her *cultos*, because she would give us chocolate milk afterward. I used to accompany my great-grandmother and her sister to church on Saturdays. My immediate family was Catholic, and I went with them to Sunday mass and was very active in the church. My grandmother (mother's mother), on the other hand, was a rebel who said that religion was for show and that she believed only in God and not a religious institution. So, I grew up having a very open mind about spirituality and differences of opinion.

Because we had no running water, we had to go a well to get water for the day. We had to wash our clothes by hand. I became a second mother to my brother and sister. I became a very responsible girl who was taught about chores, cleaning, cooking, and the duties of a woman. I was told that I needed to know these things in order to be a good wife and homemaker. Yet, I was also told to study so that I could be a professional and get ahead. I was a different kind of child, who confronted mainstreams beliefs and did not agree with

the patriarchal ways in which I was being raised. I remember that many times I got in trouble for speaking out against my home duties and its unfairness. Although I had to grow up quite fast and learn to be a mother at a very young age, I'm thankful for it now. It gave a meaning and a perspective to life that shaped the person who I am today. Political turmoil was shaking the country, and my father decided that it was time to look for alternatives. He had a sister in the United States who had left Nicaragua almost at the same time we did but headed to the U.S. She encouraged my father to migrate the U.S. So, one day my father went to request an American visa. It was granted to him but not to us. So my father left with the promise that he would send for us. While in the U.S., my father had many difficult times as he struggled with the language and without his family in a country that did not want him. He told me that he would stand on street corners seeking opportunities. He worked as a delivery man, a bartender, a dish washer, and anything that provided him with income to send for us. He also told me that he did his best at every one of those jobs because he always wanted an opportunity to do more. After about a year he was also to accumulate enough money to send for us. I remember getting a phone call from my father telling me that I would be going to the U.S. to study and be someone.

My life has been defined by border crossing and migration. Leaving Panama was difficult. The morning we left, aunts, uncles, cousins came to say good-bye. They did our hair. They had breakfast with us. It was a sad moment filled with tension and anxiety caused by the unknown possibilities of the future and the sorrow of leaving emotional comfort and security behind. I vividly remember hugging every one of my family members, knowing and feeling that I had been there once before. Knowing that my life was going to change drastically, not knowing when I would see my family again. I remember the car ride and the

coolness of the air; the meaning and memories places brought me. It was too real. I had been there before. It was a hidden pain that came back.

We flew from Panama to Mexico City. We stayed in Mexico City one night and the next morning we flew to Baja, California. In Baja, California, we were told to go to a hotel. We went to a hotel next to the beach. We swam, played, and enjoyed the pool, not knowing this was soon going to change. There we met Daniel, our coyote who drove us in a two-door Dodge Colt to Tijuana, Mexico. In Tijuana we were taken to an elderly woman's house who told us to change and wear black clothing. My mother saved some money inside her bra. We ate dinner, and then proceeded to get in the Dodge once again. The coyote took us to the hill. We climbed the hill and at the top there were hundreds of people waiting for their chance at the American dream. That was the moment I began to realize, the moment I lost my innocence, the moment I realized that we were not wanted. As I stood there, I realized that for the very first time my palms were sweaty. I held on to my mother, who told me to be calm that it would be all right. Yet, I knew by the look of shock and concern on her face that she did not believe what she was telling me.

In front of the hill was what seemed to be a stadium, a plain area with big stadium lights. We began walking, walking immigrant lines, until we were far away from the stadium lights. We walked and walked as we saw, smelled, and felt many different emotions. We came to a ditch that was covered with a piece of wood to ease our crossing. As we began crossing, a group of armed man came and demanded money, and my mother gave them some. My bother and sister were so little that it was difficult for them to keep still. They were sleepy and anxious. Several times we had to get down on the floor to hide from *la migra* (immigration officials) who were scouting out the area. We then got to a highway and we

crossed the highway, not knowing that it was the California Interstate 5 freeway. As we ran across the freeway I saw a yellow, diamond-shaped sign with the shapes of mother and two children running, an image as representative of our lives as immigrants in the United States. We rested next to the sewage water next to Interstate 5. As we were resting, an armed man approached our coyote. He wanted to harm us and take money from us. We were not the only family there, so our coyote talked to him and he left us alone. Yet he continued to bother the others, and we were witness to that. A person was supposed to pick us up in San Diego, but he never showed up. A woman, I call her an angel, asked if we had just crossed the border and provided us with shelter. We were able to eat, shower, and make arrangements for our ride. A couple of hours later, while in the car we were told, "Okay, we are free now," but were we? This was only the first step: living, surviving, struggling, and walking immigrant lines in the United States became even a bigger struggle as we immigrants are defined the moment we cross the border illegally.

My life has been defined by border crossing and migration. As an immigrant who fled persecution and who lived in three different countries, I can definitely say that I know what it is to be "Other." Because I migrated to the United States at the age of 14, I have been the "Other" for many years. I have felt the coldness of looks that tell me I don't belong, and the chill of my heart as it gets tougher in order to avoid pain. *Yo, la mojada* (Me, the wetback), I am a girl who, like many, crossed the border in hopes of a better life in *gringolandia* (gringoland). Soon after we crossed the border, after my feet stopped hurting because of all the running, after my hands stopped sweating from fear, after we avoided rape and heard someone else get raped, I realized that I was in the United States. I was finally here *en gringolandia* (in gringoland). After the magic of the clean streets, the beautiful homes, the

dishwashers, the nice looking TVs, and the cool restaurants like McDonalds subsided, I soon realized that *gringolandia* was a scam. That most “gringos” were not happy to see me, to deal with me, and that for the most part they avoided me. To them I did not exist. I was invisible, transparent, and mute. This was the beginning of my journey, the day the mask fell off—the day I began to “see.”

My positionalities as a researcher arise from those moments that transformed me into, who I am today. From living in Nicaragua, fleeing Nicaragua to Panama, living in Panama for five years, fleeing Panama, crossing over to Mexico, entering the United States “illegally.” Going to school, being told I didn’t belong here, having been put aside and not given “regular” assignments because of my “lack” of language. Going to high school, trying to be accepted, going to college, graduating. Getting married to an immigrant, and becoming a mother. Getting a master’s in bilingual cross-cultural education, teaching, enrolling on a PhD program, moving to the South. Being the only Latino immigrant in the PhD program, working with the Latino community in Mango County (considered the other side of the tracks), gaining respect from school officials, to sitting here finalizing this stage of my life.

It is hard to explain the complexities of my space, as it is hard to explain the complexities of the spaces and experiences lived by the immigrants in this study. Doing so would be sterilizing, and insult, as it would lack the elasticity of human essence, it would be like summarizing life in a few words; that is unrealistic. Yet, learning and growing from these experiences is not.

The success of this study was based on the relationships that were built with participants, and the autonomy of expression participants were allowed. Participants were told that they had something valuable to offer, and were provided with the space to share

that. Furthermore, most times I had to be an active listener, a learner, and a participant as well. While I had an obvious advantage when working with Latino immigrants, because we share the same language, similar experiences, and I could easily relate to them—my story was in many ways their stories. Therefore, participants felt comfortable talking to me. Moreover, these stories were the focal point of our interactions; they served a way to add utility, humanity, and autonomy to participants and commonness. Stories present a history, lived experiences, and struggles. In many ways they validate one's past, present and future purpose. When making the relationship between political power and knowledge, Michael Apple (1990, p. 7) states that one must ask, "Why? Why is this knowledge being presented?" Stories provide non-hegemonic ways of answering the why's of history. They do so because they are first-person, personal accounts of their history. Through these stories, these histories, one can draw parallels, similarities, and find ways in which one can identify with those storytellers. And even if there are no correlations, they serve to build empathy and understanding of each other's struggles, and reasons why.

This experience can be replicated by others. Ideally, a native speaker, who can relate to their stories, would be the most capable of building these kinds of relationships. Yet, this experience can be achieved by others whose stories are not similar, for example, an African-American or Caucasian person seeking to work with newly arrived immigrant populations. However, those who don't have an immediate connections should first have a true and honest conviction to helping newly arrived immigrants. They must understand that in order to gain entry to the intimacy of immigrant stories, they need to be open to telling their own stories. Furthermore, they need to be committed to including people who have similar stories or those lived by participants (i.e., other immigrants or Latino speakers). Additionally, they

should not to be judgmental, hateful, or racist. Trust is built through transparency, honesty, and a true desire to help others and build relationships. Without transparency, good relationships will not be built, as Latino immigrants are very astute and have a great sense of intuition. We follow our feelings. If we are not treated with an honest concern and desire to help, then these relationships will not be established. Non-Latinos working with Latino populations need to be allies, as brokers who have institutional access and who will use that access to the benefit of the population they are serving.

Crossing Immigrant Lines Together

Immigrants transcend, overcome, and surpass barriers unconsciously as a way to survive in a foreign country. We have an incredible survival mechanism that provides us with strength. As an educated Latina immigrant, working with community members has been one of the most rewarding experiences in my life. It has been an intimate process of re-crossing borders and transcending new ones with other immigrants. It has been about the relationships built along the process. I could not simply conduct research. It was not about “the research” per se, rather, it was about the stories that made this project and transformed me as an immigrant. As community members gave me their stories, hopes, sadness, and aspirations, I gave them my knowledge, my access, my struggle, and my self in return. We formed strong relationships based on our commonalities, our connectivity. I provided written and oral translation services, gave assistance filling out forms, brokered community resources, helped with child delivery, and provided rides to schools, clinics, and the supermarket. They came to my home gatherings. I went to theirs. We shared child-raising strategies, home remedies, myths, tales,

and experiences. I am a part of their lives as they are a part of my life. They touched my life as I touched them. We crossed immigrant lines together.

Once, I had the wonderful opportunity to meet *El Sabiduria* (The wise one) who left me with some questions that have followed me until this day. He said:

“Go with this question and let it follow you everywhere, let it become you, what will happen to this (interview)? How many hands and minds will penetrate it? And, what is going to be different? And finally, what does that make you?” He then got up, and said “Don’t make any promises. Don’t tell me this is to make a difference. When you figure it out come back.”

The answers to these questions have defined me. My answers are:

I am my community.

I am redefining academic spaces traditionally not occupied by Latino immigrants.

I am redefining academic spaces traditionally not occupied by Latino immigrants by telling immigrant stories, and bringing others to the border.

My community and I are redefining this space called living life as an immigrant. We are “regaining voice” (Hill-Collins, 2000). We are making new paths, and crossing immigrant lines together in different spaces, in academia and in the community, both necessary spaces. We are setting and transforming the future, for our children, for future immigrants, for U.S.-born Latinos, for non-Latinos, for this country. *Sabiduria* asked what does it make me? It makes me an immigrant.

EPILOGUE

***Ni de Aquí ni de Alla* (Not from Here or There): Towards Transnationality**

An extensive body of research exists about Latinos in education and Latinos' educational experience after entering the United States. While I think all the educational histories of Latinos in the United States will provide a theoretical framework and perspectives to support future research, I will concentrate here on a topic that I have seen in several of these narratives: transnationalism. I have been puzzled by this topic for three reasons. First, I question its definition of immigrants who "fit" into this category; I feel the definition is too narrow and restrictive. Second, I believe transnationalism can be achieved anywhere regardless of location. Third, I think that if transnationalism is challenged, its definition can be extended to include other groups of immigrants and provide a new way of looking at immigration in the United States. I will examine the definition of transnationalism and its implications by utilizing the theoretical framework and perspective used by Enrique Trueba (2004) in his book, *The New Americans: Immigrants and Transitionalism at Work*.

Trueba's research was conducted in the Rio Grande Valley, a very active border area in Texas. He explains that due to the Rio Grande's proximity to the border, it is a fully bilingual/bicultural city. In addition, he states that,

The historical accident that annexed Texas to the United States by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 changed the citizenship and relationships between peoples on both sides of the river, but it did not do away with the strong cultural foundations, traditions, and family ties” (p. 12).

Trueba states that a person is transnational when she/he has “a unique capacity to handle different cultures and lifestyles, different social statuses, different roles and relationships, and to function effectively in different social, political, and economic systems” (p. 39). From this definition, one might say that all who assume these characteristics can become transnationals. However, he excludes some non- U.S. natives from this definition. He explains that “access” is important in order to become transnational. Access to transnationality depends on the way in which those who are not U.S. born arrived in the United States. Trueba defines five major classifications: non-U.S. born, immigrant, transnational, migrant, emigrant, and refugee. He informs us that,

The main difference between an immigrant and a transnational person is that the immigrant does not have frequent and intensive contact with his original culture and consequently can eventually lose his home language and culture and assimilate into mainstream society. A transnational person cannot afford to lose his language and culture because his contact with home and culture is intensive (p. 40).

He goes on to explain the following three classifications: migrant, emigrant, and refugee.

An emigrant from Mexico who comes to the United States becomes an immigrant in this country. A migrant moves from one place to another within the same country without establishing a permanent residence in any one area. A refugee is a person who leaves the country of origin in order to escape prosecution, trauma, or injustice often associated with political or religious beliefs (p. 40).

He goes on to explain:

Neither immigrants nor refugees nor migrants can be considered “transnational.” Their permanent affiliation with the host country and their physical and emotional separation from the countries of origin provide them and their families with a clear adaptive strategy of assimilation” (p. 41).

This is unlike transnationals who choose to maintain close ties with their country of origin, maintain political and financial affiliations, and most importantly, maintain their

home language as well as their second language. As a result, transnationals get the best of both worlds. In addition to benefiting from both worlds, they can retain values, beliefs, and characteristics of both cultures. Furthermore, Trueba explains that transnationality can also be achieved by U.S.-born citizens in search of economic opportunity by “dealing effectively in two cultural groups” (p. 41).

I respectfully disagree with Trueba’s argument that immigrants, migrants, refugees, and emigrants cannot be considered transnationals. Instead, I argue that most immigrants, migrants, emigrants, and refugees can be considered transnationals, and that transnationality can be achieved anywhere in the United States, not just border states, as in the case of this study. I think many immigrants leave their countries of origin in the hopes that someday they can go back to their country under better economic conditions. I think that the difficulty with this is that many immigrants are not financially able to travel to their country of origin. This suggests that transnationality may have a class dimension when away from the border. I think many immigrants maintain a form of transnationality with their home country in other ways. For example, all but one person (Francisco, whose family was displaced) in this study sent money back for business investments, buying land, educating family members, and even for legal actions. Furthermore, the first generations of immigrants, refugees, and migrants do not really lose contact with their homeland or those they love. Instead, first-generation immigrants, refugees, and migrant workers must maintain their multiple worlds, affirming their own identities as immigrants while maintaining their home identity. Admittedly, this is less obvious for second and third immigrant generations. As stated by Trueba for transnationals residing on the border, bilingualism is a necessity not a luxury. Since in border towns, second, third, fourth generations end up losing neither language nor culture, but

instead end up being able to fully live in both worlds. They learn to live the “pedagogy of the chameleon.” This may suggest that far from the borderland, second-generation immigrants and so forth may lose their language—and lose the capability to be transnational.

Given that transnationality is apparent and present. I suggest that future research investigate transnationality in Southern states such as North Carolina. For future research, I would ask the following questions: What will happen to second, third, and fourth generation immigrants in the South? The investigation of the children of immigrants should be continued to see whether they are transnationals or not. This also implies a policy question: Can schools educate Indigenous/Latino immigrants, second, third, or fourth generations of immigrants to be transnationals? This question is as important for the economy of North Carolina as it is for children, both being subject to globalization.

I feel that in achieving transnationalism, future immigrant generations can achieve a sense of acceptance, pride in cultures, dual identities, and a new and valued role in the rapidly changing society and economy of the South. Transnationality is something that parents, school officials, teachers, and communities need to strive for. Not just for the first generation that has one foot in this country and the other foot in their native country of origin, but also for future inherited generations of immigrants. I also see transnationalism as a possibility not only for non-U.S. citizens, but also U.S. citizens of any race and ethnic group. Transnationalism can provide a cultural bridge and a linguistic understanding of two (or more) very different worlds. Achieving transnationalism would shift power structures and redefine the criteria for access to the nation and its educational system. It would change the reductionistic way in which cultures and languages other than English are perceived. This

would make social and cultural capital more visible and public, allowing the values of different cultures to be respected and maintained.

Throughout history, the treatment of Latinos has led to the miseducation of thousands and thousands of Latinos in the United States. It is also leading to the academic deterioration of the inherited generations of Latinos who, for the most part, will also be miseducated if the current educational system does not change. The current educational system is not supporting transnationality or the possibility that Latino children may lead the way in this. Latinos in the South, and throughout the country, are potentially bilingual transnational U.S. citizens who are currently denied basic representation, proper treatment, and education. They are the future of the South and of the United States. That future can be determined by history as we know it, or transformed by embracing a new concept, a transnational concept, of the possibilities Latinos bring to the United States.

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