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MIGRANT FEELINGS, MIGRANT KNOWLEDGE

Building a Community Archive

EDITED BY ROBERT MCKEE IRWIN

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The project's most important collaborators are the more than three hundred community storytellers, migrants who have been willing to share their stories, their experiences, and their knowledge with the world on the Humanizing Deportation website, http://humanizandoladeportacion.ucdavis.edu/. There is not space here to mention all their names, but it is important to understand the degree of care for community, for family, and for migrants everywhere that has motivated them to participate in the production of the world's largest public archive of migrant testimonial narratives of deportation and other mechanisms deployed by contemporary border-control regimes in North America. For collaborating with us more deeply by helping us to network and meet new community storytellers, several community storytellers deserve special recognition, including Esther Morales, Isaac Rivera, Gerardo Sánchez Pérez, Guadalupe Mendívil, Luis Gonsaga, Tania Mendoza, Rubén Robles, and Juana Méndez.

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SOMETIMES

SONIA GUIÑANSACA

The sky is cracked, and I only imagine it being whole because
when I was five, I understood the sky to be a heaven I get to visit before
reaching America

When I was five, I imagine that packing as much of my belongings in a burgundy suitcase will help me trap all my memories and the scent of my grandparents
so not to forget them

It doesn't work that way. I learn this at age six, and twelve, and again in my twenties.
Year after year after year
The nostalgia and the longing never leave

At thirty-two I still decorate my bedroom walls with photographs that are wilting away
In my sleep my abuelitos wait for me until
I wake up. Every morning I look at the same photographs of them

Abuelita Alegria with an orange pollera and Abuelito Cosme with a black hat on a top on a hill. I can't remember their voice or how they smell or how their hands felt against my face.
Sometimes I am tired of telling my story because it hurts

I want to write poems about flowers and mountains, but they always turn into a story of migration. I talk to my therapist every Saturday, or every other Tuesday.
I think I finally understand

We name it childhood trauma, anxiety, mourning, and abandonment issues.
Now that I have labeled it
Will this pain go away

I perform on stages about these traumas and the audience applauds after every set. I am interviewed by reporters, and they use my anguish as headlines. I am cited on scholarly papers, so I learn to intellectualize all this ache. Our faces plastered on hardcover books

Sometimes I am tired of telling my story.
The sky is cracked, and I
only imagine it being whole

MIGRANT FEELINGS, MIGRANT KNOWLEDGE

PART I

PROBLEMS, APPROACHES, METHODS

CHAPTER 1

THE HUMANIZING DEPORTATION PROJECT: BUILDING A COMMUNITY ARCHIVE OF MIGRANT FEELINGS, MIGRANT KNOWLEDGE

ROBERT MCKEE IRWIN

THIS COLLECTION OF ESSAYS PRESENTS the Humanizing Deportation digital storytelling project, which since early 2017 has collected over 350 stories of over 300 migrants, giving form to what may be the world's most robust archive of migrant knowledge and experiences. Over the past quarter century, the United States has deployed a succession of immigration laws and policies that have treated migrants with unprecedented harshness. Even as immigration agents and courts have expelled several million migrants, many people in the United States remain ignorant of the devastating human effects of deportation and other migration control mechanisms on migrants, their families, and their communities. Meanwhile, as Mexico has increasingly cooperated with the United States to control migrants and asylum seekers entering Mexico from its own southern border on their way northward, it has gradually applied to migrants in transit many of the same harsh mechanisms employed in the United States. The Humanizing Deportation archive documents this recent history of criminalization, stigmatization, detention, and deportation of migrants in the United States and Mexico. The hundreds of migrant stories it has published in its public online archive movingly communicate the lived consequences of the unforgiving migration control mechanisms deployed with ever greater intensity in recent decades, and the tactics migrants have applied to survive, and sometimes to resist or even surmount, the prodigious obstacles they must confront in the face of what has been called the "border industrial complex" (Dear; Pérez, Irwin, and Guzmán Aguilar).

Humanizing Deportation has prioritized recording the lived experiences of migrants in order to fully capture the human consequences of border and migration control regimes. Our research and fieldwork teams believe that observations by journalists, by academic researchers, and even by migrant-service providers who directly observe the day-to-day struggles of

migrants are unlikely to capture the trauma of deportation, deportability, and other harsh circumstances faced by migrants as completely as migrants themselves can. We believe that the embodied knowledge that migrants have acquired through deeply felt emotions provoked by radical displacement, family separation, persecution by authorities, social stigma, and other jarring experiences is best understood by migrants themselves. The contribution of this book to the ample material that has been published over the past decade on deportation and other migration-control mechanisms indeed lies in its intense focus at the grassroots level of migrant experiences, and its commitment to listening to migrants and learning from migrant knowledge. Rather than carry out conventional ethnography based on specific research questions, we instead have offered an opportunity for migrants to tell the stories they want to tell from their own perspectives. We then look to this community archive to learn from the migrants' experiences and the knowledge they choose to share.

Our research method consists of an innovative adaptation of digital storytelling, a form of community participatory audiovisual production. We neither interview nor film migrants; instead we offer them a platform to tell their stories from their own perspectives, in their own words, with their own visual design, and featuring their own arguments. Digital storytelling aims to bring digital media production techniques to communities, allowing individuals, including those with little formal education or multimedia experience, to produce their own testimonial audiovisual shorts (digital stories) consisting of personal narratives and accompanying visual materials (Lambert). This genre permits what has been called an important new form of "vernacular creativity" (Burgess) that effectively allows communities to speak for themselves. It does not aspire to a high level of technical quality, but rather employs a DIY/bricolage style in which the voice of the community storyteller is the most fundamental element. Likewise, as its diffusion is primarily via the internet, and as our aim is to make all our material easily streamable, our stories run an average of five or six minutes (with longer ones often divided into multiple chapters). Humanizing Deportation is ultimately a community archive; participating storytellers are the authors and directors of their videos, owners of their intellectual property.

The Humanizing Deportation archive is packed with stories of suffering and trauma, of lives torn apart, of the callous everyday violence of a massive infrastructure built upon virulent nativism and racism. Indeed, the second part of this book includes three chapters focused on major issues that resound throughout the Humanizing Deportation archive—the specific lived consequences of deportation for families that may undergo long-term

separation, for childhood-arrival migrants who are culturally unprepared for repatriation, or for long-term migrants who, despite their precarious status in the United States, may identify deeply as US citizens or, in the case of US military veterans, even patriots. These are all phenomena that have been studied elsewhere through more conventional methods (see, for example, Boehm; Ruiz Marrujo; Caldwell; Torre Cantalapiedra, Rodríguez Gutiérrez, and Rodríguez Gutiérrez; Yrizar Barbosa and Alarcón; Paláez and París Pombo; Hagan, Rodríguez, and Castro; Horyniak, Bojórquez, and Armenta).

Our research team, in addition to helping migrants document their experiences through digital storytelling, applies a method of listening closely to migrants' stories in order to learn from migrants' expressions of their feelings and articulations of the wisdom they've acquired as migrants—what we refer to as "migrant knowledge." Listening closely to the Humanizing Deportation archive allows us to view the movements of migrants (migrants in transit, undocumented immigrants, detained migrants, deported migrants, asylum seekers, criminalized migrants) from their own perspectives. It allows us to understand their own interpretations of their interactions with different actors and mechanisms of the contemporary border industrial complex. The expression of embodied knowledge of migrants may lead in different directions, some of which may seem more banal or more radical than others, but in all cases is worth recording. For example, it is no surprise to learn that long-term family separation is painful or that it poses challenges for deported parents in reconstituting their lives. But listening to migrants' stories helps us to comprehend more fully what their pain entails and how it impedes their ability to move forward with their lives. In these cases, migrants' narration of experiences and expression of sentiments may confirm what we already know about family separation, while also deepening that knowledge and helping to reveal the ways that certain actions taken against migrants, such as deportation, may be excessive in relation to the circumstances that led to them—in many cases nothing more than a lack of documents.

Not all migrants may think as we expect them to, however. And herein lies the more radical potential of digital storytelling. Digital stories, when not shaped by predetermined sets of research questions or other external interventions, allow for alternative expressions of forms of thinking and knowing the world. And if we listen closely to these migrant stories, we might sometimes glimpse creative approaches to life that are fundamentally different from those we might expect, instances of what Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos call "world making" (211). Sometimes, without a doubt, this difference may be expressed merely as confusion in the face of trauma—improvised coping strategies that may reflect intuitive resourcefulness or creativity—but

sometimes it may also offer glimpses into epistemologies with which we are unfamiliar, alternative ways of being that emerge through the lived experience of migration. If we apply a method of deep listening in which we seek to understand the actions, motivations, thoughts, and feelings of migrants on their own terms, if we listen not to confirm our own politics or theories but rather to try and comprehend those of migrants, we may learn something entirely unexpected.

The third part of the book, then, looks to stories that unfold in ways that are less expected, stories whose expressions of feelings, politics, or embodied knowledge may at first glance seem muddled, imbalanced, or even absurd, but on closer examination are enlightening. These chapters seek to listen deeply and to learn from migrants who may approach the world from epistemologies that they have developed through their lived experience as migrants. These latter chapters reveal the more radical potential of the Humanizing Deportation archive, drawing attention to a handful of what are probably a much larger number of digital stories that incorporate elements of migrant thinking and world making that may help us to think in new ways and imagine alternative futures.

We frame our academic analysis with some poignant expressions of migrant knowledge and feelings by some prominent migrants. Sonia Guiñansaca's poem "Sometimes," which opens the volume, sets the tone with its introspective reflections on migrant experiences and public expressions of them, highlighting the valor no doubt summoned by all of our community collaborators in sharing personal insights on their own lives. We are honored to have this talented poet and activist as a contributor in this book, but also to feature her poetry in the format of a digital story in the Humanizing Deportation archive (Guiñansaca, "Calling Cards," no. 256). We are also privileged to conclude with an epilogue by the migrant scholar and activist Nancy Landa, well known for her *Mundo Citizen* blog, whose provocative and astute reflections on her own postdeportation experience and professional trajectory offer compelling evidence of the importance of listening carefully to what migrants have to say. While few migrants in our archive have the kinds of academic credentials and publication record of Landa, her eloquent commentaries make clear that we have much to learn from what migrants can tell us, drawing from their often substantial and deep embodied knowledge, and encourage us to pay attention.

This introduction is divided into three sections: the first, "Scenario," presents an emblematic example of the material contained in the Humanizing Deportation archive and lays out the circumstances that led to the design of the project; the second, "Project History" recounts the archive's history,

FIGURE 1.1. Alex Murillo near his home in Rosarito, Baja California; photo by Leo Peña

from its planning in 2016 to four distinct phases of its realization through early 2021; a third section, "Issues and Approaches," summarizes the main human rights issues the archive exposes, as well as some of the humanistic approaches that can be applied to its analysis, all of which are explored by our research team members in the following chapters.

SCENARIO

Alex Murillo was brought to the United States as a baby and grew up as "an American kid," a story he tells in unaccented English. As a young man, he joined the US military, serving in the Middle East. After his stint in the navy, he struggled with drugs and alcohol, eventually ending up with a federal marijuana conviction, his first and only criminal offense. As a first-time offender convicted of a nonviolent crime, he was sentenced to thirty-seven months at a minimum-security prison and was scheduled to be released to a halfway house after about a year and a half. Since this violation was considered an "aggravated felony," however, and even though he was a legal permanent resident, he was automatically deported, leaving his four children without a father to provide for and guide them. No one had expected this to happen: "My kids were waiting for me and I never made it back home." He was deported to Nogales, where, "once people found out that I was a US military veteran, strange people started coming around the house asking

if I knew how to work with weapons, if I knew how to shoot people." He fled to Rosarito, where he has been working as a high school football and basketball coach. But he remains deeply concerned about his kids: "They're going to grow up with this pain and this anger." Moreover, even though he expresses his frustration—"America very well got their use out of me, used me thoroughly"—he "never stopped being faithful to America." He and so many other deported immigrants are "tired of being exiles—I just want to go home" (Murillo, nos. 30a–b).

His story encapsulates several themes that repeat throughout the Humanizing Deportation archive: the damage done to both parents and children when deportation leads to family separation; the special difficulties faced by deported childhood arrivals, who are often unprepared to adapt to life in their country of origin, which for them is a foreign country; and the excessive harshness of immigration laws that trigger automatic deportations for what would otherwise qualify as minor offenses. These are some of the most prominent human rights issues that migrants signal in their stories, and there are many more.

The following sections of this introduction summarize, in general terms, the effects of deportation in the Californias, where our project has been centered (launched in Tijuana, housed at the University of California, Davis), and along the Central America–Mexico–United States corridor in general, outlining the concerns that led to the design, launch, and expansion of the Humanizing Deportation digital storytelling project, of which Alex Murillo's two-part video is an example. Following this historical contextualization, I will recount the history of the Humanizing Deportation project from its planning stage in 2015–2016 and launch in early 2017 through its first four phases of fieldwork and production (the fourth of which, inaugurated during the COVID-19 pandemic in mid-2020, is live at the moment of this writing), noting some of the challenges we have faced over the course of the past five years, as well as some observations regarding the major issues our digital stories document.

The following chapter will present a detailed discussion of fieldwork protocols and audiovisual production methods and the theoretical assumptions that underlie them. Subsequent chapters, contributed by various members of our research team, offer detailed analyses of digital stories from the Humanizing Deportation archive, including a set of essays focusing on key issues that have emerged from the archive (family separation, special plight of childhood arrivals, deportation of US military veterans) and another final series of analyses of stories that highlight the knowledge proffered by the community storytellers themselves regarding the human consequences of

the contemporary border enforcement and deportation regimes of North America, and some of the possibilities they find for a better world.

DEPORTATION: CALIFORNIA BORDERLANDS 2015

The history of immigration laws and policies targeting Mexican, Central American, Caribbean, and other migrants arriving at the US southern border is long. Going back to 1855, California enacted a law "to punish vagrants, vagabonds, and dangerous suspicious persons" (Johnston Dodds, 14) that specifically targeted Mexicans and other Spanish speakers and was therefore commonly known as the "Greaser Act" (Alemán, 81). Racism indeed has underlain many US immigration laws, epitomized perhaps by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and reflects a broader pattern of nation-building tactics that preserve white dominion through legalized racialized violence, as occurred with nineteenth-century Indian removal. Mae Ngai has indeed argued forcefully that US immigration laws were repeatedly enacted in ways that produced racial difference and excluded those racialized as nonwhite or of non-European heritage, turning Mexicans into "racialized aliens" (55). In a similar vein, Daniel Kanstroom has provocatively demonstrated that "many procedural aspects of the Fugitive Slave [Act of 1850] were later to be adopted by Congress and accepted by the Supreme Court as legitimate components" of deportation laws enacted in recent decades (*Deportation Nation*, 81). The repatriation campaigns launched during the economic depression of the 1930s employed violence and scare tactics in order to "get rid of the Mexicans," resulting in hundreds of thousands (some have estimated a million or more) displacements (Balderrama and Rodríguez, 1, 300). Xenophobic backlash to the Bracero Program of 1942 to 1964 led to Operation Wetback in 1954, which yielded the expulsion of some 1.3 million Mexicans (J. R. García).

There are a number of points in time that might be marked as the origin of the current wave of institutionalized hostilities against migrants in the United States. President Ronald Reagan's migrant amnesty program permitted nearly three million undocumented immigrants to obtain legal permanent residency. Despite provisions penalizing employers of undocumented immigrants, the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act seemed to accelerate the level of undocumented immigration, most especially from Mexico, while also generating significant backlash among US citizens, which would continue to intensify into the 1990s, as seen in voter referenda such as California's Proposition 187 of 1994; new campaigns of border enforcement such as Operation Hold the Line, launched in the Border Patrol's El Paso sector in 1993, and Operation Gatekeeper of the San Diego border zone a

year later (Nevins); and, ultimately, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, which would facilitate deportation of not only undocumented immigrants but also legal permanent residents who are convicted of "aggravated felonies," a wide range of major and not so major criminal offenses. This law also justified deportation for convictions years prior to its enactment and introduced a degree of rigidity, severity, and intensity in migration law enforcement never seen before in the region (Kanstroom, *Deportation Nation*, 227–228).

The installation of physical barriers (border walls), sensors, and enhanced vigilance at what had for decades been the most trafficked crossing zones (Tijuana–San Diego, Ciudad Juárez–El Paso, and Nogales–Nogales, among others) caused much undocumented migration to move from metropolitan zones to increasingly remote areas, where border crossing became much more perilous because of extreme temperatures, exposure across long distances, and lack of access to water or food (see Alonso Meneses, *El desierto*; J. de León). With heightened concern for security in the United States following the attacks of September 11, 2001, another series of laws were enacted to enforce borders, step up migration control, and accelerate migrant detention and deportation in the early years of the new millennium (see Coleman and Kocher).

While migrant "returns"—the term usually applied to the expulsion of those caught by Border Patrol agents while in the process of attempting to enter the country without documents—ran at levels of eight hundred thousand or higher from the early 1980s until 2008, formal deportations (catalogued as "removals") numbered well under one hundred thousand per year through 1996. Clearly, policing of the interior of the country came to outpace that of the border itself during this period, resulting in the repatriation of ever-higher numbers of migrants who were not recent arrivals but rather had been long settled in the country. Deportations rose to above two hundred thousand for the first time in 2003, hitting new records nearly every year until 2012. Meanwhile, since 2008, a large proportion of deportations have been carried out by Customs and Border Protection (and not by Immigration and Customs Enforcement), very often because of evidence of a prior removal order, with "illegal reentry" having been more and more aggressively prosecuted and punished since the 1990s (Keller). Since 2012, the majority of removals have been realized at the border, not through interior enforcement—that is, even at the border, higher numbers of apprehensions are not of first-time migrants but of previously deported migrants, often longtime residents seeking to return to their homes and families (Vaughn; Wolf).

Even though many of the deportations realized during the Obama

administration occurred at the border, interior removals—which historically had occurred in significant numbers only during relatively short-term campaigns, most notably the repatriation of the 1930s during the Depression and Operation Wetback in 1954—were being logged in the range of one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand per year beginning in the late 1990s. This ongoing mass deportation was a new phenomenon and one felt intensely among communities with large populations of undocumented immigrants (Golash Boza, *Immigration Nation*; Kanstroom, *Aftermath*).

Also, with the heightened border security that became more and more evident beginning in the mid-1990s, migrants who in other historical eras might have moved back and forth between their hometowns and US places of residence (often deemed "circular migrants") stayed put, choosing to remain in the United States and to raise families there, developing much deeper ties in the United States than previous generations had (see Durand and Massey). While circular migrants of earlier times might have come to the United States to work on a seasonal basis or for a few years, often to support families left behind in their permanent homes back in Mexico, by the 2000s there were many more undocumented immigrants who had lived long-term, ten years or more, in the United States, often with deep-rooted family ties there, including US-born children. Many of these migrants had lived for so long away from Mexico, without being able to visit (due to heightened border control), that they no longer had strong family or personal bonds there.

The deportations of the Bush and Obama eras not only were realized in more massive numbers than in previous eras but also targeted profiles of immigrants that differed from those of prior decades. Many of those being deported had lived many years in the United States, and their deportations separated them from families whose personal and professional lives were too deeply embedded in the United States to leave. In addition, as mentioned before, since 1996, legal permanent residents with criminal records that included aggravated felonies were subject to nearly automatic deportation, and the Secure Communities program explicitly targeted this group. Many legal permanent residents convicted of these crimes had no idea that they were deportable. Moreover, many were childhood arrivals whose personal and cultural ties to Mexico were weak. A subgroup of deportable permanent residents is that of US military veterans, who often identify as patriots yet nonetheless have suddenly found themselves unable to contest removal orders. While Secure Communities kept Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) informed of who was imprisoned so that upon release from prison, inmates could be sent directly to immigrant detention facilities to begin deportation proceedings, ICE also began rounding up immigrants

with criminal records—including significant numbers of legal permanent residents—many of which reflected convictions from years past and bore no evidence of recent illicit activity (Rosas).

Furthermore, deportation not only was increasing dramatically but also was becoming a much more definitive legal action than it had once been. There is no question that it became both legally and physically more risky to cross undocumented to the United States over the last two and a half decades. Deported migrants who might once have elected to cross back to the United States soon after being returned or removed now faced greater dangers, including exposure in the desert or the increasingly prohibitive cost of hiring coyotes. With often lengthy penalties (ranging from three years to life) assigned to those who are repatriated (including those who avoid a formal deportation by agreeing to a "voluntary" removal) and that prohibit them from applying for any visa to return to the United States, the possibility of returning in time to limit damage to themselves and their families—for example, children who lose a parent to deportation—has become implausible or even impossible for many. Deported legal permanent residents, many of whom were childhood arrivals, prior to 2010 could often return to the United States using a driver's license as identification, their fluent English and American accent offering further evidence of their Americanness. New passport requirements for travel to Mexico made this impossible. Furthermore, the ramping up of border removals in the 2000s raised a new threat. While the process of border returns is relatively informal, border removals, like interior removals, are deportations. Once deported, anyone caught attempting to return without documentation to the United States can be charged with the felony of illegal reentry, which frequently implies a federal prison sentence and a lifetime ban from admission to the country.

This new culture of deportation that was made possible by new restrictive laws and fortified border controls beginning in the 1990s, and dramatically amplified enforcement in the 2000s, became highly alarming in places such as California, where large numbers of undocumented immigrants, legal permanent residents, childhood arrivals, and mixed-status families live. Even as Secure Communities, with its post-9/11 promise of protecting US citizens from threats from abroad and ridding the country of immigrants with histories of violent crime, was reassuring in both name and guiding principles to many, the reality of mass deportation was devastating to many others, especially in the numerous cases in which the immigrants being expelled represented no threat to public safety at all, and their detention and removal caused significant emotional and economic damage to their families (Kanstroom, *Aftermath*, 39–42). Furthermore, the heightened anti-immigrant rhetoric

emerging across the country by the last years of the Obama presidency, as new presidential election campaigns took shape, was alarming, as racialized groups of immigrants, most prominently Mexicans, who were by far the most numerous, became scapegoats for a range of social ills (Huber).

It was around 2015 that the noise regarding immigration and deportation in both the media and the political rhetoric became upsetting to the point that I felt I needed to act. Political scapegoats come and go: other recent eras had seen the scapegoating of gay people, mothers enrolled in social welfare programs, inner-city communities of color, political dissidents; I think I had hoped that the mounting anti-immigrant rhetoric of the Obama years would fade. Instead it was intensifying. Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program was under threat, and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans had been shot down; Congress was unable to agree on an immigration policy that granted a path to citizenship for any long-term undocumented immigrants. Activism wasn't working; and all the noise, positive and negative, seemed to rile up xenophobic sentiments that might otherwise have remained dormant.

TIJUANA: DEPORTATION EPICENTER

The vast majority of deportations to Mexico are realized at the border: those being repatriated are usually taken from Border Patrol or immigration detention centers to border-crossing points and are released on foot with whatever belongings they had with them while in detention. A small portion was flown to Mexico City between 2007 and 2018, but even then the annual figure never exceeded twenty-five thousand. Even as deportation flights were reinitiated and expanded in 2020 to include not only Mexico City but also Guadalajara, Villahermosa, Morelia, Puebla, and Querétaro, the total of nearly thirty thousand events for the year remained proportionally small, just 16 percent of the total for the year (see https://portales.segob.gob.mx/es//PoliticaMigratoria/Boletines_Estadisticos).

The city that has received the greatest number of repatriations over the last two decades is unquestionably Tijuana. While precise data is hard to obtain and may vary significantly over time, Tijuana, whose greater metropolitan area ranks sixth nationally and first among border cities, has consistently received the largest portion of repatriations. Repatriation data from Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Migración, which does not aim to separate removals from returns, reports that from 2001 to June of 2019, 24 percent of all repatriations captured in their data (1.9 million of 7.9 million events) occurred at Tijuana ports of entry; only one other city received over a million repatriations during that period, Nogales, with 1.0 million (less than 13 percent

of the total). From 2005 to 2012, also according to the Instituto Nacional de Migración, Tijuana's figures soared, as it was the point of removal for 1.1 million migrants (25 percent of the total), the annual figure exceeding 100,000 every year from 2005 to 2010, peaking at nearly 225,000 (close to 40 percent of the annual total for the country) in 2008.

While recent migrants, especially those repatriating with families, may choose to return to their hometowns, those returning alone to Mexico (with family remaining in the United States) or those without strong ties in Mexico (long-term emigrants, especially childhood arrivals) often settle in border cities. Tijuana is an attractive site for return migrants to settle because of its proximity to California, home to the largest US population of Mexican immigrants; its continuing growth (absorbing an average of eighty thousand new residents per year) and relatively robust labor market; and its relatively pleasant coastal climate (in comparison with much more extreme temperatures and weather conditions in other large border cities such as Ciudad Juárez or Mexicali). Those who speak English may appreciate its border culture, large presence of English-speaking visitors and residents, and job opportunities in industries such as call centers.

With so many arriving, and so many staying, Tijuana is likely the city that has absorbed the most deported Mexican citizens over the last decade or more, ever since crossing back after a deportation became too risky for the vast majority of migrants. Even for a city of migrants like Tijuana, with a dynamic labor market, however, the arrival of so many forcibly displaced people was a shock. For example, the breakfast kitchen Desayunador Salesiano Padre Chava, located just minutes from the US-Mexico border in downtown Tijuana, founded in 1999 to serve migrants and homeless people living near the border, by the 2010s was serving as many as 1,500 breakfasts a day, the majority of them to recently deported people who were either staying in shelters or living in the streets (see Calvillo Vázquez, "Un paso en falso").

A large population, estimated at one thousand or more, of mostly deported Mexicans had established a colony, popularly known as El Bordo, in the canalization of the Tijuana River, with the majority living within sight of where the canal crosses into the United States. Many of these repatriated Mexicans hoped to cross back to the United States, although many realized it had become next to impossible. As a result many became depressed or turned to drugs or alcohol. Most lived in *ñongos*, makeshift lean-to structures constructed from odds and ends (sticks, pieces of cardboard, metal sheets, lengths of canvas), or sometimes below the ground, burrowing into sediment along the canal; others took shelter in sewage drainage canals, which offered the privacy of gates that could be shut from within to keep out unwanted

guests, including the police. This somewhat implausibly large homeless camp invited media coverage from around the world, drawing attention to the problem that massive deportations thrust on the city, while stigmatizing deported people as addicts, indigents, and criminals (Albicker and Velasco; Del Monte; Ibarra González).

This image of social disorder—within view of the bridge popularly known as Puente México, which, upon its opening in 2012, became the main vehicular crossing point to the city, and within direct view of the Chaparral bridge, which over 2016 to 2017 would open to pedestrian border crossing in both directions—was an embarrassment for a city hoping to recover from a huge loss of tourism due to a major recession and a surge in drug-related violence, both occurring around the start of the second decade of the new millennium. A series of campaigns to empty and clean up the canal included sometimes violent police roundups, burning of *ñongos* and property of canal dwellers, and forced relocations and, some say, disappearances of migrants (Calvillo Vásquez, "El desalojo").

While repatriated Mexicans had become visible in other ways in the city—for example, in its rapidly growing call center sector, and with the public actions of newly founded groups such as Madres Soñadoras Internacional and two different groups of deported US military veterans—the image that circulated most was that of homeless addicts, contributing significantly to the social stigma associated with deportation (see Woldenberg). By 2015, as we began to formulate the project of Humanizing Deportation, it was evident that massive involuntary repatriations were transforming the social landscape in Tijuana, and that the most visible manifestations of these repatriations created negative stereotypes of deported people as criminals, indigents, and addicts (see Alarcón and Becerra; Alonso Meneses, "La frontera gulag").

At that same time, the city of Tijuana was investing significantly in reconstructing its image. Its tourism sector had been damaged severely from the recession that began hitting during the last years of the first decade of the new millennium. That recession coincided with a period of unprecedented and highly visible violence. As Mexican criminal narcotics syndicates battled for control of retail markets in a strategically important border city, murder rates rose sharply, and some spectacularly bloody killings scared off cross-border tourism from the United States (Orozco and Lorenzen).

It is no surprise that municipal authorities were not willing to tolerate large camps of homeless people, including many addicted to drugs or alcohol, right along the border, just under bridges crossed by thousands of travelers daily. As investments in medical tourism, food and wine industries, real estate for vacationers and retirees, and sports and entertainment (including the Xolos

soccer team, which was being marketed heavily to English-speaking markets in Southern California) grew rapidly, the need for Tijuana to maintain a tourist-friendly image of safety, cleanliness, and friendliness was evident (see Ruiz Andrade, Martínez Moreno, and Verján Quiñones).

The campaigns to remove the homeless camps from El Bordo were no doubt realized to address this problem of image. But this particular image that came to be associated with deportation in local and international media failed to take into account the scope of the problem of deportation for Tijuana and Mexico. With sometimes sensationalized attention focused on social problems and dangers attributed to those residing in El Bordo, the vast majority of deported Mexicans remained largely invisible in mainstream media and politics. The criminalized image of return migrants took for granted their inability to integrate into Mexican society, ignoring the potential contributions of this group, whose skill sets often included fluency in English, significant bicultural knowledge, years of experience as well as certifications as skilled laborers, and even college degrees. Instead of seeking to understand legal, bureaucratic, cultural, and psychological obstacles impeding the successful integration of these Mexican citizens into the labor force, attention was drawn largely to the threats to public health and safety attributed to a small portion of this population.

The initial impulse of Humanizing Deportation in Tijuana was to make visible the wide range of profiles of people who were arriving and the ways in which their often abrupt return to Mexico affected them. We hoped that Humanizing Deportation would help to combat the stereotype of return migrants as a criminal threat and a social burden, and that it would also draw attention to what this broad population may need to help them to resettle, integrate, and maximize their contribution to Mexican society—or justify their eventual readmission to the United States.

While from a US perspective we imagined the Humanizing Deportation project might soften views toward undocumented immigrants and discourage the use of deportation as a punitive measure in the United States, in Tijuana it seemed important to encourage governmental agencies to recognize the realities of the mass repatriations that had now become regularized and to promote policies that would be sympathetic to return migrants and helpful to them in integrating socially, culturally, and economically in Mexico.

PROJECT HISTORY

PHASE I: TIJUANA

It was thus that we launched Humanizing Deportation in Tijuana as an institutional collaboration between the University of California, Davis,

which would house the project's website, and El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF), which would host our fieldwork in Tijuana. I partnered with Guillermo Alonso Meneses of COLEF in designing our community collaboration protocols and research method.

We agreed that digital storytelling, a community-based, participatory audiovisual production genre, would serve as an effective method, as it would allow us to produce a web-based public archive that could easily be disseminated and used as both a resource for activists and a source of qualitative data for researchers and would serve as a platform for the expression of migrant knowledge. We would model our fieldwork protocols on those of Sexualidades Campesinas, a previous project I had directed that was smaller in scale than what we were envisioning for Humanizing Deportation at the time (the production of up to two dozen digital stories) but comparable in other ways that called for certain revisions to the orthodox method of digital storytelling proposed by the Story Center (originally the Center for Digital Storytelling), which had developed the genre and published a manual aimed at promoting its wide application (Lambert). The second chapter of this book summarizes this orthodox method of digital storytelling, as well as the particular adaptations we developed for Humanizing Deportation, taking into account my previous experience with Sexualidades Campesinas (see Lizarazo et al.).

We identified a group of scholars, principally graduate students, and scheduled training for November of 2016, with a plan to send the team to Tijuana in the summer of 2017 for a month of intense fieldwork. As immigration and deportation became key themes of debate in the 2016 US elections, the project seemed more timely than ever. And when the presidential election was won by a candidate who ran on an often strident anti-immigration platform that drew significantly on what many interpreted as shockingly xenophobic and racist anti-Mexican rhetoric, the urgency of understanding and disseminating the real lived human consequences of mass deportation became strikingly evident and even more urgent than we had first imagined.

Our fieldwork team arrived in Tijuana on Wednesday, November 9, 2016, the day after Election Day, having barely begun to process what its outcome would mean for migrants. We signed up to volunteer that Saturday at Desayunador Salesiano Padre Chava, thrusting us into the heart of deportation's most visible face in Tijuana. We also went on a walking tour of El Bordo that morning, and while there were no longer homeless camps there, Padre Chava was as bustling as ever with indigent and semi-indigent deported people, many of them recent arrivals, others longer-term denizens of the border zone, having settled into Tijuana's many formal and informal shelters. In addition, among Padre Chava's clients were members of a large

and highly visible new wave of migrants that were generating substantial international media attention: Haitians, many of whom had been living in Brazil, working in industries supporting the 2016 Olympic Games, were now migrating to the United States in hopes of obtaining Temporary Protected Status there. The vibrant celebration by Tijuanans of the victory of the Mexican national soccer team over the United States in a World Cup qualifying match, the first Mexican victory of this kind on US soil in decades, that same night left the team numb, unable to process everything we were experiencing. We nonetheless completed three intense days of training in audiovisual production methods and fieldwork protocols, took in as much as we could of the ambience of a city that some members of the team knew well, others not at all, and took inspiration from the potential of our Humanizing Deportation fieldwork plan to do some good, in some way, for a population that was clearly subject to severe injustices, human rights abuses, and institutional neglect.

During the first six months of 2017, I was able to visit Tijuana a half dozen times, seeking to establish relationships with institutions and community groups and to identify potential sites for our teams to carry out fieldwork. I also met some individuals who would eventually collaborate with Humanizing Deportation as community storytellers, producing their own digital stories, or would introduce us to potential community collaborators. I volunteered regularly at Padre Chava, meeting people such as Darinka Carballo of Fundación Gaia, a group that had worked extensively in El Bordo; Pastor Guillermo Navarrete of La Iglesia del Faro, who, with a colleague from the United States, performed weekly cross-border church services in Friendship Park in Playas de Tijuana and also directed a small pilot reintegration program for deported Mexicans; Héctor Barajas of the Deported Veterans Support House; and Yolanda Varona of Madres Soñadoras Internacional. I also dialogued with Guillermo Alonso and with Ana Luisa Calvillo, a team member from the Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua who had taken part in a prior project at Padre Chava in late 2015, collecting testimonial narratives on deportation (see Calvillo Vázquez, "Un paso en falso"), about locating deported migrants who had previously been willing to share their stories. I also developed relationships with two deported men—one whom our entire team met in November when he offered to give us a tour of El Bordo (see Irwin, "Crueles deportaciones y lazos afectivos") and another whom I had met while volunteering at Padre Chava early in the year—and both were interested in sharing their personal stories through our project. Both were attracted by the opportunity to publicly tell their story, emphasizing what they believed people (whether in the United States or Mexico) needed to know about deportation; indeed, both were aware that most people had

very little information about the often devastating human consequences of deportation. In May of 2017, we launched the Humanizing Deportation website with these two digital stories, "Crueles deportaciones" by Gerardo Sánchez Pérez (no. 1) and "Aprovecha la oportunidad" by René López (no. 2), as the first two contributions to the archive.

Our inaugural team consisted of Guillermo Alonso Meneses, a professor of cultural studies at COLEF; several graduate students from COLEF, notably José Israel Ibarra and Dörte Krebsbach, who was visiting COLEF from Freie Universität Berlin; and University of California (UC), Davis, graduate students Lizbeth De La Cruz, Sarah Hart, Marlené Mercado, Marinka Swift, and Jessica Ordaz; as well as Ana Luisa Calvillo of Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua and Yairamaren Román of UC Berkeley.

In June of 2017, our Phase I fieldwork team arrived in Tijuana and began working at a number of different sites and with a variety of institutions around the city, including those mentioned previously as well as Enclave Caracol, Madres y Familias Deportadas en Acción, and Unified US Deported Veterans Resource Center. We also connected into networks already established by team members Alonso and Calvillo as well as Ibarra, a PhD student in migration studies whose master's thesis had focused on labor integration of deported Mexicans in Tijuana. The team spent an intense four weeks working with great dedication and producing much more than we had imagined in our planning. Counting a handful of digital stories that I and Alonso continued to work on through the rest of 2017 and into 2018, our Phase I fieldwork yielded a total of fifty digital stories created by nearly forty different community storytellers.

As our project quickly gained visibility and its contribution as an important scholarly resource became evident, we were approached by colleagues from multiple Mexican universities who sought to participate in the project. We were fortunate to obtain new grant funding that enabled us to launch new collaborations with Tecnológico de Monterrey, Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua, and Universidad de Guadalajara—with significant investments from the first two. We soon scheduled training sessions in Mexico City, Guadalajara, Juárez, and later Monterrey so that new teams could begin working in the several new sites as soon as possible.

PHASE II: EXPANSION

In June of 2018, we launched Phase II of Humanizing Deportation, marking the expansion of the project across Mexico. That summer, we would have teams working in Tijuana, Mexico City, Guadalajara, Ciudad Juárez, and Monterrey. The experience in each site would be different.

In Tijuana, students and faculty of UC Davis and COLEF (Brooke Kipling,

Ross Hernández, Kyle Proehl, Alia DeBurro, John Guzmán, Mary Kate Coleman, Israel Ibarra, and I, along with Ernesto Zarco, a visting scholar from Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua) continued expanding on networks established in Phase I, working through community organizations, among personal and academic networks, and in the street. In Phase II, Tijuana remained at the heart of the project, with Tijuana-based teams producing sixty-two new digital stories.

In Mexico City, a team of UC Davis graduate students and faculty from local campuses of Tecnológico de Monterrey (Mexico City, State of Mexico, and Toluca) sought out connections initially with activist and community organizations, including Deportados Unidos en la Lucha and New Comienzos, the latter of which serves as a community center and employment agency, among other functions. New Comienzos, which managed a wide network of deported Mexicans living in the area, offered us a deal to work in their offices in Little LA (Colonia Tabacalera), where they drew a steady supply of community storytellers over the course of four weeks in the summer of 2018 and a second four-week period in the fall, with Maricruz Castro Ricalde of Tecnológico (Tec) de Monterrey and John Guzmán, and later Aida Lizalde, of UC Davis coordinating the very busy activities there, with contributions by Óscar Miranda, Roberto Domínguez, María José Gutiérrez, Dubravka Sužnjević, Jacob Bañuelos, and Ailyn Ríos.

As previously noted, Mexico City has only sporadically received direct deportations on ICE-sponsored flights, and the number of direct arrivals of deported migrants has been relatively small. For example, in its peak year, 2010, 23,391 deported people were dropped off in Mexico City's airport, representing less than 5 percent of the total for the year, while border cities such as Tijuana and Mexicali received well over one hundred thousand each. During the entire Obama presidency, a little over ninety thousand deported Mexicans were flown to Mexico City, barely 3 percent of the total. These flights were suspended altogether in 2018, reactivating (along with new flights to Guadalajara, Villahermosa, and Morelia) only beginning in mid-2020. Nonetheless, many deported Mexicans have chosen to settle in Mexico City, in part because of the city's diverse and vibrant labor markets. The role of New Comienzos in particular has been significant in placing deported Mexicans in local call centers and other jobs. Its office, at the edge of the plaza surrounding the Monument to the Revolution, is located in a neighborhood that has become known for the presence of repatriated Mexicans, some of whom have launched small businesses there, including barbershops, tattoo parlors, coffee shops, and lunch stands, earning it the nickname Little LA, although in this rapidly gentrifying area, few of these

Mexicans can afford to live there, many of them settling instead in more inexpensive but also more crime-ridden neighborhoods, such as the municipality of Ecatepec in nearby State of Mexico, a one-hour commute on public transport. Humanizing Deportation team members worked principally at New Comienzos but also connected with other organizations, including the Madres Soñadoras chapter in Mexico City, and personal networks, including those of students of Tec de Monterrey's State of Mexico campus (located north of Mexico City, in Ciudad López Mateos), ultimately producing fifty new digital stories.

Guadalajara proved to be a quite different and in many ways more challenging fieldwork site. Team members of the Universidad de Guadalajara were well connected with migrant service agencies and shelters, including government agencies. By contrast, the 2017 Tijuana team had never connected with any government agencies, as the bulk of services offered to deported migrants came from private agencies. In Jalisco, enthusiastic public officials from Zapopan's city hall, Jalisco's state migrant services office (Instituto Jalisciense para Migrantes), and Jalisco's state Human Rights Commission were all working with deported migrants and were eager to collaborate with our fieldwork teams. Representatives from these groups even attended our rigorous four-day training workshop. But when we started following up on referrals from these agencies, the migrants didn't want to speak to us. Despite the apparent good intentions of our local and state government collaborators, the people they served did not trust them, and our academic and activist project—which had not been a difficult sell to many deported people in Tijuana, who had appreciated the opportunity to counteract narrow stereotypes and reveal injustices—was met with similar distrust. The endorsement of government agencies was a deterrent for many community members. Moreover, unlike Tijuana, where the deportation issue was highly visible, Guadalajara was receiving no direct deportations (ICE deportation flights to Guadalajara resumed only in late 2019 after a hiatus of many years). People returning from the United States, whether on their own or via a deportation order, generally arrived with no attention drawn to them. And while longtime migrants might have stood out because of the way they spoke Spanish or their style of dress, they seemed more determined to blend in and to avoid the stigma associated with deportation. Without a doubt, Jalisco, long one of the main sending zones of migrants to the United States, had enormous numbers of deported returnees; nonetheless, it was much more difficult to locate deported people there, and even more difficult to find deported people who wished to share their stories, even anonymously, with Humanizing Deportation.

Eventually, our teams found some willing community collaborators via personal networks. Salvador Leetoy (Tec de Monterrey, Guadalajara) and Enrique Martínez Curiel and Lourdes García Curiel (both of Universidad de Guadalajara) involved their undergraduate students, taking advantage of their personal networks, which encompassed not only the urban zone of Guadalajara and Zapopan but also surrounding rural towns such as Ameca, where Martínez teaches (Óscar Miranda of Tec de Monterrey, State of Mexico, did the same, also with excellent results there). By the conclusion of Phase II in June of 2019, our Guadalajara teams, under the leadership of Luis Rodolfo Morán, Enrique Martínez Curiel, and Lizbeth De La Cruz, and with significant contributions by Ana Lucía Magdaleno, Lourdes García Curiel, Antonio Mena, and María del Carmen Lazárraga Ramos, had published thirty-three digital stories. It should be noted that these same conditions of limited visibility and elevated stigmatization were also found in Monterrey, where a small team of colleagues, led by Cristina Reynaga, and with contributions by Adriana Castro Aguirre, Juan Manuel Fernández Cárdenas, and Sandra Gudiño Paredes from Tec de Monterrey, as well as Yuliet Bedoya Rangel from Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, were able to produce four digital stories.

In Ciudad Juárez, the recent history of deportations was notably different from that of other large border cities such as Tijuana. Juárez, the setting for record levels of violence during the presidency of Felipe Calderón, was thought to be too dangerous to manage substantial deportations. Deportations to Juárez's main entry point fell from a high of 85,693 in 2006 to below 10,000 by 2011. Even though Ciudad Juárez's population is comparable to that of Tijuana (both were roughly 1.3 million in 2010, according to that year's census), deportations to Juárez for the decade beginning in 2009 were one-third those of Tijuana (221,000 versus 669,000). Juárez had no iconic sites of deportation services like Desayunador Padre Chava in Tijuana, nor did the city boast the large network of shelters that could be found along the border in Tijuana. Juárez's climate, with both winter and summer extremes notably more brutal than in Tijuana, also was less encouraging for long-term settlement, especially for those who might remain homeless or in cheap rentals with no heat or air-conditioning. In short, although there were clearly large numbers of deported Mexicans arriving and living in Juárez, they were notably less visible than in Tijuana. Nonetheless, members of our Juárez fieldwork team—including colleagues from Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua (UACH), who were highly knowledgeable about migration and deportation dynamics in the city, leadership on the ground from Emilio López Reyes, with robust support from Abraham Paniagua, the director of

the School of Political and Social Sciences, and significant contributions from Marlené Mercado of UC Davis and Daniel Sierra from UACH—were able to make significant inroads, producing twenty-two digital stories during their first year of operation.

NEW DIRECTIONS: MIGRANT CARAVANS

The bulk of Phase II production was based on summer 2018 fieldwork, with one hundred new digital stories published between August and November, effectively tripling the size of the Humanizing Deportation archive. With increased participation on the ground in Mexico, Phase II production remained active throughout the academic year. And in that year, new developments in migration trends in North America shook the Humanizing Deportation project, most especially the fieldwork teams working on the border in Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez. In October of 2018, global news media zoomed in on Mexico as a series of large migrant caravans set out from Honduras and El Salvador for the US-Mexico border. Humanizing Deportation had not previously worked with migrants in transit for two reasons: (1) their current lives defined by their movement northward, they did not seem to be an obvious population for deportation stories; and (2) a population in movement, they were not likely to stay in one place long enough to allow for the production of a digital story. The arrival of the fall 2018 migrant caravan in Tijuana would change our perspective, however, and motivate us to develop new protocols for working with migrants in transit.

While large numbers of Central Americans had been migrating through Mexico for many years, much Central American migration, like Mexican migration, had been undocumented and mostly invisible. Horrific stories circulated widely of migrants traveling perilous routes atop freight trains, being robbed, raped, kidnapped, or murdered by criminal gangs, and being exploited by coyotes, but many Mexicans thought little about these migrants who, it was assumed, would quickly cross into the United States—they were not Mexico's problem. But the sensationalized trek of the fall 2018 migrant caravan significantly changed public opinion about Central American migration among Mexicans. Presidential tweets from the United States claiming that many caravan migrants were dangerous *maras* (gang members) and viral videos that depicted these migrants as dirty (leaving behind mounds of trash in their wake), entitled, and ungrateful stirred up rancor among many Mexicans, and when the first busloads of caravan migrants arrived in Tijuana in November, they were met by anti-migration protests. It immediately became evident that these migrants were doubly deportable: many would cross the border and end up getting removed from the United States, while others might

get deported from Mexico before even arriving at the US-Mexico border. The negative image of these migrants seemed to stoke anti-immigrant sentiment even in places like Tijuana, whose population, taking into account its metropolitan area, had grown from under one hundred thousand in 1955 to over one million by 1995 and is today estimated at over two million (see https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/tijuana-population), a growth composed principally from internal migration—that is, many, if not most, of those protesting were internally displaced migrants themselves, or first-generation Tijuanans.

The spectacle of this city of migrants protesting against newly arrived migrants was startling to many Tijuanans. And the migrants themselves were very conscious of the media image that was accompanying them and the chilly reception they were receiving in Tijuana, where the city's mayor indignantly commented, "They're a horde of vagrants and potheads" (quoted in *El País*, November 17, 2018).

Humanizing Deportation teams in Tijuana, and in Juárez, where UACH was soon helping to manage a sign-up log for appointments for asylum seekers with US migration authorities, began working with caravan and other in-transit migrants, documenting this newly visibilized and controversial migration of Central Americans, many seeking to migrate through a process much less frequently attempted in the recent past, eschewing clandestine, undocumented movement and instead requesting to file formal applications for asylum. The magnitude of the change is significant, with fewer than two thousand asylum adjudications reported per year for any of the three Northern Triangle countries (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador) between 2005 and 2015, figures that rose to a combined total of over twenty thousand in 2018 and thirty-five thousand in 2019 (see https://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/asylum/). Despite the migrants' claims to legitimacy as refugees and hopes for an eventual government endorsement for their right to migrate, rhetoric from US authorities made clear that US institutions of migration control would not welcome them, and our intuition regarding their vulnerability to detention and deportation in both countries was quickly confirmed. By the conclusion of Phase II in June of 2019, seventeen of the archive's digital stories (8 percent) were created by Central Americans (fourteen of those produced during Phase II).

Our overall production during those thirteen months (June 2018 through June 2019) was significant and at times overwhelming (especially for webmaster John Guzmán), the archive growing from 50 to 222 digital stories. While the heart of the project remained in Tijuana (112 of 222 stories, or 50 percent), it had now grown to become much more national, in terms of

sites of production across Mexico, and transnational, in terms of its contributing storytellers.

NEW CHALLENGES IN PHASE III

Continued institutional commitment from our Mexican partners, as well as new grant funding, allowed us to continue to support fieldwork teams for Humanizing Deportation's third phase, beginning in July of 2019. In addition to continued activity in Tijuana, Mexico City, Guadalajara, Ciudad Juárez, and Monterrey, teams began working in California to record stories of past deportations, concerns of deportability, and experiences of those who have seen their loved ones get deported; and in Tapachula, which had become a site of significant controversy as many migrants sought to apply for refugee status in Mexico, while the Mexican National Guard carried out campaigns to round up and deport undocumented migrants.

Our Chiapas team—led by Ernesto Zarco and with significant contributions by Brooke Kipling, Ross Hernández, and a team of graduate students from Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas (Karla Sarmiento, Jeison Cortés, and Norma Guichard)—found themselves laboring intensively under conditions not previously seen within the project. While members of the field teams were prepped for differences they might encounter with Central American migrants, who might be fleeing significant threats of violence, in comparison with the deported Mexicans with which we most often worked, and although Zarco is originally from Tapachula and had years of experience working with migrants in his home city, none were prepared for the human rights crisis confronting migrants in the summer of 2019 as Mexico began more aggressively fulfilling its new role as a filter (see Varela Huerta), unleashing forms of direct and indirect deterrence through both detentions and deportations as well as bureaucratic obstacles. Our team, besieged constantly to help migrants fill out forms, locate resources, and obtain medical attention, recorded stories by Mexicans, Central Americans, Cubans, and even Africans.

Our efforts to document stories of migrants in California required us to tighten up our community collaboration protocols as anonymity became especially important for undocumented migrants. This was of course also true for many migrants in transit in Mexico, many of whom had not obtained temporary legal status while passing through Mexico, and for asylum seekers, who needed to be extra careful in how they represented their migration stories in public forums.

From July 2019 through April 2020, when we were forced to pause operations and conclude Phase III because of the COVID-19 pandemic, our teams—including, in addition to those already mentioned, notable contributions by

Emilio López Reyes and Daniel Sierra and their teams of UACH students in Ciudad Juárez; Jazmín Aceves, Ana Lucía Magdaleno, and Lizbeth De La Cruz in California; Mary Kate Coleman in Ciudad Juárez and Tijuana; Ernesto Zarco and me in Tijuana; and Maricruz Castro Ricalde in State of Mexico—had, working with sixty-three new storytellers, published a total of seventy-seven new stories: twenty-seven in Tijuana, sixteen in Chiapas, sixteen in Ciudad Juárez, fourteen in California, and two each in the metropolitan areas of Mexico City and Guadalajara, reaching a cumulative total of 299 stories by 244 community storytellers.

NEW UNCERTAINTIES FOR PHASE IV

Fieldwork and production essentially shut down in the spring of 2020 with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Maricruz Castro, who was supervising the production of a series of stories in the town of Tonatico, State of Mexico, was forced to delay the project when pandemic-related stay-at-home orders prevented student facilitators from returning to the field to complete the collaborative process on site. Mary Kate Coleman cut short a fieldwork stint in Tijuana and barely managed to get across the US and then Canadian borders just as both were shutting down to nonessential travel. Because of travel restrictions, I also had to postpone a number of appointments I'd made in Tijuana and Mexico City.

Only after several months of no activity at all did the project relaunch modest and tentative initiatives that aimed to permit digital story production through remote means, many of which never truly got off the ground. From July 2020 through August 2021, our Phase IV production included only thirty digital stories, most of which were begun prior to the pandemic and were held up for several months as production was interrupted or significantly decelerated. As of the latter date, only nine of the new digital stories had actually originated and been completed during the pandemic—with the help of new team members Jocelín Mariscal and Loraine Morales of COLEF, Jesús Galán of UC Davis, and Yunuen Gómez of UC Santa Barbara.

With no long-term institutional funding, Humanizing Deportation has produced its entire archive—the world's largest qualitative archive on contemporary border and migration control regimes, which, as of January 2022, features 358 stories by 294 different community storytellers—with a series of short-term grants and improvised collaborations. The project has achieved significant diffusion across the United States and Mexico; in some community contexts, especially in Tijuana, we are assumed to be not a university research project but a charitable nonprofit organization. It is not clear whether significant fieldwork will continue into the future or whether the

archive will soon settle into its final form. Even if we are unable to continue producing new material, however, it is clear that by the time our Phase IV funding runs out in 2022, we will have captured better than any other source the human consequences of the multiple dynamics of migration, especially those of forced repatriation, across North America during this highly contentious and volatile period.

ISSUES AND APPROACHES

The bulk of the labor performed by our academic collaborators for the Humanizing Deportation project has consisted of fieldwork and audiovisual production: that is, archive building. It is impossible to quantify that labor, given that each relationship with community storytellers is different, each digital story is different, and each fieldwork and production collaboration assumes its own dynamic. For example, some stories have been produced by a single community storyteller and a single academic collaborator, while others may involve three or more academic team members in fieldwork and two or more additional members in audiovisual production and postproduction. Moreover, the labor implied in the production of a three-minute digital story is substantially less than that required in the elaboration of a twelve-minute story—or a three- or four-part story whose total duration may be greater than twenty minutes. If we conservatively estimate seven hours of fieldwork contact, ten hours of production and editing, and another three hours of postproduction (twenty hours total) per five-minute digital story, we calculate at least five or six thousand hours (depending on whether we base the calculation on our current tallies of 294 storytellers or 358 digital stories) of labor, not counting the many hours dedicated to cultivating relationships and starting on the production of stories that ended up being abandoned because storytellers withdrew or we lost contact with migrants in transit. This also omits the many hours spent developing our website, including the labor-intensive process of designing and implementing the archive's thematic index, and participating in community outreach activities.

I point to the labor implicit in producing the archive because it is only afterward that we can begin to analyze its data, and with the great volatility in the dynamics of migration over the past five years and the relentless interest in migrants to record their stories, coupled with our relentless curiosity to know and to document more of these changing dynamics, it has often been hard for our academic collaborators to back off from carrying out more fieldwork and to dedicate their energies to studying it. Many of us have gradually shifted our focus from listening empathetically to migrants

in emotionally intense collaborative production processes to a more abstract process of listening critically to migrant narratives in order to learn from migrants' experiences, feelings, and politics—from migrant knowledge. In addition to a collection of essays produced by our Phase I Tijuana fieldwork team (see Irwin and Alonso Meneses, including contributions by Alonso, Román Maldonado, Ibarra González, Calvillo Vázquez, Mercado, Hart, and Irwin), team members have begun analyzing the archive from the perspectives of multiple disciplines across the humanities and qualitative social sciences (see Calvillo Vásquez and Hernández Orozco, "Potencialidades," "Discurso"; Irwin, "Making Sensation and Sense" [parts one and two], "Thickening Borders," "Masculinidades"; Alonso Meneses, "Los muros"; Swift; Castro Ricalde and Casteñeda Díaz), while other scholars have also begun publishing studies that draw from the archive (see Cuttitta, Häberlein, and Pallister-Wilkins; Rabasa; Saucedo).

In the two parts that follow our two introductory chapters, members of our fieldwork teams address several key issues that resonate throughout the archive while listening closely to these migrant stories in order to tease out what we can learn from their experiences, their sentiments, the politics underlying their narrations, and their knowledge.

KEY ISSUES

Scholars might seek qualitative data on any number of issues from the digital stories collected in the Humanizing Deportation archive. Deported community storytellers share experiences of unauthorized border crossing, of living undocumented in the United States, of interactions with Border Patrol and immigration enforcement agents, of conditions in migrant detention centers, of processes of removal, of traumas brought about by forced displacement, of stigmatization and harassment, among many others. Deportable migrants tell stories of fleeing violence and poverty, of traveling via caravan or freight train, of obstacles arising in processes of seeking asylum, of dangers posed by organized crime or government authorities. The archive contains a wealth of material whose analysis could fill many books. In the second part of the book, we have selected three key themes that have appeared again and again in the archive over the course of the past four years of production: the trauma of family separation brought about by deportation, the particular plight of deported childhood arrivals, and the special case of deported US military veterans.

In the first of these articles, Maricruz Castro Ricalde, Humanizing Deportation's site coordinator for Mexico City and the State of Mexico, draws attention to the damage done to families living in the United States upon the deportation of a family member by focusing on cases of deported mothers of

young children. She signals that the problem of migrant family separation—which in recent years has come to signify a controversial policy of the US government to segregate adult and child family members arriving at the US border to apply for asylum, often resulting in long-term separation, and even failure on the part of US authorities to keep track of the locations of asylum-seeking family members, causing parents to lose contact completely with their children—has a longer history in the context of migration law enforcement in the United States. Castro Ricalde offers close readings of the digital stories of seven mothers living in Tijuana and Mexico City and notes that the stories both reinforce some stereotypes of motherhood and present strategies that redefine the "emotional ties" and "material and intangible aspects of care" that remain essential components of cross-border motherhood. In listening closely to these stories as part of an archive of both feelings and migrant knowledge, Castro is able to put the storytellers' embodied experiences of motherhood in productive dialogue with scholarly discourse, highlighting these mothers' often creative contributions to what might be deemed the "globalization of care."

Lizbeth De La Cruz Santana, who has facilitated the production of digital stories in Tijuana, Guadalajara, and California, addresses another profile of deported migrant that recurs widely throughout the archive, that of deported migrants who arrived in the United States as children. These migrants often have little or no memory of their life in Mexico and few or no meaningful family ties there. Their cultural knowledge of Mexico may be limited, and in some cases language itself presents a major challenge. Thus, in addition to the trauma of forced displacement, these migrants suffer what resembles exile: rather than being forcibly returned to their place of origin, a notion that implies violence but also familiarity, they are being sent somewhere to which their cultural and emotional bonds may be negligible. While there are many categories of childhood arrivals—including those granted temporary protections through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, those with residency lapses or other circumstances that disqualify them from DACA, those who despite being eligible have elected not to enroll in DACA, and those with permanent legal residency—De La Cruz focuses here on the stories of two childhood arrivals who meet the criteria of DACA and would have qualified to enroll had they not been deported prior to its implementation in 2012. She draws from what she deems a Childhood Arrivals Critical Theory framework, interpreting the ethical arguments made explicitly or implicitly by these two migrants (one in a two-part and the other in a three-part digital story) for revised treatment of migrants who arrived in the United States as children.

Finally, Tijuana fieldwork team member Kyle Proehl and site coordinator Guillermo Alonso Meneses address a particular profile of childhood arrival migrant that can be found throughout the archive, especially among the migrants we've worked with in Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez—that of deported US military veterans. These migrants came to the United States as minors and obtained legal permanent residency, a requirement for admission into US military service. Like all deported permanent residents, their deportation was brought about by criminal infractions: each was convicted of an aggravated felony, a blanket term that includes violent offenses as well as many nonviolent transgressions, such as some forms of drug possession. These migrants, however, perhaps more than any other group, tend to identify strongly as US citizens, even though they never formalized their status, as their enrollment in the military was motivated by or cultivated in them strong feelings of patriotism.

MIGRANT FUTURES

The three chapters described in the preceding section not only address major issues contained in the Humanizing Deportation archive but also link to political organizing among deported migrants in Mexico. The issue of family separation has been the driving force of DREAMers Moms, a group that has obtained substantial visibility in both the United States and Mexico since its founding in 2014 (G. Chavez). The problem of adaptation of deported childhood arrivals has been the focus of Otros Dreams en Acción (Anderson and Solis). The cause of deported military veterans has been taken up by two Tijuana-based organizations, Deported Veterans Support House and Unified US Deported Veterans Resource Center. Other organizations, such as Deportados Unidos en la Lucha, New Comienzos, Madres y Familias Deportadas en Acción, and Dream in Mexico, among others, each offer support and advocacy in regard to some of these same concerns. And these are only some of the issues that resonate throughout the archive. Some other major matters not taken up in detail here include due-process issues in both deportation and asylum cases, conditions in immigration detention centers, and violent overreach by immigration enforcement agents in both the United States and Mexico—problems that have been addressed in the advocacy of Freedom for Immigrants, the American Civil Liberties Union, Al Otro Lado, Alma Migrante, Sin Fronteras, and América Sin Muros, among others.

Some migrants, however, told stories that moved the conversation in other directions. Some surprised us, perplexed us, confounded us. We sometimes initially dismissed them as products of confused thinking, incoherent expression, sloppy articulation. But many times such digital stories—raising new

questions rather than confirming or expanding on what we already knew—drew us in, motivating us to view them again and again, to listen ever more closely to these migrants. In some cases they were migrants we knew personally, with whom we had bonded, and for whom we felt great sympathy; in some cases their stories included elements with which we identified, whether as women, as fathers, as migrants, or as human beings. It can be jarring to identify with a story and yet not understand key elements of it. Listening closely to the archive has given us, in the chapters that follow, insights into ways in which migrant experiences, knowledge, and politics might help us to think differently, to approach life differently, to seek alternative solutions to those routinely offered through mainstream ideological paradigms. These are perhaps the stories from which we can learn the most. The four chapters in the third part of this volume present a handful of examples; we believe that the archive offers many more, and we invite readers to explore it, to listen closely to its content with minds open to learning.

María José Gutiérrez, a member of our Mexico City fieldwork team, focuses on a single digital story, that of US citizen Jessica Nalbach, who opted to abandon her home in the United States with her children when her husband was deported to Mexico. Nalbach's story of a troubled childhood that included neglect, homelessness, and substance abuse questions the notion of access to an American dream, even for white, US-born Anglo-Americans. Her unusual story follows her trajectory as she ends up working as an agricultural laborer alongside Mexican migrants and forming a family with an undocumented Mexican migrant. Gutiérrez's analysis focuses on the concepts of care and autonomy as driving forces in Nalbach's decision-making processes, including her unexpected move to and accommodation in Mexico, which would seem on the surface to imply an illogical relinquishment of privilege but for Nalbach leads to a personal equilibrium defined by what Gutiérrez calls "citizenship of care."

Ana Luisa Calvillo Vázquez, who participated in Humanizing Deportation fieldwork in Tijuana, offers close readings of three digital stories—two produced by deported migrants in Tijuana and a third by a repatriated Mexican in Guadalajara—that on the surface represent defeat: deportations that seem to definitively disrupt life trajectories, tear down accomplishments, and strip these migrants of dignity and esteem. None of these migrants makes an ethical case for their return to the United States, as those advocating for family reunification, childhood arrivals, or military veterans might; it may be that these migrants have mostly given up hope on recapturing what they've lost through their expulsion to Mexico. And yet, reading between the lines, Calvillo identifies an unexpected resilience, even optimism, that she associates

with the notion of "infrapolitics," forms of covert subversion and everyday resistance, an assertiveness that reaffirms their agency in the face of brutal forces of oppression that seem designed to crush their humanity.

Brooke Kipling, who has carried out Humanizing Deportation fieldwork in both Tijuana and Tapachula, looks not to the stories of deported Mexicans but rather to those of a Central American migrant in transit, a doubly deportable migrant, who might end up being detained and expelled from Mexico or, should he make it through to the North, from the United States. The stories of migrants fleeing extreme hardships and danger in their home countries, who then face no-less-significant hardships and dangers as they migrate northward, seem on the surface to project acute abjection. Yet closer readings reveal pockets of radical hope that offer insights to what Kipling calls "new migrant ontologies" and futures. These migrants, so radically and often violently ostracized from the rewards of global capitalism, neoliberalism, and exclusionary democracy, are driven to think creatively to offer new paradigms of survival, hope, and futurity.

Finally, I, who have been active performing fieldwork for the entirety of the project, dating to the production of its first digital story in 2017, look to moments of improvisation that I believe to be key to migration experiences, decision-making processes that tend to draw not from formal education but from the embodied knowledge obtained through migration—at the border, on the migrant trail, in the borderlands, in migrant detention, moving back and forth across national borders. I follow the extraordinary story of a Honduran migrant from the fall 2018 caravan, Douglas Oviedo (author of the testimonial drama *Caravaneros*), noting key moments in which he applies his migrant knowledge in what critical migration scholars have called processes of "world making" (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos), leading to outcomes that no one could have foreseen. His is a story of survival in the face of adversity, of migrant autonomy amid the violence of the border industrial complex, of manifestations of migrant knowledge and politics that offer valuable insights regarding the dynamics of migration in the contemporary context of heightened anti-migration sentiments and intensified mechanisms of migration control in both the United States and Mexico.

While all the contributions to the Humanizing Deportation project offer valuable data regarding migrant experiences, migrant sentiments, migrant knowledge, and migrant politics, these last four chapters offer glimpses of migrant thinking that might lead us to look beyond contemporary debates and struggles—without denying their urgency, nor rejecting the important ethical considerations that underlie them—and to seek innovative paths for migrant futures.

CHAPTER 2

APPROACHES AND METHODS: MIGRANT EPISTEMOLOGIES THROUGH DIGITAL STORYTELLING

ROBERT MCKEE IRWIN, ANA LUISA CALVILLO VÁZQUEZ, AND YAIRAMAREN ROMÁN MALDONADO

THE EMBODIED KNOWLEDGE OF MIGRANTS

In this chapter, we first lay out the framework underlying our approach to research on migration, an approach that focuses on documenting migrant experiences and listening closely to migrant stories in order to understand the knowledge that these stories impart. We then review the method we developed to facilitate the production of migrant stories, an innovative adaptation of digital storytelling. The robust archive of digital stories that our migrant collaborators created with the assistance of our fieldwork teams offers a wealth of material regarding migrant experiences, the sentiments those experiences have provoked, and knowledge migrants have gleaned from them.

We believe that in order to fully understand the excesses of the current regimes of border control—what some scholars have deemed the contemporary "border industrial complex" (Dear; Pérez, Irwin, and Guzmán Aguilar)—we must listen to migrants who have experienced them firsthand. We turn then to the embodied knowledge attained by migrants through their experiences as migrants, whether on the migrant trail, in day-to-day undocumented life, through detention, in immigration courts, after deportation, et cetera. The notion of embodied knowledge, in this case, refers not to abilities of the body to realize actions without specific consciousness or mental deliberation (the oft-cited case of riding a bicycle: see Tanaka, 48) but rather to the knowledge acquired through experiences that evoke deeply felt emotions that subjects, here migrant subjects, learn to express and to relate to lived phenomena such as clandestine border crossing or involuntary repatriation—what might be referred to as "embodied cognition" (Tanaka, 51). It is not experience itself that produces this knowledge but rather the cognitive process of understanding exactly which experiences—and which causal actions (e.g., immigration laws or policies, choices made by migrants or by immigration agents, legal

judgments, acts committed by others, including immigration lawyers, social service providers, human smugglers, employers, neighbors, family members, etc.)—provoke these profound emotional responses.

To be clear, all migrants are able to express their feelings, but it may take them time to understand the processes that arouse those feelings, and even over time, their comprehension of these processes and their causes may remain incomplete. Nonetheless, we believe there is a fundamental difference between imagining migrants' experiences and feelings and living them. And it is this embodied knowledge obtained through experience that we seek to capture through the application of digital storytelling as a research method, as we outline later in this chapter.

In the Humanizing Deportation archive, migrants recount their lived experiences and offer their personal observations and their deliberated interpretations. Recalling their often traumatic experiences tends to evoke strong emotions; on one level, Humanizing Deportation is without a doubt a colossal archive of feelings (Cvetkovich). But while documenting the emotional damage done by the migration-control regimes that have emerged over the past quarter century has produced an important historical record, and hopefully provided some validation or even catharsis for some community storytellers, the events and emotions they experience may go beyond affective sensations; they may lead to acts of cognition—they may produce knowledge. People learn from experience, especially major life experiences such as transnational migration. Sometimes this knowledge leaves them frustrated, makes them feel trapped (see Albicker and Velasco; París Pombo, Buenrostro Mercado, and Pérez Duperou). People also use their experience, feelings, and knowledge, however, to find solutions to their circumstances. For example, while some deported migrants seem unable to get over their inability to return to the life they created for themselves in the United States, others find ways of building a new life. And some find ways to translate their knowledge to politics, whether in the form of political activism aimed at changing immigration laws in the United States or better supporting return migrants in Mexico or in less visible manifestations of a politics of everyday life, what has been called the "imperceptible politics" of migrants (see Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos)—or what Ana Luisa Calvillo Vázquez analyzes later in this volume as migrant "infrapolitics"—that may sometimes have more radical implications. Migrant experiences, migrant feelings, migrant knowledge, migrant politics: Humanizing Deportation is a rich source for understanding all of these.

There is already significant scholarship documenting the brutality of the contemporary migration-control regime in the United States (Kanstroom,

Aftermath; Boehm; Golash Boza, *Immigration Nation*, *Deported*; Caldwell; Alonso Meneses, *El desierto*; Nevins; De Genova and Puetz, among many others) and an emerging critical interrogation of its extension into Mexico (Varela Huerta; Torre Cantalapiedra and Yee Quintero; París Pombo; Castillo Ramírez). In addition, much has been published about the plight of migrants who have been repatriated to Mexico and Central America (Albicker and Velasco; Alarcón and Becerra; Del Monte; Torre Cantalapiedra, Rodríguez Gutiérrez, and Rodríguez Gutiérrez; Ambrosius; Coutin). Our investigation, without a doubt, confirms the excesses of the contemporary border industrial complex in the United States and its extension into Mexico, a process of "thickening of borders" that extends both ever more deeply into the United States (Rosas) and southward through Mexico and beyond (Gramajo Bauer; Selee). While the chapters that follow focus on well-documented experiences, they offer significant insights into how specific border phenomena play out over time. Our method of listening closely, not only to confirm what we already know but also to learn from migrants' expressions of their feelings and articulations of their embodied knowledge, adds nuance and depth to existing scholarly discourse on these persistent problems.

Yet our method of digital storytelling permits additional insights. It allows us to view the movements of migrants (migrants in transit, undocumented migrants, detained migrants, deported migrants, asylum seekers, criminalized migrants) from their own perspectives. It allows us to understand their own interpretations of their interactions with different actors and mechanisms of the contemporary border industrial complex. This is not to say that the many works mentioned here do not take into account the experiences of migrants; many employ different forms of ethnography or otherwise directly cite migrant stories. And there is also a growing body of work that approaches these same contexts from the notion of the "autonomy of migration," or allied projects focused on understanding migrant agency (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos; Acuña González; Ruiz Lagier and Varela Huerta; Prieto Díaz). Our archive adds to this material, moving beyond recognition of migrant agency by foregrounding migrant knowledge. And the size it has assumed over these past five years gives it a breadth that is impossible to incorporate into most ethnographic studies.

Migrant knowledge may reflect specific strategies or resources that individuals have learned to apply to overcome obstacles they face as migrants. For example, the experiences of migrants in learning to cope with and overcoming traumas of forced displacement represent an important contribution that may help other migrants deal with their own circumstances or may be useful to agencies in formulating (re)integration programs for repatriated

migrants (see Radziwinowiczówna; Anderson; Loredo and Guerrero). Here it is not the mere fact of a deported migrant's experience in obtaining employment or moving from a shelter to an apartment, but rather their own interpretation of the emotional effects of these events that may allow us to better understand to what degree finding that job or establishing a new home contributes to a healing process. Listening to migrants' articulations of their embodied knowledge in their digital stories may offer us not only confirmation of what we already know about forced displacement but also new ideas developed by migrants themselves, their own lessons learned through lived experience.

This concept of problem solving may offer strategies of recuperation without necessarily questioning basic social structures. For example, some migrants have expressed the practical importance of giving up on their American dream in favor of a Mexican dream, the latter of which may actually be a nearly identical reconfiguration of the former. If they had migrated in hopes of obtaining a level of material wealth, physical security, or personal freedom, they may simply find ways of obtaining the same kind of material wealth, physical security, or personal freedom in Mexico without questioning the values or ideologies underlying their priorities. Indeed, American dreams, often constructed from media production and commercial propaganda, may be built on systems of capital that imply significant labor exploitation, social configurations steeped in white supremacy, or political structures that thrive on economic inequities. It might be argued that it is only a "cruel optimism" (Berlant) that drives migrants to continue to pursue success through mechanisms that relentlessly do damage to their own rank, often with very direct and severe effects on their own well-being. This is not to say that it is always the case that migrants err in their aspirations, but only that their strategies for overcoming forced displacement may not involve any major ethical reassessment of their lives. And it is most certainly the case that many of those seeking to aid deported migrants may assume that they share a common set of values aligned with those implicit in global capitalism, racial neoliberalism, or the modern carceral state, or even with the contemporary border industrial complex itself.

Some migrants learn through experience, however, that hegemonic institutions, mainstream values, orthodox epistemologies, and conventional ontologies may not work for them. Magalí Rabasa proposes that in order to better understand the perspectives of vulnerable migrants, we must "develop undisciplined forms of reading that take us to other forms and other circuits of representation" (175). The openness of digital storytelling to different approaches to expression that are not shaped by predetermined sets of research

questions or other external interventions allows for forms of storytelling that might introduce traces of alternative southern epistemologies (Santos), manifestations of border thinking (Mignolo), or kernels of embodied migrant knowledge that might stand against the worldviews underlying mainstream politics or even radical activism—or the most cutting-edge academic inquiry. If, rather than ask migrants to interpret their stories through sets of questions that may be difficult to express through concepts not derived from worldviews—whether conventional or alternative—developed in the global North, we instead simply give them the opportunity to express themselves on their own terms, and then listen closely, we might hear something totally unexpected.

This listening implies focusing in on certain moments of tension: actions or statements that seem illogical, astonishing, and even counterproductive—that is, paying attention to what is not immediately comprehensible and explainable through our own conventions and ethics. Here is where the greatest value in migrant knowledge may lie; migrants, through their own lived experiences, may develop ways of thinking, ways of living, ways of coping that may be radically different from those we already know, and from which we might tease out ideas that may be useful not just for understanding the border industrial complex itself but for reformulating aspects of our own ways of life.

Before looking at these initial inquiries into the material of the Humanizing Deportation archive, however, we first lay out exactly how the digital stories were produced. Our use of digital storytelling as a method of building a community archive starts from the premise that migrant experiences, migrant feelings, and migrant knowledge matter.

METHODS AND PROTOCOLS

Humanizing Deportation aims to capture with significant breadth and nuance the experiences, sentiments, politics, and knowledge of migrants, especially those who have been deported or who may be vulnerable to deportation, thus revealing the human consequences of the increasingly harsh laws and policies of migration control that have been introduced and deployed in the United States and Mexico over the past quarter century. We chose digital storytelling, a participatory audiovisual production technique most often employed in contexts of community activism, as a research method, extending its application in some innovative ways, albeit with some notable alterations and adjustments.

We designed a project inviting the participation of a wide variety of migrant storytellers, formulated collaboration protocols to enable us to work

with a broad range of migrant profiles in a way that guarantees their safety, launched a website to house their community archive, and organized events, published articles, and sought media coverage in order to disseminate these stories as widely as possible. In the paragraphs that follow, we lay out (1) what digital storytelling is and how it works, (2) its limits with regard to guaranteeing storyteller creative autonomy, (3) our protocols for collaborating with vulnerable communities and in potentially unsafe spaces, (4) our strategies for minimizing our teams' interventions into the creative process of community storytellers, (5) our emphasis on listening and on respecting migrant knowledge, (6) some of the complications faced by fieldwork teams because of volatile dynamics in contexts of migration and our sometimes improvised strategies for adjusting to them, and (7) some ongoing methodological issues we have faced throughout the project's duration so far.

DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Digital storytelling is a form of community-based participatory audiovisual production that is meant to put simple audiovisual montage and editing software in the hands of ordinary people, and to empower them to express themselves publicly: to tell their stories, to disseminate their arguments, to communicate their messages over the internet. Its methods were designed to give storytellers the tools and knowledge they need to make an impact in the public sphere. It has been heralded as a form of "vernacular creativity" and a means of democratizing contemporary digital media (see Burgess; Couldry).

Digital storytelling's standard method has been amply diffused by a group of digital media activist-artists whose original project was consolidated, in 1998, under the name of the Center for Digital Storytelling. One of this group's founders, Joe Lambert, authored a manual, *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community*, originally published in 2002, which has been expanded and updated through several later editions. The Story Center, as this institution is now known, offers workshops, facilitation services, and partnerships of different kinds, all aimed at supporting its core goals of helping communities to tell and disseminate their stories to wide audiences in audiovisual form.

More specifically, digital stories are audiovisual testimonial shorts, created and directed by storytellers themselves, usually with the help and guidance of facilitators who have been trained in the genre's collaborative techniques. These stories are composed of a main soundtrack, normally the recorded voice of the community storyteller narrating their story, and a main visual track, which may include short clips or, more traditionally, still images with applied motion effects (commonly known as "Ken Burns effects"). The latter

tend to be images not of the narrator narrating but rather of places, people, events, emotions, or other visual references that may illustrate or expand on the story itself. Digital stories are usually first-person narratives; they recount personal experiences and may be emotionally charged. They may be accompanied by an additional audio track featuring music, generally instrumental, or occasionally sound effects meant to enhance the story or establish or vary its mood or tone. An overlapping video track will usually include titles and credits and sometimes subtitles. Digital stories, which are designed for diffusion on the web, are meant to be concise, in alignment with the attention span of typical web surfers; in their most orthodox form, digital stories run from two to five minutes. Another key characteristic of digital stories is their simplicity: they do not strive for the professional veneer of documentary film but rather the authenticity of everyday expression; nor is high-resolution imagery or sophisticated cinematography a priority, as distribution is meant to occur by internet and not on large movie-house screens. Finally, a key methodological concept for digital story production is the minimization of the role of the facilitator: the authors, creators, designers, and directors of digital stories are the community narrators, with the role of outside facilitators limited to that of assisting storytellers in realizing their vision.

Digital stories are often used by communities to bring a message to the public—a very broad, general audience or a targeted section of the public, such as public authorities. They may be used to further a political agenda, to cultivate a shared sense of community, or perhaps to establish or contribute to an archive of public memory. Storytellers may also have more personal and less public uses for their stories, whether to communicate to their families or discrete networks of friends and neighbors or to achieve a form of personal fulfillment by simply telling stories that have never been properly told or recorded. Digital storytelling has also been deployed widely in education as a means to empower youth in developing storytelling skills, digital media aptitudes, and general self-esteem.

Although individuals may benefit saliently from creating and producing digital stories, the genre is most often thought of as a format in community-based digital media production. And the Story Center's signature element of the creation process laid out in Lambert's book is that of "story circles." The generic context for digital storytelling is that of a community group that shares a desire to communicate a collective message. Community members tell individual, or sometimes collective, stories with the idea that the collection of stories produced within the community will add up to a stronger group story. Therefore, as individual community members begin to formulate their stories, the story circle offers an important venue

for community input. Storytellers have the chance not only to try out their stories on and measure reactions from audiences but also to get critical and productive feedback from their peers, neighbors, or colleagues, helping them to tell their story as effectively as possible. While the collective goals of digital storytelling projects may vary widely, the role of community dialogue in the process of creating digital stories is key.

The role of the facilitator, then, is not to intervene directly in the creative process but rather to guide and oversee it, including this important and sometimes delicate step of eliciting community feedback. Once the content of the stories is determined, and usually set in written form (a script), the main role of the facilitator is to guide storytellers through the technical details of recording and editing audio, designing the visual track, usually using a storyboard, and finally carrying out the montage, including various subtle but essential visual effects, including motion or lighting effects (zooms in or out, pans, fades, etc.), as well as transitions between images. These technical details, all of which can be achieved pretty easily, with a minimal learning curve, using nonprofessional software such as basic versions of iMovie or Adobe Premiere Elements, draw community storytellers deeply into the production process. A very short video may take many hours to draft and edit, which contributes significantly to the sense of achievement of storytellers, many of whom might have had no previous experience with audiovisual production, upon completing production of their digital stories. While the stories may not exhibit a professional veneer, they are often highly effective in communicating personal and collective experiences.

FACILITATION, COLLABORATION, COCREATION

The main appeal of digital storytelling, from our point of view in choosing this method, was its claim to authorial independence. We were certainly conscious of our role in "curating" content for the archive. In the context of what Sujatha Fernandes calls the "storytelling turn," community stories are often "commodified" and reduced to the "service of narrow goals" in relation to specific "target audiences," whether by television talk shows, philanthropical organizations, governmental agencies, or political activist organizations (29). We did not want to tell people what to say or how to say it; instead we believed that people who had experiences relating to deportation would have a lot to say, and, moreover, few of them had anywhere to say it in the public sphere.

In the United States, their lack of voice was quite clear; even as activists fought hard to try to stem the flow of deportations, which had risen to unprecedented levels during the Obama presidency, those already deported

were largely forgotten—a lost cause. Cities like Tijuana represent an abyss of care, from a US perspective: even for many activist groups, there was no point to thinking about those already deported, as in most cases nothing could be done to bring them back. We believed, however, that once people better understood the human consequences of deportation, it would be apparent that the United States had gone too far, become too severe in its laws and enforcement policies. We hoped that through disseminating stories of deportation, any stories, it would become apparent just how extreme this means of migration management was. And the way to communicate these human cruelties was through the production and diffusion of true and authentic stories, shaped by community-driven priorities and not by activist agendas or academic theories.

Digital storytelling is meant to align ethically with participatory action research: "knowledge and techniques effectively committed to social and political action in order to induce needed transformations" (Fals Borda, 27). Participatory media projects are meant to follow common guiding principles: horizontal relations between community collaborators and academic or professional facilitators, community participant ownership of product, aim of consciousness-raising regarding problems and possible solutions, emphasis on processes of dialogue and community participation (avoiding external impositions), long-term horizons for social change, and focus on issues identified by community (Gumucio Dagrón, 26–27). A subset of these projects emphasize the importance of "participation as research methodology" in such a way as to blur "the distinction between research and community development" and to recast "traditional relations of power" in a way that involves community collaborators in "processes of empowerment that integrate local norms and understandings into the process of production and make use of social capital—the networks of relationships that are both valuable and available to participants" (Low et al., 53–54). Digital storytelling held some potential to uplift a population that had been dealt severe blows and remained in many ways deeply demoralized.

Our adaptation of digital storytelling was no doubt idealistic, and our initial goal was somewhat specific, but we were not naïve. While we did not know what deported or deportable migrants would want to express in a public forum, we were confident their embodied knowledge would bring out new information that would help activists, policy makers, researchers, students, other migrants, and the general public in both the United States and Mexico to better understand the full implications of contemporary migration-control measures. We chose digital storytelling, then, because the genre did indeed present itself as a resource promoting the principles of pedagogies of the

oppressed, other aligned projects of decolonization (Quijano; Mignolo and Walsh), or epistemologies of the South (Santos)—approaches that put faith in the knowledge of marginalized groups and their ability to develop the skills necessary to make an impact in public spaces to which they may have little access without our assistance. We therefore would not intervene in the stories themselves but rather would offer access to and assistance with audiovisual production technology, as well as a platform for dissemination. The stories would always belong to the storytellers. From the very beginning, we established a system of credits that was also meant to guide our collaborations: storytellers are credited as "creators" and "directors" of their digital stories, while our academic facilitation team members are listed as "assistants."

Recalling the sometimes strident debates on testimonial narratives and authenticity of a few decades earlier (see Gugelberger; Beverley), however, we were cautious about assigning too much authenticity to digital stories, or assuming that facilitators could fully limit their creative or ideological influence to the point of erasure. Instead, we realized from the beginning that an important objective in every collaborative relationship with community storytellers would be to manage our potential mediations. Indeed, we were acutely aware that mediation was inevitable and that it would be our ethical duty to avoid intervening in ways that would diminish the agency of community storytellers or threaten their feelings of ownership over their digital stories (see Hertzberg and Lundby; Lizarazo et al.; Low et al.). We would be cocreators, but we needed to maintain our subordination to the needs, desires, and creative vision of our community collaborators (see Worcester). The question of facilitation versus mediation would be much more complicated than we had imagined, as we quickly learned once we got into the field and began working with community storytellers. We will discuss this sticky point further, once we explain our particular adaptation of the Story Center's standard methods.

FIELDWORK PROTOCOLS

Humanizing Deportation is not technically a research project. It does not employ questionnaires, ethnographic interviews, or even participant observation. Instead it proposes the creation of a community archive in which community members voluntarily offer to share their stories in a public forum, a platform that we host: our website. Like many oral history or public memory projects, ours is about creating a public archive in which the community, rather than scholars, determines and controls content. It is not shaped by any prestated research questions but rather is guided by a very general question, whose reach evolved over the course of the project.

The question's original iteration: What are the lived consequences of

contemporary laws and policies that have brought about the deportation from the United States of huge numbers of Mexican immigrants? Over time, the question became a bit broader: What are the lived consequences of contemporary laws and policies regarding migration control (including deportation) in the context of the corridor of Central America (mainly Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua), Mexico, and the United States?

Once the archival material, all of which is bilingual (Spanish and English), is made public, anyone can use it as a resource. And certainly perusal of the archive might help researchers formulate any number of specific research questions that these stories might help to explore. Its creation, however, is not designed to answer any specific questions but rather to document migrants' experiences, feelings, and thoughts around a theme, that of migration enforcement and control, especially its harshest consequence, deportation.

The use of the word "humanizing" in the project's title implies a focus on humanitarian or human rights issues. It also may imply a political agenda that understands deportation to be a dehumanizing process, although our only explicit intervention is a commitment to disseminate stories with the idea that once the stories are told, they will begin generating their own political responses. It is a project rooted in humanistic scholarship that may inform some specific activist agendas or policy recommendations but does not itself articulate one, nor can it promise to deliver one. Nonetheless, the project's implicit opposition to the dehumanizing effects of deportation and other harsh migration-control measures, at least in their current manifestations in North America, may imply taking a political stand of solidarity.

It also implies an empathy toward deported people and other vulnerable migrants, care about their predicament. And this sums up the principles that underlie the project's design: respect for the embodied knowledge of community storytellers, care regarding their experiences and their feelings about those experiences, and willingness to listen to and learn from them. All this implies holding back from intervening with ideological stances, political agendas, theoretically predetermined worldviews, or academic concepts and conjectures. Listening to stories may generate scholarly theories or advocacy strategies. But the project strives to prioritize the documentation of community knowledge, the embodied wisdom of migrants, and to postpone academic or activist intervention. While it would be a lie to declare that the project emerged in a purely independent form, without any a priori political preoccupation or scholarly hypothesis, it was formulated to minimize any intervention into the storytelling and audiovisual production process, following the tenets of the larger digital storytelling project developed by the institution now known as the Story Center.

It is thus essential to our fieldwork protocols to present the project in these terms, especially when meeting migrants who might be interested in sharing their stories via our platform. We are a university-based project; however, we are not doing ethnographic fieldwork. Instead we are offering a platform in the form of a community archive for people to express whatever they believe to be important regarding their personal experiences with deportation. We carry out audiovisual production, but we are not documentary filmmakers. We document contemporary issues regarding migration, many of them highly controversial, but we are not journalists. We emphasize our belief that people who have experienced migration, migrant detention, forced repatriation, and other consequences of contemporary migration-control policies are the most competent experts on their human consequences, and that documenting their experiences will help researchers, activists, policy makers, immigration attorneys, social service providers, educators, students, and everyday people understand how best to think about and address issues relating to migration and deportation. We let community members know that we believe deportation and migration-control enforcement have been poorly represented through political rhetoric and sometimes sensationalized media coverage, which has generated stigmatized images and stereotypes that we believe can be counterbalanced by accurate representations of reality, of lived experience, that are not ideological in nature but instead reflect the nuances and complications of real life.

We note that we offer a web-based platform, an archive of audiovisual testimonial shorts that is easily accessible, visually attractive, and bilingual in English and Spanish. We also explain that while our principal means of dissemination is our website, we also present the project publicly whenever we can, projecting videos in academic and community settings throughout the United States and Mexico and sometimes even staging longer-term exhibitions in collaboration with community groups. We also seek out media coverage, especially in the United States and Mexico. We further add that ours is the largest archive of stories of deportation and migrant vulnerability in the world, that we have been active since early 2017, that the archive is based at the University of California, Davis, that its production has been made possible by formal collaborations with five different Mexican universities, and that we have deployed teams in six Mexican cities, as well as throughout California.

We also make clear that Humanizing Deportation is a community archive. Those who contribute stories tell the stories they want to tell, focusing on the messages they wish to communicate. They are responsible for not only the stories themselves but also the visual design of their videos. They narrate

in whatever language they prefer and ultimately will own the intellectual property they create.

We also indicate that we make this platform available to anyone wishing to participate but that no one is obligated to work with us; indeed, we will not try to persuade those who prefer not to share their stories to work with us. Furthermore, for those who do wish to share their stories, we honor whatever degree of anonymity they request. Their digital stories need not reveal their names, their faces, their voices, or any other potential identifiers. Moreover, they may withdraw from the project at any time, even after their stories have been published (in which case they would be removed from our website). For those requiring total anonymity, we avoid recording their names, addresses, phone numbers, or other identifiers in our notes or devices, using instead pseudonyms or codes.

COLLABORATIVE PRODUCTION PROCESS

The standard digital storytelling process, in which a single facilitator works with a community group, is mostly impossible for the context of deportation or migration, in which few community groups exist and stories tend to be deeply personal. While those who have been deported might come to trust members of the Humanizing Deportation team (whom they might believe to be sympathetic to their plight), they might not feel as trustful of strangers, or even of acquaintances who have also been deported. Moreover, work and family obligations might complicate a fixed production schedule coordinated among multiple storytellers. This has meant that it has been impossible to realize digital storytelling production in the group scenarios for which they were designed. Instead, Humanizing Deportation has generally worked one-on-one with community storytellers, roughly following the model offered by Lizarazo et al., but on a much larger scale.

While we began the project with only a rough idea of how our process would work, over time it became clear that the complete production of a digital story involved about seven steps and often about seven meetings with community storytellers, although the process could sometimes move faster or slower, depending on the needs and preferences of community storytellers, and some steps might be managed digitally (communication by text message, phone, or other means) rather than through face-to-face meetings. These steps are as follows:

1. Presentation of project and general discussion of possible contributions of storyteller
2. Definition of story, with homework for storyteller to draft a script

3. Recording of audio, with homework for facilitator to edit audio
4. Definition of visual track, with homework for storyteller and/or facilitator to gather images
5. Preparation of storyboard, assigning images phrase by phrase, with homework, usually for facilitator, to realize montage of audio and visual track
6. Review of draft of video, with homework, usually for facilitator, to realize revisions and, if necessary, any additional audio track
7. Final approval of completed digital story and signing of contract, with homework, usually for facilitator, to translate narrative and add title, subtitles, and credits

Once we have completed these seven steps, the digital story is ready be published.

As can be seen from this scheme, the role of the facilitator looms quite large, covering in most cases all of the technical aspects of production, especially those of montage and editing. While the Story Center encourages community members themselves to produce and edit their own digital stories, and certainly this is not terribly complicated to learn, we found that many community storytellers had neither interest in learning audiovisual production skills nor the time to dedicate to realizing this labor. Many had busy work and family schedules that made even meeting regularly complicated; others were living, as migrants, in highly unstable situations that offered little time or space for working on projects such as this one; while others were not computer literate and were not motivated to become skilled in audiovisual production.

Profiles of community storytellers vary greatly. While we rarely work with very recently deported migrants—who are likely to have major issues to attend to, such as obtaining identification documents, finding a job, establishing residence, getting access to assets left behind, figuring out how to manage family relations, and generally dealing with culture shock and immediate trauma—some migrants with whom we have worked have, even after several years, remained in highly unstable living circumstances, whether in migrant shelters, requiring that they vacate with all their belongings in a backpack every morning and then check back in in the late afternoon, or on the street. These migrants may lack telephones and may be difficult to locate from one day to the next. Others are more comfortably established, but with full-time jobs and family lives that may occupy much of their attention. Migrants in transit may also stay in shelters but may move on to their next destination at any moment, making it difficult to sustain contact with them for more than a short period of time.

For these reasons, our fieldwork teams have to be prepared for the different situations that may arise with these different populations. With those who lack a stable living situation or access to communications technology (whether a cell phone or a computer, for social media or email contact), we have to be prepared to try to compress the production process, or risk never completing it (as has happened in a number of cases). With those whose lives are very busy, we may have to prolong the production process, sometimes for months. While we've always striven to maintain the integrity of the project by maximizing storyteller input, we've not always been able to incorporate the same level of collaborative deliberation with everyone, and have sometimes had to compress the process to such a degree that interactive feedback is minimized. In the cases that present the most obstacles in this regard, we've had to count on our team members' ability to quickly and deeply understand the goals and vision of community storytellers and the different key elements of their stories, as well as to obtain their confidence to a sufficient degree so that they will be comfortable allowing us to make production decisions based on our understanding of their vision, but without a possibility of the kind of microconsulting that would be possible under other circumstances.

A few examples from our Phase I production will help to explain these variable circumstances and how we adapted our process flexibly in accordance with the needs and preferences of each individual storyteller (see also Calvillo Vázquez, "Deportaciones masivas"; Román Maldonado, "Reconfiguración metodológica").

Robert Irwin has documented the details of his collaboration with Gerardo Sánchez Pérez (Irwin, "Crueles deportaciones y lazos afectivos"), a deported migrant who was living in a run-down informal migrant shelter and had no access to telephone or internet connections during the entire time of his involvement with Humanizing Deportation. Over the course of the collaboration, from January through May of 2017, Irwin was never able to make a formal appointment with Sánchez Pérez, who did not keep a calendar, did not have predictable work hours, and was reachable only through in-person visits to the shelter. Not all team members would have been willing to venture to this particular site, which was something of drug den, a retail outlet for one of Tijuana's narcotics syndicates, located in a neighborhood of the city, La Zona Norte, known for its high crime rate, and on a street, Avenida Constitución, that was a major area of street prostitution. And any fears of venturing to that location turned out to be well founded, as Sánchez Pérez was himself murdered at the shelter in October of the same year. Irwin, who was not living in Tijuana while facilitating the production of Sánchez Pérez's digital story but would instead visit the city a few days each month as he

made plans for the launch of intensive summer fieldwork, advanced with the process gradually over the course of those five months, but was fortunately able to meet with Sánchez Pérez to get his input and feedback during each of his visits and to successfully complete his digital story, the very first of the project (Sánchez Pérez, "Crueles deportaciones," no. 1).

In deliberating with Sánchez Pérez regarding the production process, Irwin realized that an immediate revision to digital storytelling orthodoxy would need to be made, as Sánchez Pérez was not receptive to the idea of writing a script. After the two had discussed the potential content for his story (a one-on-one approximation of the Story Center's story circle), Irwin handed him a handwritten list of themes to guide him in elaborating his story, which he asked Sánchez Pérez to write up that evening so that they could record it the following morning. Sánchez Pérez showed up the next day without having written anything, however, and instead led Irwin to a relatively quiet site, the courtyard of Centro Cultural de Tijuana, sufficiently far from the street to avoid significant traffic noise, to begin recording immediately. The list, which included about ten themes, guided Sánchez Pérez. He took a moment to think before recording his story in segments, one point at a time. Although he had not written a word, he seemed to have planned everything in his head and was able to tell his story succinctly and articulately. Indeed, his audio required only minor editing, and his story ended up serving as a model, one that Irwin and other team members could later project to migrants considering collaborating with the project. Irwin realized here that a script might work well for some migrants, but others, much more comfortable with oral communication, would do better to speak freely from bullet points or even to just tell their story without any written guide.

As our first-year fieldwork team moved forward, we shared experiences and came to realize several things about scripts. A written script did help many migrants to tell their stories concisely and without leaving out any details. But sometimes these readings sounded staged: that is, like someone reading from a script. More extemporaneous narrations sounded more natural but might include more digressions and sometimes would require significantly more editing. We realized, however, that it was essential to allow community storytellers to make the decision about scripting, as we needed to empower them to take charge of their story's production process.

A few additional concrete examples help to show how we managed our production processes with community storytellers living in different circumstances. It was easy to make appointments and to advance step-by-step through the production process with storytellers such as Esther Morales ("Guerrera incansable," nos. 11a–c), who was always available to meet at

FIGURE 2.1. Juan Manuel Villegas Galindo in downtown Tijuana; photo by Leo Peña

her restaurant; Nacho Davis ("Regresar como Dios manda," no. 17), who, although he was living in a shelter, was always reachable by Facebook Messenger and had a regular work schedule; José Amílcar López ("Un sueño frustrado," no. 33), who did not have a phone but was residing at an addiction rehabilitation center and could be easily located there; or Emma Sánchez de Paulsen ("El muro separa a familias pero jamás el sentimiento," no. 4a), who was often at home with her three sons, who were spending their summer break with her in Tijuana, and was almost always reachable via Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp. Other cases were more challenging.

Juan Manuel Villegas Galindo was homeless in Tijuana and worked cleaning windshields, sometimes on a street corner near Desayunador Salesiano Padre Chava, other times at the border, in the long lines of cars waiting to cross to San Ysidro, California. He had no telephone or other means of communication, did not keep a regular work schedule, and never revealed where he slept at night. The only way to meet with him was to go to the street corner and either hope to find him there or ask one of the other squeegee men if they knew where he was. There was always the chance he would disappear. Municipal police regularly harass vulnerable migrants, extorting money and arbitrarily arresting them and holding them for several days in the municipal jail. Street people in Tijuana might also get offered a temporary job in some other part of the city. And a migrant might at any

moment make an attempt to cross the border, which more often than not would result in capture on the other side, detention for a few days, and then a return to Tijuana or to another Mexican border city. It was clear that the best way to ensure that Villegas's digital story got completed would be to try to get as much accomplished as possible at each meeting and to get all montage and editing done as quickly as possible. What might have been a three- or four-week process of six or eight meetings was condensed into three meetings within a single week. The compressed process implied less interactive dialogue and greater intervention on the part of the story's facilitator, Robert Irwin, who had to anticipate as much as possible any questions that might come up during production in order to make best guesses regarding Villegas's preferences. Irwin had to make sure he understood as completely as possible Villegas's vision from the beginning and had to establish a high level of trust with him in a short period of time. Villegas was a friend of Gerardo Sánchez Pérez, who had introduced him to Irwin, whom Villegas also recognized from Irwin's volunteer work at Padre Chava, which gave Irwin some credibility as a friend of the community. All these factors—trust, deep comprehension of the storyteller's vision, efficiency in production—came into play in ensuring that this story got produced, with maximum input from Villegas, but in a condensed timeframe (see Villegas Galindo, "Mi esposa, mis hijos: Dios me ayude," no. 5).

Other stories required significant flexibility on the part of facilitators. For example, when a migrant who would publish his video under his first name, Tomás, told Ana Luisa Calvillo, who headed up the team of facilitators working with him, that he was not going to narrate a biographical story but instead would recite poetry inspired from his experiences with deportation, the team had to let go of some elements of their training regarding what makes a good story and let him take the lead. While he did elect to narrate some of his personal story as an interlude between the recitation of two more lengthy fragments of poetry in order to make it easier to interpret some of the more abstract expressions in his poems, his digital story is formally quite different from those of most other community contributors to the archive (see Tomás, "El colgado," no. 3).

ENCOUNTERING MIGRANT FEELINGS

A major element of the collaborative process that we were not fully prepared for during our first year, and that always remains a point of concern, is the emotional impact of telling traumatic stories on both the storyteller and those who accompany them. As we began to implement our protocols in our first major foray into the field in Tijuana in the summer of 2017, we realized that

many community collaborators were inserting an additional step early in the production process, usually between our first introductory meeting and either the second meeting, in which we defined the story, or the third, when we recorded it. We came to refer to this intermediary step as "el desahogo" (letting it all out). Even when community storytellers came prepared with a written script articulating the concise version of their personal history that they wished to share publicly through their digital story, they often wanted to first tell us the long version of their story, covering the most traumatic elements of their migration, detention, deportation, family separation, and so on. We soon came to realize that these longer stories had often remained untold for years; they were not stories that were easily shared with friends or even with family members. Since we represented a sympathetic ear, it seemed appropriate for many community participants to get the full story off their chests with us as part of a process of catharsis. We came to realize that many wished to share their stories in order to promote political agendas, to reveal injustices, or to offer advice to other migrants; but many also had spent years holding their stories inside, whether because they believed that no one cared to hear them, or because they were ashamed of having lost control of their lives, or because after having lost so much, they did not know where to turn for solace. We learned that many of those who wished to participate in the project would feel great relief at telling their stories.

This step was healing for many. But it also helped us to see just how traumatic many of their stories were, and it led us to be careful in whom we invited to participate, seeking out not migrants who were in the midst of fresh trauma (e.g., those who had just been deported), but rather those who had had time to work through some of the pain brought about by forced displacement. The instructions incorporated into subsequent training included warning migrants that recounting traumatic experiences may bring their pain back to the surface and that they should continue working with us only if they are sure they feel ready to confront their distress.

We also realized the importance of being prepared to listen to these stories, itself an incredibly emotionally charged task. The *desahogo* meetings would often drive both community storytellers and fieldwork team members to tears. The sharing of these stories often helped to forge deep bonds of empathy and became the seeds of long-lasting friendships. These deep personal connections have come to represent an important byproduct of our fieldwork, a highly rewarding element of the project that exceeds its academic and political objectives. We also realized, however, that it would be imperative to emphasize to new fieldwork team members that collaboration in the context of emotional trauma can be jarringly intense, and that we must be prepared for it. Any

colleagues considering joining our teams are advised to reflect beforehand on their willingness to engage in such emotionally charged fieldwork.

DOCUMENTING MIGRANT EXPERTISE

Considering migrant feelings and their desire to express them thus came to be a key element of our work process. We needed to be as empathetic, sensitive, respectful, and considerate as possible at every turn. But even more important would be our attention to migrant knowledge.

Our guiding premise that community expertise matters, and that the embodied knowledge of migrants offers a wealth of information worthy of documentation and wide diffusion, aligns significantly with a range of projects that might be described under the rubric of decolonial theory that seeks to ensure that community-based academic research incorporates deep collaboration with communities and absorbs community priorities for political actions, rather than imposing external agendas. Our teams work hard to minimize our interventions and influence and seek to emphasize the value of knowledge that might otherwise go unrecognized.

In this vein we insist that community storytellers must be credited as authors and directors of their work, and that academic team members be credited as assistants. Moreover, our website insists that our digital stories be cited in the same way as any academic work. This means that they should be denoted in lists of works cited under the name of their author/director and that when cited in analytical articles, these authors should be referred to by their last name and not their first name. In other words, for example, we recommend referring to the community storyteller Gerardo Sánchez Pérez in academic articles as "Sánchez Pérez" (like any other knowledge producer, e.g., "Butler" or "Foucault") and not as "Gerardo," as is the custom with ethnographic analysis. Community storytellers should not be treated as objects of study but rather as knowledge producers.

On the other hand, we are careful to recognize that our agenda to decolonize knowledge does not imply that we assume a broader decolonial project aimed at significantly challenging power relations emerging from what has been deemed the coloniality of power (Quijano; Mignolo and Walsh). While some migrants in the archive articulate challenges to contemporary hierarchies that may harm migrants, people of color, women, transgender people, or other groups, many more migrants—including those who have been deported and wish to return to the United States, and also those migrating northward in pursuit of some version of the "American dream"—do not challenge the status quo at all. Instead of endeavoring to reverse or weaken existing hierarchies, they seek to assume or reassume their

place within those hierarchies. Many continue to idealize the "American way of life" and seek to (re)insert themselves into it. Some, including some deported US military veterans, even express patriotic bonds to a country that has expelled them.

What we mean to say here is that while our methods are without a doubt informed by and aligned with decolonizing theory and practice, the community archive whose production we have curated and facilitated is a much more heterogenous entity, and our respect for migrant knowledge implies that we avoid imposing ideologies that migrants themselves do not embrace.

ADDITIONAL COMPLICATIONS, ADAPTATIONS

For the first year and ten months of fieldwork, we followed the protocols outlined in the preceding sections, improvising as necessary to accommodate our community storytellers and to better take into account the emotional charge of their stories. In an important final step that was never compromised, the storyteller viewed the final version of the digital story before signing the contract, indicating their approval to publish the video on our website. No matter how many or few meetings occurred during the production process, a final meeting always sealed the deal.

Problems arose when team members sought to work with migrants they met in shelters in Mexico's interior. Deported migrants in Tijuana such as Tomás or Nacho Davis might linger for years, residing in *ñongos* or migrant shelters before renting apartments on their own, and migrants in transit might wait months for the right moment to try and cross the border, but the migrants staying in shelters south of the borderlands often stayed no longer than a few days before moving on, making it nearly impossible to realize the complete production process. Team members in Monterrey were frustrated after advancing significantly with digital stories of Central American migrants they met in one of the city's shelters, then returning for follow-up appointments only to find out that the migrants had left. As the migrants did not leave contact data, they could not be reached, and the stories had to be abandoned. In general, the coordination team advised those working in the field not to try and work with migrants in transit because of the unpredictability of their travel timelines. This would change with the arrival of a series of migrant caravans in Tijuana in the fall of 2018, even as working with migrants heading northward would imply some significant revisions to our fieldwork collaboration protocols.

Robert Irwin happened to be in Tijuana in mid-November of 2018 as the caravan migrants were arriving, initially in Playas de Tijuana and then in La Zona Norte, where a migrant camp had been improvised at the Benito

Juárez sports complex. The caravans had generated controversy along their entire trajectory, with politicians in the United States and Mexico speaking out against the migrants; the international press covering their movement northward, sometimes with sensationalized imagery; memes and video shorts circulating virally, often criticizing or mocking the migrants; and anti-migrant protests eventually sprouting up in Tijuana. The first of these was undertaken by local residents on November 14, when the first busloads of migrants were arriving in Playas de Tijuana; a second, on November 18, took the form of a march through downtown Tijuana that ended at the Benito Juárez camp. This anti-migrant sentiment was unprecedented in Tijuana, which had long been a major transit city for migrants heading north and was now established as a main port of arrival for migrants being deported southward. Tijuana, a city that had swelled from a tiny border town in the early twentieth century to a huge megalopolis and the sixth-largest city in Mexico, indeed owed its growth to migration. Very few Tijuanan families dated back more than a generation or two. And yet here they were protesting the arrival of migrants.

Robert Irwin, Israel Ibarra, Juan Antonio Del Monte, and other team members working in Tijuana were stunned and perplexed at this rise in anti-migrant sentiment and became concerned that the sensationalism that had materialized around the caravaning migrants was creating false and damaging impressions of them. We realized that Humanizing Deportation was in a unique position to document and disseminate the migrants' stories. But in order to work with these migrants in transit, we would have to significantly alter our methods. Indeed, with thousands of migrants arriving in the city, many of whom did not have phones, nor specific plans for crossing to the United States, it could prove impossible to locate a migrant on more than a single occasion. Many of these migrants, however, conscious of the distorted images circulating about them and the damaging effects on their immediate well-being or even their longer-term migration prospects, were anxious to tell their stories. We therefore improvised a new express production method designed to appeal only to vulnerable migrants in transit who felt an urgent need to tell their stories and were willing to trust the Humanizing Deportation project to publish them.

Irwin devised this method on the spot one afternoon (Sunday, November 18, 2018) in Playas de Tijuana, when a migrant asked him for water. Irwin had spent the early afternoon witnessing a pair of competing protests: one supporting the migrants and another, larger one opposing them. He purchased drinks for a few migrants who were hanging out near the entrance of the Embajada Migrante shelter around the corner from the northernmost end of the boardwalk and began chatting with the one who had first asked for

water. Over the course of the conversation, in which the migrant rapidly recounted several of his adventures traveling with the caravan, Irwin realized not only that this migrant's story was very interesting but also that the Honduran man was upset about the misleading, but not totally incorrect, image the caravan had assumed, and its negative effects on the majority of caravan migrants, whom the man saw as legitimate refugees. The migrant wanted to show that there were a handful of problematic individuals traveling with the caravan, under what for him were suspicious circumstances, and that this small group of rabble-rousers were making the migration process difficult, even dangerous, for everyone else.

Irwin told the migrant about Humanizing Deportation, showing him the web page and one of the videos. Irwin then offered to produce a digital story in which the migrant would tell his story, however he wished, communicating whatever message he felt needed to be disseminated. They not only recorded the audio but discussed ideas and made plans for its visual representation. The migrant, realizing that he had no idea where he might be the next day (he was not happy at the shelter in Playas, which he said had bedbugs), was willing to sign his contract that day. Irwin, very conscious of the story's urgency, produced the whole thing as quickly as he could, getting it completed and published in three days (on Wednesday, November 21, 2018; see Un Migrante Hondureño, "Desde la caravana," no. 124a). Irwin would later learn that the migrant jumped the border fence, crossing into the United States that very same day. Indeed, the two would never meet again, although they would be in touch via WhatsApp months later, when the migrant, having twice been deported—once from the United States and once more from Mexico during a second attempt to migrate—was trying again, for a third time, to migrate northward. He had gotten as far as Huixtla, Chiapas, where team member Ernesto Zarco would record a second story with him, and another with his wife, and this time he connected frequently and extensively with Irwin via WhatsApp messages over the course of eight months (Un Migrante Hondureño, "Después de la caravana," no. 124b; Una Migrante Hondureña, "Migrar embarazada," no. 124c).

Later on, we considered stretching our methods further. Beginning in late 2019, Esther Morales, who had already published four stories with Humanizing Deportation, offered to help us by introducing the project actively within her personal networks. Ernesto Zarco, who was carrying out fieldwork in Tijuana at the time, facilitated the production of several stories of migrants whom Morales had identified for us in Tijuana as potential community collaborators. Morales then introduced Zarco to Ana María Arroyo Maldonado, who was living at the time in Durango. Ernesto was unable

to travel to Durango, but Arroyo was happy to collaborate remotely. She knew of the project through Morales, and this personal connection allowed her to feel confident in working with us and to trust Zarco despite never having met him personally. Arroyo recorded her own story, sent photos she wished to include in it to Zarco, and dialogued with him via social media regarding the design of her video, which was published in January of 2020 (Arroyo Maldonado, "Uniendo a través del corazón, lo que la deportación separó," no. 233). Morales and Irwin later followed these same procedures with another of Morales's personal contacts, Marcia Yadira Durón, who worked with Irwin from Tegucigalpa, Honduras, entirely via WhatsApp, to produce her digital story, this one published in March of 2020 (Durón, "Deportación, violencia, discriminación en Honduras," no. 240).

We invented this remote method on the fly in order to respond to migrants who were eager to work with us but lived far from our fieldwork sites, as an exception to our community-collaboration protocols, which we knew functioned best only when we were able to establish deep personal connections with community storytellers through multiple face-to-face meetings. Little did we realize that it would serve as a model for Phase IV production.

As mentioned previously, Phase III production began to slow to a near standstill in March of 2020, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. We soon realized that it would be a long time before we'd be able to consider resuming the kind of hands-on, intensely intimate collaboration that had characterized our method until then. We thought about the possibility of simply ending the fieldwork phase of the project and concentrating all of our energies on diffusion and analysis. But we had a number of pending commitments with migrants still hoping to tell their stories with us. In addition, we were very concerned about the impact of COVID-19 and the hard-line policies implemented to control its spread, especially on migrants at the US-Mexico border, including both migrants in transit hoping to cross to the United States (among them many whose asylum application processes had already begun but were now indefinitely paused) and migrants being deported to Mexico (whose expulsion processes had not been paused at all despite outbreaks of COVID-19 in migrant detention facilities and documented cases of migrants with COVID-19 being deported). Juan Antonio Del Monte and Robert Irwin had begun researching this situation using an improvised method of remote ethnography (see Del Monte and Irwin), and the two realized that it would be useful to try to document some of the issues that emerged through that investigation in the form of digital stories. The challenge, of course, is in establishing trust in a virtual collaboration.

This process has been slow going and onerous compared to our experience

FIGURE 2.2. Esther Morales at her restaurant, La Antigüita, in downtown Tijuana; photo by Leo Peña

working on location. Via contacts in Tijuana, including Esther Morales, we have met several migrants interested in sharing their stories through our archive. Morales met one migrant storyteller in mid-November of 2020, a Guatemalan who chose to identify himself only as Ludvin. Although local team member Sandra Dibble did meet with him to record the audio of his story, the rest of the production process was carried out via WhatsApp. The process, which might have taken two or three weeks, ended up taking ten weeks from start to finish, a total of sixteen different WhatsApp exchanges interrupted briefly when his phone was stolen and he changed his phone number (Ludvin, "Dos separaciones," nos. 257a–b).

While neither our express nor remote production methods are ideal, we have found that it is important to be ready to improvise however we can in order to make our platform available for migrants who wish to share their stories, and we are pleased to have been able to publish testimonial narratives of immigrants whose experiences in extraordinary moments of volatility might otherwise have gone undocumented—to "catch" their stories (Lambert).

ONGOING ISSUES

Aside from the issue of minimizing our interventions in the creative process of community storytellers, we have also struggled a great deal with the duration

of our stories. In introducing the project and its genre to community storytellers, we let them know that shorter videos tend to be most effective in making an impact on the web. But storytellers often have more to say than can be contained within five minutes. Sometimes we have worked with storytellers to edit their videos, whittling off seconds or minutes of less important details. Other times, storytellers have preferred not to make cuts, in which case we might divide the stories into two or more parts. We had never expected to produce more than one digital story by a single community storyteller. Early in our fieldwork, however, when team members Israel Ibarra, Sarah Hart, and Jessica Ordaz recorded Esther Morales's story, they ended up with so much material, much of it very moving, that they were at a loss as to how it might be edited down to a manageable length for a single digital story. After much thought and consultation with Morales and with other team members, they suggested making a multipart story, an idea Morales embraced. The audio recording, edited down to a little under seventeen minutes, yielded three separate digital stories (Morales, "Guerrera incansable," nos. 11a–c).

On still other occasions, migrants have preferred simply to publish a longer story, with some running longer than ten minutes. For example, one of our first community collaborators, Emma Sánchez de Paulsen, who had previous media experience through the Madres Soñadoras group, of which she was an active member, had a very clear vision of what she wanted to communicate in her digital story. She sought not only to tell several key elements of her personal story but also to involve her husband and three sons, inviting each of them to comment on the effects of her deportation on their own lives. Her completed story, after final edits, ended up running eight and a half minutes. Robert Irwin, who was facilitating its production, discussed the issue at length with Sánchez and her sons, the eldest of whom, Alex, argued that while some people surfing the web might not have the patience to watch a video of this length, those who were drawn in and most likely to be moved or influenced by the family's story would be willing to watch it through to the end, leading the family to decide collectively to make no further edits, nor to divide the story into two parts (see Sánchez de Paulsen, no. 4a).

This is not the longest-duration digital story in the archive. Much later in the project's history, members of our fieldwork team in Chiapas (Brooke Kipling, Jeison Cortés Zúñiga, Ross Hernández, and Ernesto Zarco Ortiz) recorded several stories of Cameroonian immigrants who were stuck in Tapachula as they tried to obtain documents necessary to allow them to move through Mexico to the US border to seek asylum there. These migrants had fled significant danger in their home country and had arrived in Chiapas only after crossing in highly precarious conditions from Ecuador, most notably

passing through the notorious Darién Gap (see Miraglia). Their stories were invariably long, as they incorporated their histories of political struggle and endangerment in Cameroon, their difficult and lengthy migration route in the Americas, and the highly aggravating obstacles they were encountering in Mexico, where it appeared that government bureaucrats were actively trying to prevent them from reaching the United States (see Amin, no. 211, clocking in at ten and a half minutes; Gilmore, no. 218, at eleven-plus minutes; Valentine, no. 235, at over twelve and a half minutes).

Classroom projects presented further obstacles, as student teams at Tec de Monterrey campuses (under the supervision of Salvador Leetoy, Óscar Miranda, and Maricruz Castro Ricalde) and Universidad de Guadalajara (working with Enrique Martínez Curiel) facilitated the production of stories as part of class assignments, requiring them to meet fixed deadlines. In other circumstances, migrants would determine how quickly or slowly we proceeded with production; however, in classroom situations, migrants had to agree to predetermined timelines, which sometimes made it more difficult to incorporate the same level of interaction that might otherwise have occurred. We rely on meticulous training and careful supervision by instructors, as well as an enhanced review process by our project webmaster, to make sure student productions meet project standards, and we do not publish all stories produced as class projects, as it has been impossible for some student groups to conform to our project protocols.

The degree of precarity in which some migrants lived also called for revised protocols. For example, although we had always invited migrants who wished to remain anonymous to participate in the project, when we started working with undocumented migrants in the United States, we developed more meticulous protocols of anonymity in which fieldwork team members made sure not to record names, addresses, or other identifiers of migrants anywhere, whether in their computers, telephones, or notebooks, developing the collaboration without leaving any paper or digital trail at all. These protocols could also be applied to migrants in transit in Mexico, who might, for example, feel an urgent need to expose an injustice but might not want their digital stories to be discovered and perhaps misconstrued by immigration officials or in asylum hearings.

In addition to collaboration and production protocols, we have faced challenges to ensure that our archive represents the full spectrum of diversity of the contemporary migrants who might be casually associated with our fieldwork sites (all over Mexico and California) and target populations (undocumented Mexican or Central American migrants, including those who have been deported from the United States to Mexico or those passing

through Mexico on their way to the United States). Given the archive's size, there might be reason to assume that it represents a cross section of deported or deportable migrants.

By some measures it probably does. For example, while we do not work with minors except under the direct supervision of their legal guardians, we have worked with migrants from a wide range of age groups. A browse of our index also indicates that members of our community have come from all over Mexico (and Central America) and have lived all over the United States.

Women may be overrepresented in the archive, especially in the context of deportation: while in recent decades only about 10 percent of deportations to Mexico have been of women, their representation in our archive is more than double that. On the other hand, it might be argued that women's stories may be more likely to introduce certain themes that come up less often among male storytellers (e.g., domestic violence). Ensuring that the range of issues experienced by women migrants is sufficiently visible in the archive may require that women make up more than that 10 percent of digital stories.

As mentioned earlier, although it has been difficult, we have made significant efforts to incorporate stories by migrants who end up in situations of precarity after being deported, including those who end up addicted to drugs or alcohol or who become homeless. Also, while childhood arrivals who have been displaced to Mexico may sometimes be easier to identify than other repatriated migrants, we have been successful in documenting stories by large cross sections of both groups, most especially in Tijuana, where we have been most active and present for the longest period of time. And although from the very beginning many migrants whom we have met have been unwilling to work with us, we have been fortunate in obtaining contributions from such a wide variety of migrants that we have never felt a need to try to persuade those who are reluctant to work with us. There are, however, two areas where we have been less successful.

After our very first summer of production, we noted that none of the stories we produced seemed to include any reference to sexual diversity; the entire archive gave the impression of a heterosexual bias. We realized that some of the migrants who had shared their stories with us were not actually heterosexual, but none had elected to reveal this detail as part of their migration or deportation story. While it may be that sexuality is not relevant to many such stories, it is also likely that societal prejudices may have discouraged some community storytellers from speaking openly about this aspect of their private lives on a public website. While we hoped that Ernesto Zarco, who had experience working with sexually diverse migrants in Tapachula as part of his doctoral dissertation fieldwork, might help us to

address this issue, his efforts were only partially successful, as he and other Phase II and III team members helped produce stories by a number of trans women migrants, but only very few migrants whose stories we have published have identified themselves as homosexual.

We have also been unsuccessful in expanding our archive to incorporate stories by migrants from Indigenous communities. Our fieldwork teams have brought all kinds of expertise to our fieldwork sites, which has made it easier for them to work with people of different social backgrounds, gender or sexual identities, nationalities, and life experiences, yet none of our team members have had the cultural or linguistic skills necessary to obtain the trust of migrants whose first language is not Spanish or English or whose primary cultural identification is with an Indigenous group. To date we have not managed to bring in team members with the necessary expertise to develop the archive in this way.

We should add that Humanizing Deportation's funding has never been guaranteed, and that each grant and each institutional collaboration we have obtained has opened new doors for us but also limited us. For the most part, our research teams have consisted of a handful of faculty members who have signed on to the project through institutional collaborations (mostly determined by personal relationships), graduate students who have volunteered at some of these institutions (again, those most likely to sign on have had existing personal relationships with faculty already involved), and undergraduate students of a few of these same faculty members. In other words, we have never had the luxury of recruiting and funding researchers with expertise in specific areas (e.g., Indigenous studies). More often than not, funding has come through with limited time to prepare for fieldwork, making it necessary to quickly recruit team members from a limited pool. Since we have never had ongoing institutional support, and since most grants offer funding for fixed time frames (usually twelve to eighteen months), it has never really been possible to do long-term planning. On the other hand, this lack of infrastructure—and our luck with obtaining multiple grants over time—has allowed us to react quickly to new trends and issues. Should we manage to obtain new grants in the coming years, we will hopefully be able to design strategies to further enhance the diversity of the materials housed in the archive.

CONCLUSION

Our methods have ultimately incorporated a great deal of improvisation over the years. Inspired significantly by the previous experience of Robert

Irwin (Lizarazo et al.), the protocols introduced for our inaugural fieldwork emphasized flexibility; as we've sometimes joked among ourselves, we've often been driven by a spirit of *rasquachismo* (Ybarra-Frausto) that has sometimes helped us to produce work of sublime eloquence and beauty in an impromptu fashion, out of borrowed, makeshift, or repurposed resources. One of our teams (Lizbeth De La Cruz and Marlené Mercado) recorded the audio for a digital story in a closet (Arturo, no. 26); on another occasion, we recorded a song composed and sung by a community storyteller on a street bench in downtown Tijuana while she was on lunch break from her job at a local supermarket (Román, no. 101).

This flexibility has allowed our fieldwork teams to solve problems creatively and to respond helpfully to storytellers whose living situations, schedules, and resources would have made it difficult or impossible for them to contribute to the project under more rigid protocols. In many cases—for example, when the team members working with Esther Morales found that they couldn't edit down her complicated and compelling story to a single five-minute digital story and proposed instead to divide it into three parts (Morales, nos. 11a–c), or the afternoon Irwin met the first migrant caravan contributor to the project in Playas de Tijuana and on the spot came up with a way to enable this migrant to tell his story (Un Migrante Hondureño, no. 124a) when only a single meeting and no further contact were possible—solutions developed on the fly became part of the more official protocols of the project that were incorporated into training programs for new fieldwork team members. While in a highly volatile context in which punitive migration-control laws and enforcement policies, as well as immigration itself, have become increasingly controversial, we are always ready to confront new challenges, and our commitment to offering opportunities to migrants who wish to share their stories on our platform has been unwavering. Our guiding principle remains to make every effort possible to ensure that each digital story we produce reflects the vision of the community member who is its author.

As a result, we believe that the Humanizing Deportation project not only documents a wide variety of aspects of the dehumanizing consequences of contemporary migration-control regimes in the United States as well as Mexico in the form of a robust archive of experiences and feelings, but also successfully captures many of the insights, lessons, and strategies shared by community storytellers that reflect what we've called here their migrant knowledge. As Sujatha Fernandes admits, even in the most carefully curated contexts of community storytelling, "stories can exceed the framings and protocols that try to contain them. [. . .] People's lived experiences, memories

of collective struggle, deeply held feelings, and traumatic experiences may interject into their narrative in ways that disrupt the power of dominant discourses" (12). We've tried our best not to circumscribe the stories we help to produce within any predetermined rubrics, tried not to suppress any elements that do not fit neatly into prescribed paradigms, even when the stories may end up expressing ideas our team members may not agree with or do not fully understand. Listening is as important to our production of stories as it is to our analysis of them. The following chapters offer close readings of many digital stories and highlight the knowledge their migrant creators share.

CHAPTER 3

MOTHERHOOD, SPACES, AND CARE IN THE DIGITAL NARRATIVES OF HUMANIZING DEPORTATION

MARICRUZ CASTRO RICALDE

Translated by Tim Havard and Haley Williams

THE SEPARATION OF MIGRANT FAMILIES was one of the main policies of the Trump administration and was apparently designed to attract significant media attention and provoke sentiments of xenophobia among Trump's followers, as is evident in any number of headlines from 2019. One article referred to migrant families or unaccompanied minors caught crossing the US southern border: "The Border Patrol detained 76,103 migrants in February, an 11-year high for that month. Among those intercepted were about 40,000 members of families, two-thirds more than in January" (Jordan and Dickerson). While the Trump administration's actions have led to appalling situations, they have also served to distract attention from the fact that a reverse phenomenon has existed for many years: mothers and fathers who have been living in the United States with their families and who one day fail to come home. These mothers and fathers are detained and returned to Mexico, sometimes after court proceedings that drag on for months.

The Humanizing Deportation digital archive includes numerous stories that describe these family separations. Women (and men) now living in Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez, and Mexico City, to name a few of the cities where these narrators currently reside, testify about the trauma they have suffered. Some describe the anguish of not being able to tell anyone about what has happened to them, and once apprehended they may have no indication of how long their detention will last. There is also often a lack of information concerning their legal options, the best alternatives for their cases, the actual costs involved, and the likelihood for success. Many end up giving up on appealing deportation orders after exhausting their financial resources, and they are left only with the option to accept deportation to a country they no longer recognize as their own.

This chapter focuses on a number of cases of the deportation of women who are thereby forced into "distance motherhood." Despite the fact that the possibilities for family reunification may be beyond their control, they are often judged as being "good" or "bad" mothers without any consideration given to this extenuating and unavoidable factor (Lagomarsino, 24; Wagner, 327–328). They are forced into an experience referred to as "transnational family" membership, a term that makes visible "other possible family structures in which family members do not live together and are not physically present" (Zapata Martínez, 16). The distance of separation implies a reorganization of family structure, responsibilities within it, and its place in the affective network. This restructuring involves a series of challenges, such as the forging of agreements and alliances to ensure the family's collective well-being.

While extensive literature on the subject of migrant women already exists, only a relatively small body of literature addresses the particular phenomenon that occurs "when the distancing of the father or mother is the product of forced migration, as is the case with deportation" (Torre Cantalapiedra, Rodríguez Gutiérrez, and Rodríguez Gutiérrez, 3). In this context, a gender perspective was introduced only a little over a decade ago. In the cases analyzed here, some mothers continue to maintain a relationship with their partner who still resides in the United States and is responsible for the care of their children, while others have no contact with the father with whom the children reside. These examples demonstrate a wide range of possibilities concerning how motherhood is experienced and understood, despite the distance involved. Each of these women has interpreted, in her own way, her role as mother, even while being defined by social and cultural norms that impose a meaning of motherhood and its associated duties.

The complexity inherent to the topic and the historical weight placed on ideas concerning the responsibilities, behaviors, and attitudes that women must adopt in their role as mothers offer theoretical entry points in assessing these case studies. On a material level, housekeeping is associated with order, cleanliness, and general welfare. Following this line of thought, cooking, for example, is displaced from the economic to the emotional sphere, positioned as an expression of maternal affection. According to the social constructions that have relegated women to the realm of the private sphere and the space of the intimate, mothers are responsible for the collective management of emotions.

The methodological perspective adopted here is qualitative, of a descriptive-analytical nature. Given the essential characteristics of digital storytelling as an audiovisual genre, the corpus of analysis is not formed

by interviews nor, strictly speaking, by life stories. Since digital narrative is conceived of as an empowering tool for storytellers, the facilitator intervenes minimally and acts as a bridge, almost exclusively as a support for technological issues, to produce the story (Burgess, 207–208; Worcester, 91). The narratives that constitute my units of analysis are therefore intentional and definitive, each addressing, in some way, the issue of "distance motherhood" and its relationship with spaces (places, routines, one's own body, and the bodies of one's children). Nevertheless, the mediator did not pose this as a topic, as is often the case with questionnaires or semistructured or in-depth interviews. Consequently, approaches to maternity are not necessarily developed as central ideas in these audiovisual documents, nor do some of the central points for this work appear programmatically and continuously throughout them.

The corpus comprises ten digital stories of seven female narrators. In order of appearance, these narratives are "El muro separa a familias pero jamás el sentimiento" and "Separados por leyes inflexibles, reunidos por el amor inquebrantable" (Sánchez de Paulsen, nos. 4a–4b); "Mamá Leona contra el muro" and "El amor por las hijas ante la violencia doméstica y la deportación" (Galván, nos. 19, 128), "La deportación es como un vivir sin vivir" (A. L. López, no. 48); "Dreaming in the Shadows" and "Feelings Are Feelings and Family Is Family" (Mendoza, nos. 115a–b); "Madres deportadas en México" (Santaana, no. 116); "Ni de aquí ni de allá" (Mora, no. 132); and "Salir adelante entre discriminaciones y bendiciones" (Jiménez, no. 148a). Some female storytellers in the Humanizing Deportation repository relate their stories in the first person but prefer to remain anonymous or use a pseudonym; however, the participants in all of the audiovisual productions in this analysis use their names, show their faces, and include various images (photographs, drawings, videos) of a personal nature. In these narratives, there is a clear "process of self-representation, through which people express their problems from their own subjectivity, experience, and creativity, since they decide what they want to tell and how to tell it" (Calvillo Vázquez and Hernández Orozco, "Potencialidades," 89).

Through close analysis of these testimonial narratives, I will offer portraits of maternity, illustrating how the separation of families forces us to qualify certain existing stereotypes and reinforce others, while simultaneously proposing various ways to understand the role of the mother. I will show how deported women have experienced separation from their children, highlighting the significance of the idea of lost space (their homes, their country, the bodies of the people they love). Finally, I will demonstrate how the harsh experience of deportation has compelled these women to devise strategies

for maintaining their emotional ties while still contributing to the material and intangible aspects of care. Certain existing academic studies on the subject will serve as a counterpoint and form of dialogue with the narratives of these storytellers.

TRANSNATIONAL MOTHERS AND THE SPACES OF DEPORTATION

In the digital stories analyzed in this chapter, many of the emotions expressed serve to configure a clear semantic field of pain, guilt, anxiety, uncertainty, and confusion. This group of sensations is linked in some way to the anxiety these mothers feel when they are not performing a maternity that is consistent with internalized social expectations. In the case of mothers who migrate and leave children behind in order to support them with remittances, family separation is tolerated; for deported mothers, however, the economic effect is the opposite, because the mothers may themselves require support, even from their own children, as is made evident in the analysis that follows. The guilt that deported women feel because of their failure to fulfill, either partially or fully, their assigned roles as mothers increases when combined with a sense of meaninglessness that stems primarily from not being able to be with their children. The stories selected for this chapter are narrated with strong emotion and profound sorrow. The videos communicate the high levels of anxiety experienced by these women as physical proximity has become an imperative need, a notion that can be perceived in the narratives of three of the storytellers: "How can they possibly believe it is right to leave young children, teenagers, without their mother?" (Sánchez de Paulsen, no. 4a); "That is something I still don't understand—how people can think that kids are okay without their mothers" (Mendoza, no. 115b); "They don't know what's going on. They don't understand, they just see their mother is being taken from them" (Mora, no. 132). According to París Pombo and Peláez Rodríguez, "Deported women were not only displaced across borders, but were also forced to leave a familiar place that they considered home. Given that identity is relational, well-being is associated with the meaningful relationships formed throughout one's life. The damage done to a mother forced to leave her children results in a brutal rupture of significant bonds" (6). Deportation is an experience marked by multiple undesired displacements, and through these displacements, various types of significant spaces are lost.

The life stories of the group of narrators recorded in the Humanizing Deportation archive reflect the enormous difficulties of reintegrating into Mexican society. Emma Sánchez de Paulsen expresses the bewilderment of

having been deported: "You don't know what will become of your life, you don't know what will become of your children" (no. 4a). Rocío Santaana observes, "It was difficult. It was very, very difficult to fit in. I spent two years without going out, deeply depressed" (no. 116). Liliana Mora explains, "My whole family is in Los Angeles, my dad, my sisters, my children. I have family here, but family that I don't really know, that I have never lived with. I've met them, but we have nothing in common" (no. 132). Lupita Jiménez states, "I arrived in Tijuana feeling lost, humiliated, hurt, alone, empty, without family" (no. 148a). Sánchez de Paulsen's uncertainty, Jiménez's unfamiliarity with an unrecognizable country, Mora's lack of emotional ties in Mexico, and Santaana's depression are all emotional states that serve to synthesize the experiences of thousands of deported women. For mothers, these concerns are exacerbated by psychologically and pragmatically "loading" them with a series of coercive elements linked to idealizations of maternity (Stang, 135).

The difficulty of integrating into these new spaces that they express coincides with the findings of Abrego and Schmalzbauer (10–17) and is exacerbated by the challenges involved in residing in border cities like Tijuana or metropolises like Mexico City. The absence of care networks and the lack of knowledge or nonexistence of social services make these places especially inhospitable for women. In her narrative, Rocío Santaana explains what happened when she arranged for her two-year-old son to travel to Mexico to stay with her, stating, "I had him here, for two or three months, I think, but it was very difficult for me. Without a job, living at my mother's house, I didn't even know what to do with him." When she tried to enroll him in school, he was rejected because he couldn't speak Spanish. Finally, she made the decision, "a very tough one," to send him back to the United States (Santaana, no. 116). Emma Sánchez de Paulsen had a similar experience, noting that her three children were not entitled to vaccinations or allowed access to health services in Mexico because they were citizens of the United States. She and her husband therefore decided that when each child reached school age, it would be best for them to live with him in California (Sánchez de Paulsen, no. 4a). Ana Laura López describes reasons why integration is complicated: "It was difficult to find a job, get identity papers, to find a point from where I could start afresh" (no. 48).

Deported women therefore face a set of challenges that prevent them from meeting the social expectations surrounding their role as mothers. In Mexico, they long for the opportunity to exercise an intensive maternity in which the responsibility for childcare falls exclusively to them (Mata, 202–203). Representations of this type of maternity highlight the relevance of the "total and absolute physical presence of the mother for the well-being of the child and

which determines adequate guidelines for their care and upbringing, maintaining conventional ideas of what is expected from a mother" (Hernández Cordero, 100). This ideal involves the reproduction of the social practices of child rearing, protection, socialization, and care (Hernández Cordero, 95). In the narratives I analyze here, however, a recurring and prevalent theme is that deported women cannot exercise an intensive maternity for some of the reasons previously stated, such as the lack of support networks and the difficulties in accessing social services for them and their children, nor are they able to provide economic support or social capital for the nuclear family because of a lack of knowledge about their environment and positionality, legal vacuums, lost papers and documentation, and difficulties securing a job, among many other reasons.

DEPORTED MOTHERS AND SYMBOLIC DISLOCATIONS: WHERE IS HOME?

We tend to think of "space" as our material surroundings with clearly defined geographical coordinates. But the notion of space can be expanded to think of bodies as well as memories and emotional relationships. In the previous section, I focused on the new contexts of these deported mothers and the multiple frustrations they experience because of their circumstances. This section concerns the home as a space that is conceived of materially and located in the United States. For this reason, I use the concept of "dislocation" to signify an experience of symbolic segmentation that includes the notion of citizenship, the separation of families, the failure to fulfill expectations regarding economic and social improvement, and feelings of not belonging (Peláez Rodríguez, 12).

In the corpus studied, home is equated with a desired affective universe and, by a synecdochic movement, so is the country these women have decided to make their own. In her narrative, Tania Mendoza speaks of how she arrived in the United States as a little girl and went to school there beginning in prekindergarten (no. 115a). Years later, when Mendoza was deported, her daughter remained in the United States, where she had been born. Shortly thereafter, the father prevented Mendoza from having any form of contact with her daughter. When Mendoza then balked at signing a form in order for her daughter to obtain a US passport so that the father could take her to Mexico (but not to Tijuana to visit her mother), he challenged the couple's dormant custody agreement, allowing Mendoza an entry to demand renewed contact with her daughter while declining to challenge his de facto custody. Mendoza relates, "I understand my daughter needs to be in the United States

because I would like to be there too. I wouldn't want to take her out of her habitat because that was my habitat too, and I wouldn't want her to feel how I feel, so I don't want to take her from her country" (no. 115b).

This statement demonstrates agency, an agency both for her daughter and for herself, in multiple ways. Primarily, despite wanting to be with her daughter, Mendoza postpones the fulfillment of her own desires in order to respect those of her child. Secondly, by recognizing the United States, the place where her daughter was born, as "her habitat," she normalizes the inconsequence of her own birth country in her everyday life. Thirdly, Mendoza acknowledges how she feels outside "her" country ("I wouldn't want her to feel how I feel"). Mendoza's narrative allows us to see the significance of identifying physical space as our place. Consequently, mothers accept that their descendants belong in the United States, separated from them, because it is not simply a place or a country but "their habitat," their home. This "home" carries with it a powerful connotation that transcends semantic meaning through the acquisition of the symbolic attributes of a place that is "better" than any other.

For her part, Ana Laura López emphasizes, "Despite having lived almost sixteen years in the United States and being an honorable person, I was never able to fix my immigration status" (no. 48). The title of her narrative, "La deportación es como un vivir sin vivir" (Deportation is like life without living), configures deportation as a place where something anomalous happens—you are there without being there—and reveals the feelings of alienation characteristic of repatriated people. López expands on the sense of loss that accompanies deportation and how it is exacerbated when families are broken up: "All that is over. Now, in Mexico, it has been exceedingly difficult. I saw Danny, my youngest son, after a year and a half. [. . .] I haven't seen Angel, my oldest son, and I have no clear hope of knowing when I will see him again. I have even less hope for the three of us being together" (no. 48). The feeling of incompleteness, lack of fulfillment, and not belonging can be explained "in the sense of 'here in part' " (París Pombo and Peláez Rodríguez, 5).

When deported mothers live somewhere different from their children and, for various reasons, such as problems with former partners, are unable to maintain even virtual contact, a sense of failure in their role as mothers materializes. This leads to experiences of depression and a worsened emotional state, especially when they feel as though they are in a hostile environment. "Why are they so happy and together, while I am alone and without my daughters?" Galván asks (no. 19). Mendoza reflects on "all the things we go through," explaining, "We are just trying to have a better life, a better

FIGURE 3.1. Ana Laura López of Deportados Unidos en la Lucha, Mexico City; photo by Leo Peña

living for our kids" (no. 115b). For these mothers, rebuilding their lives and moving on is not an option without the physical proximity of their children. They believe that the actions they take to supervise and care for their children are temporary and insufficient (París Pombo and Peláez Rodríguez, 6, 10). Emptiness, depression, the feeling that their lives have no meaning, and a high level of discontent with where they live reinforce the influence that notions of a hegemonic femininity exert over them.

Sánchez de Paulsen explains it in the following way: "When they told me I couldn't return for ten years, I felt my world was falling apart. You feel like you're floating, you're in a state of shock" (no. 4a). The title of Ana Laura López's narrative (Deportation is like life without living), Tania Mendoza's desire to be in the same place that her daughter wants to be, Lupita Jiménez's feeling of being "lost" and "empty," and Emma Sánchez de Paulsen's state of "shock" and sense of floating are some examples of the manifestations of this feeling of incompleteness, of something unfinished, as experienced by deported women. Echavarría-Canto interprets this as a state of symbolic dislocation in which the subject is split and their decisions are "partially conditioned, in the sense that they involve both the sedimented practices (social, political, or ideological) of the subject and their freedom to choose" (13). Beliefs about maternity and its sedimented practices being full and valid only if one is in the same place as one's children mean that these mothers inhabit two spaces simultaneously: the present and the past, the here that is rejected and the there to which they aspire to return. Although the situation and the environment require the construction of new identities, the spatial-temporal dislocations described here prevent this or make it extremely difficult, tending to fuse with other dislocations related to separations from one's partner, extended family, friends, job, and much more.

Another type of space that appears in the mothers' narratives are favorite places that formed part of their routines. When the storytellers try to explain the meaning of deportation, they often refer to their daily lives, which are linked to specific spaces. Ana Laura López talks about daily life with her children, relating, "We used to watch movies together, go for walks, on weekends we woke up to watch the sun rising over the lake" (no. 48). For her part, Emma Sánchez de Paulsen, who was able to return to the United States after waiting out a penalty of ten years and undertaking a lengthy (two and a half year) process of applying for readmission as the spouse of a US citizen, lists a series of places she would have liked to share with her children when they were young. Thanks to her return, she now visits these places as a kind of symbolic pilgrimage in an attempt to make up for lost

FIGURE 3.2. Monserrat Galván in downtown Tijuana; photo by Leo Peña

time: "I am trying to do with my family now everything I could not do during the years I was deported." They have been to places such as Legoland and to the schools where the children studied, to meet their teachers. Now Sánchez de Paulsen takes her children to their current schools, never misses an academic ceremony or sporting event, and ensures that they get to the doctor promptly when necessary (no. 4b). Rocío Santaana regrets not having been present at important moments in her children's lives as a result of her deportation: "And even if the years pass and I see them again, I will have lost ten years. I will have missed birthdays, school events, their entire adolescence" (no. 116). Ana Laura López's and Rocío Santaana's memories, as well as Emma Sánchez de Paulsen's return to the important spaces of her children's childhood and adolescence, demonstrate that shared places are common in the existential journey that helps to form family memories. Recovering the importance of shared spaces in narratives is a strategic way to show how, even when there has been material displacement, these mothers continued to watch over their children in symbolic terms.

BODIES AND MOTHERHOOD DURING DEPORTATION

Although the storytellers' new surroundings, the homes they miss, and the spaces forming part of their daily routine all carry great weight in the

narratives analyzed, the presence of their children is what deported mothers miss the most, a separation exacerbated by the fact that they remain deprived of physical contact. Mata affirms that gender stereotypes have highlighted physical closeness "as a fundamental element in achieving 'good motherhood'" (204). The powerlessness that emerges in these narratives can be understood in light of these ideas and the implication that by not fulfilling their stereotypical roles, the women are "bad mothers."

In the narratives of these storytellers, therefore, feelings of love fuse with verbal expression and displays of physical affection. Monserrat Galván, fleeing domestic violence, initially returned to Mexico with her two young US-born daughters. When her partner convinced her to return to the United States, the girls were able to enter the country as citizens, but Galván had to seek another way across the border, leading to her apprehension and deportation back to Mexico. Continuing problems with the father led to him cutting off all contact between Galván and her daughters. At the time that the first of her two digital stories was recorded in 2017, five years had passed without any contact between them. Galván's greatest sorrow remains the impossibility of "being able to hug them and tell them how much I love them" (no. 19). One of Emma Sánchez de Paulsen's children describes the separation caused by deportation as if the family were a body that had been fragmented: "It was as if we had lost a part of us we could never get back" (no. 4b).

Being deprived of the longed-for physical proximity of their children, mothers design certain strategies that help them to feel as though they are still performing their maternal role. Monserrat Galván states, "Even though distance separates us, you are always in my heart. Not a moment goes by without me thinking of you. You are the driving force in my daily struggle for you. There is never a moment of peace in my heart because I never know how you are really doing" (no. 19). In Galván's case, a double movement is proposed to preserve the emotional bond, to maintain her daughters' presence through thought and the need to let them know this. Because of this, Galván wrote a book of stories that she reads and illustrates with her own color drawings.

According to Eva Kittay, the body is where maternal care is most fully expressed (París Pombo and Peláez Rodríguez, 5). Concerns about health and symptomatic manifestations can be detected because of the proximity of bodies that can be touched and examined; one can be asked to move one's body in certain ways and about how one feels. These storytellers report that what they long for the most are acts of affection, but they also miss performing the activities inextricably linked to maternal affection.

We see the love that they feel for their children transmuted into a constant concern for their education and health. For example, Emma Sánchez de Paulsen prepares meals, supervises homework, and plays children's games with her children even though they are now in high school (no. 4b), performing activities to make up for the time she believes has been lost because of her deportation. Ana Laura López believes that as a result of her deportation, "everything that had been my life is over" (no. 48). She then offers details of what has ended and what is in effect the meaning of her existence: "Every morning there I would wake up, check that my children got ready for school; I took them to school, fixed them something to eat, and waited for them to come home in the afternoons" (no. 48). Rocío Santaana uses terms nearly identical to those of Ana Laura López to express what deportation has meant for her: "My life is over. I lost my life of twenty years. [. . .] My family fell apart" (no. 116). Monserrat Galván's hope of one day being reunited with her daughters is condensed into a dream of what may happen in the future, when she will "prepare their favorite meal, sleep together, hug them, as we used to do" (no. 128).

These testimonies reveal the continuing importance of this intensive mothering model and how it can be idealized by mothers even as circumstances do not allow them to exercise its requisite behaviors. Meanwhile, existing social conditions continue to naturalize and thereby exacerbate the women's predicament, since, structurally, both society and the state turn a blind eye to the vulnerability of women, in particular those who migrate or are repatriated. Without referring to the causes leading to deportation, much less the reasons for migration from Mexico to the United States, these narratives indicate the magnitude of the imaginaries concerning maternity and the enormous weight women bear in terms of delivering affection, caretaking, and assuming responsibility for their children.

These stories embody the following paradox: while they manifest the existence of "paternalistic cultural constructs, within an excessively traditional vision of the family," it is necessary to consider that they are the testimonies of women who reveal their desires and, with them, their right to determine how they want to live as a social group (Lagomarsino, 5). Intimacy is created within the same space as ideas concerning care and the transmission of values, where physical contact is considered the principal means of expressing emotional attachment. "All my interviews were conducted through a pane of glass. I could never hug my children. That was what hurt me the most," Liliana Mora notes regarding her time in detention (no. 132).

Separated from the bodies of their loved ones, deported mothers seem to have transformed these bodies into an extension of themselves. This leads

to the coherence of Eva Kittay's explanation concerning the "here" of mothers corresponding to the "here" of their children (París Pombo and Peláez Rodríguez, 5). When these indices do not coincide, mothers may make the decision to remain symbolically in the space of their children and not in the space where their own body is located, giving rise to the symbolic dislocation discussed in the previous section.

SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

Remarks from many of the narratives clearly reveal how forced displacement can lead to a reconfiguration of family roles, even when mothers themselves are not satisfied with this arrangement. Since these mothers would prefer to continue with an intensively managed maternity, their situations represent a challenge to imaginaries about "the traditional figure of the woman/mother charged with the care of her children" (Betancourt Burón and Gross Gutiérrez, 161). As I have shown, the impact of these stereotypes is a major source of stress and depression that prevents or hinders these women's integration into their new environment.

The reconstruction of female and maternal identities is complex and extremely difficult for women who have been deported. They frequently and repeatedly suffer feelings of guilt about their perceived failure as mothers and experience an urgent desire to return to the United States. Because of this, in combination with either successive failures in their attempts to cross the border, fear of new immigration penalties that such attempts might entail, unresolved personal problems with their former partner or the father of their children, problems with their family, or legal complications, these mothers are forced to make drastic decisions about how to practice their maternity. Peláez Rodríguez relates that the deported mother "is forced to give up her right to care, and her agency to mother the way she knows requires a reformulation. Here is where the machinery of resources come in handy, especially symbolic ones" (17). "Distance motherhood" implies a break with traditional ideas about the exercising of maternity. The mothers' decision to allow their children to grow up while physically displaced from them "for their own good" can, however, reinforce a sense of agency and lead to an imagining of a life different from the one they knew.

The case of Emma Sánchez de Paulsen is especially interesting in this context, since she is the only mother thus far within the Humanizing Deportation archive who has documented through digital storytelling her reunification with her family on US soil. Her story demonstrates the difficulties women face when the expectations and desire to exercise a maternity characterized

FIGURE 3.3. Emma Sánchez de Paulsen and Michael Paulsen in downtown Tijuana; photo by Leo Peña

by physical closeness undergo a complete transformation. While this is a common feature of the narratives of this corpus, this case is unique because the transnational nuclear family remained united throughout the period of forced separation.

In the first of her two narratives, Sánchez de Paulsen narrates the story of her attempt to resolve her immigration status (no. 4a). Despite being married to a US military veteran and mothering three young, US-born children (aged two months, three years, and four years at the time of her family's separation), she received a ten-year penalty for residing in the United States without documentation. The children initially remained in her care in Mexico, and her husband traveled to see them on weekends. Because the children did not have dual citizenship, however, Sánchez de Paulsen faced difficulties in getting them vaccinated or enrolling them in public schools, which led her and her husband to decide that when the children reached the age of five, they would return to live in their birth country.

The Paulsen family was therefore forced not only to become a transnational family but also to establish a transnational chain of care. Both conditions, the type of family and the exercising of motherhood and fatherhood at a distance, represented a challenge that included conflicts and bleak moments for all family members. For example, Sánchez de Paulsen decided to live in Tijuana since it was the closest point near the border to where her family lived in Southern California, thus making it easier for the family to meet on weekends or every two weeks; however, the endless lines for crossing the border and the travel time involved caused multiple disruptions to the children's school routine and the father's work schedule. The solution that the family came to was to travel during the early hours of the morning to avoid these causes of disruption, but that meant that they arrived directly at their destinations (school and place of work) with the father driving the sleeping children.

The Paulsen family illustrates a kind of global chain of care. That is, a transnational nexus is established between both households by which care is transferred based on axes of power (gender, ethnicity, social class, place of origin) (Cerrutti and Maguid, 13). Traditionally, a family becomes transnational when a father or a mother migrates and leaves another family member in charge of the children; the person who moves represents a better economic option than the person who remains in the place of origin and assumes day-to-day responsibility for the family. The Paulsen family's case destabilizes this model, since the place of origin is in the country that deported Emma Sánchez de Paulsen, and, despite the fact that the main day-to-day childcare responsibility falls on her husband, the narrative clarifies the existence of intrafamily processes that also appear in other narratives.

For example, the eldest son in the family had to care for his younger siblings while the father was working away from home. At times, the father was unable to attend meetings or important school events, a situation that the father, mother, and children in both narratives regret. The middle child says that one of the most difficult situations was not having someone to help them with their schoolwork. All three children mention the stress of arriving at school late and not doing well on their homework. The youngest child complains about "not knowing what it is like to have both parents in the same place" (Sánchez de Paulsen, no. 4a).

Torres Baquero writes, "The experience of transnationality configures new types of links and organization at the level of the family group, as well as in the mother-child relationship" (75). The Paulsen family's experience demonstrates how roles change and how power relations are transformed as the eldest son is also given authority when the father is not there or has not yet arrived home. This reorganization is more pronounced in Lupita Jiménez's story (no. 148a). When Jiménez, a single mother, was deported, her oldest son, her "greatest treasure," was twenty-one years old. He dropped out of college so that he could work and earn income to pay the rent, buy food, and care for his two younger siblings. With his salary, he was able to send money to his mother at the detention center so that they could talk on the phone; a call at the detention center cost twenty-five dollars for three minutes. Jiménez states, "I spoke to them every two weeks, if at all. I don't know what hurt me more, thinking about the sacrifices of my children, my eldest son, my dearest cutie, or my body, having been there so long, frozen by the cold and so much pain" (no. 148a). The role assumed by her eldest son as provider and caretaker, essentially becoming the single head of household his mother had been, would continue after her deportation. The roles assumed by Emma Sánchez de Paulsen's and Lupita Jiménez's older children represent both a reorganization of family functions and authority as well as a challenge to the beliefs that women are the best equipped to care for, protect, and provide affection for the other family members.

The family remaining in the United States functions as a protective net and provides some relief to repatriated mothers. Liliana Mora's children, Mani and Roberto, were five and seven years old when she was detained by immigration authorities in 2015. She did not see them again until much later. "They should offer the opportunity to explain this to the children," Mora says, because the children do not understand why their mother does not live with them. With all the grief this situation has caused her, her father and sisters have taken care of the children while Mora lives in Mexico City (no. 132). For Tania Mendoza, the affective closeness with a large extended

family living in the United States has provided invaluable emotional support in the fight for the shared custody of her young daughter. Mendoza relates, "The family never, never forgets and never leaves you behind." Prior to her deportation as a young single mother, she notes, "They were always there. They took care of my daughter while I went to school and while I kept working under the table as well because there were things that couldn't get done" (no. 115a). Mendoza never gave up, and she finally managed, through legal channels, to get back in contact with her daughter (no. 115b).

While emotional support usually comes from a family member, regardless of whether the family remains in the United States or lives in Mexico, there are times when this support comes in the form of new emotional ties. In the story Monserrat Galván wrote for her daughters, she states, "In that jungle there were other lionesses in the same situation and they offered help. She met the mother lioness, Yoli. She helped her find comfort and love and to have a new family" (Galván, no. 19)—referring here to Yolanda Varona, founder of DREAMers Moms Tijuana-USA in Tijuana (who tells her own story of family separation; see Varona, no. 82). Rocío Santaana works with this same organization in Mexico City (no. 116), while Liliana Mora has found a just cause in making visible "los pochos" who suffer discrimination in Mexico City. "People look at you as if to say: Don't you know you are not Mexican? [. . .] I am glad that we are a new community, making history in Mexico," Mora relates (no. 132). Ana Laura López, likewise, founded and continues to lead Deportados Unidos en la Lucha, an advocacy and support group for deported emigrants in Mexico City. The women's perception of belonging to a group, whether familial or social, is fundamental to accepting their status as deportees and to starting the process of integration into a new environment.

MOTHERHOOD AND CARE

These stories draw attention to two important issues regarding motherhood and care at a distance. The first is that the idea of maternal care by deported women who are separated from their children has been transformed. Research shows that many deported mothers, in despair, try to return to the United States. Despite understanding that illegal reentry carries severe penalties, many save up to pay someone to help them cross the border. The prospect of returning home and reuniting with their children sometimes helps them to overcome depression by giving them a goal to work toward (Rodríguez Gutiérrez, 76–98). That is, in the first shock of the separation, it would seem that physical closeness is essential to exercising motherhood.

But the unlikelihood of reunification forces many other mothers to think of other ways to reconfigure family life. In none of the cases analyzed here did deportation involve a disengagement from family back in the United States. On the contrary, feelings of motherhood seem to become more acute through separation. Hence, the women look for ways to continue expressing their maternal affections. The anguish with which they tell their stories is linked to the conviction that many years will pass before they can return. This stress is exacerbated by the difficulties they face in arranging visits to Mexico for their children. Problems with ex-partners (the cases of Tania Mendoza or Monserrat Galván) may prevent them from even communicating with their children. Deported mothers must therefore figure out how to continue to maintain loving and caring ties despite the distance.

With the exception of Galván, all the storytellers were able to stay in touch with their children. Many of the photographs that illustrate their stories come from the social media or other communications apps they use to maintain contact. Long-distance care for deported mothers, then, seems to imply staying up-to-date with the day-to-day lives of their children. While they can't cook for them or give them a hug, virtual affection helps draw them closer, showing that they are still by their children's side and still care about them. In other words, they continue "to be and make family" (Hernández Cordero, 101).

The second idea is that gestures of care go beyond everyday contact. For example, faced with the impossibility of having any contact at all with her daughters, Monserrat Galván first wrote a storybook. In it, she records everything she lived: meeting the father of her daughters, their migration, her eventual forced separation from her daughters. She narrates this story directly to her daughters; likewise, in the first of her two digital stories, she expresses, "Although distance separates us, you have always been in my heart. Not for a moment did I stop thinking about you. They are my engine every day to fight for you. There is not a moment of tranquility in my heart because I do not know how they really are. This separation has been very difficult for me as well as for you" (Galván, no. 19). In that same story, Galván reads from the storybook, whose protagonist, a mother lioness, is clearly based on herself; she reads, "She wants her daughters to know that she has not stopped fighting to get them back" (no. 19). The digital story includes her email address at the end, in hopes that her daughters will one day come across the video and contact her. Thus the digital story itself becomes a potential means of interfamilial communication, not only a recounting of instances of care but an act of care. Her story is itself a transnational action, not only an attempt to treat her own trauma but an endeavor to contribute to the emotional well-being of her children.

CONCLUSION

Abrego and Schmalzbauer (10–17) have analyzed the importance of spaces in the experiences of undocumented mothers and how they shape their possibilities for agency. They show how the different experiences of women who are mothers are configured in accordance with the characteristics of the places where they live. The storytellers in this chapter express their desire to exercise an intensive maternity, but their testimonies attest to the presence of numerous impediments to attaining this desire at a distance. Their narratives demonstrate the importance for them to have jobs, information about and access to social services, and inclusion in support networks, among the fulfillment of other needs. Their process of integration into new spaces of residence often depends on these basic needs being met. The difficulties they face upon repatriation also highlight the ways in which the exercising of their motherhood is not entirely in their control, since structural conditions pose obstacles to their personal will, even when they try to put family first.

The belief that they are not fulfilling their obligations as mothers and the feelings of guilt that accompany this sense of failure appear repeatedly in the narratives. If female migration challenges a mother's ability to perform traditional roles, becoming the main provider for their families serves to qualify the negativity with which they are judged (Wagner, 335). In contrast, this does not occur with deported women who break with gender stereotypes by not being physically close to their offspring and by not being able to contribute to their care or material well-being.

In short, the maternal bond remains, even though it cannot assume a traditional configuration. Expressions of affection are intensified in virtual communications, and, although the perspective of an idealized motherhood is a contributing factor, it is also true that such intensity contributes to the persistence of emotional bonds between mothers and their children. Regardless of whether the development of strategies to maintain affections and contribution to the rearing of their children are effective, the importance of physical closeness should not be underestimated. This is particularly true when it is the desire of the subjects, regardless of whether it is based on social imaginaries or stereotypes. Respect for the desire of those living outside their countries of origin to be reunited with their loved ones should prevail in migration policies.

The behaviors and attributes associated with motherhood multiply when they are adopted by a familial group as the result of readjustments forced by the mother's deportation. The figures of the father (the Paulsen family), grandparents, and other people involved in the care and upbringing of the

children (aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends in the cases of Tania Mendoza and Liliana Mora) become valued in different ways. It is necessary, however, to qualify the previous statement, since even though intimate-partner violence has not been directly addressed here, different types of violence between partners are present in several of the narratives (domestic violence appears explicitly in the stories of Galván and Mora). According to Wagner, deportation makes visible or triggers familial problems, but it can also alleviate them in various ways, such as favoring the escape of circles of violence, fostering a closer link with existing care networks, finding other employment possibilities, and building new forms of subjectivity (340).

Finally, I wish to illuminate how the globalization of care often involves a double task for deported mothers. On the one hand, they must seek their livelihoods and find the necessary motivation to integrate into their new lives. On the other hand, they are forced to imagine a way to maintain emotional ties at a distance, using strategies and tools for which no one has prepared them. In both cases, stereotypes about women and the exercising of maternity become yet another burden that makes it difficult to conceive of other ways to be a mother.

CHAPTER 4

DEPORTED CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS "FROM THE FAMOUS ESTADOS UNIDOS" DREAMING IN TIJUANA

LIZBETH DE LA CRUZ SANTANA

THE DEPORTATION OF MIGRANTS WHO came to the United States as children ("childhood arrivals") raises the need to make visible their diaspora process and their experience with deportation. The hypervisibility of the DREAMer movement has obscured the population, already forgotten, of "illegalized" (Sati) childhood arrivals who have suffered a deportation process. The stories of migrants identified as childhood arrivals are among the most tragic within the Humanizing Deportation archive and offer compelling evidence of the cruelty of deportation as punishment for migrants who entered the United States as minors. Considering the current growing population of this group in Mexico, this chapter explores their narratives to better understand their experience of deportation as diaspora. It employs a Childhood Arrivals Critical Theory framework to expose the punitive excess of the expulsion of a population that articulates an American identity that is not legally endorsed (Caldwell). This study then presents an overview of this specific generation of immigrants, focusing on those who remained undocumented until their deportation. It argues that a reasonable ethics of human rights dictates that childhood arrivals cannot be held responsible for having migrated as children, from which it follows that a punitive action as severe as deportation should not be applied to childhood arrivals at all. The digital stories of Tania Mendoza and Isaac Rivera—Mendoza's "Dreaming in the Shadows" (no. 115a) and "Feelings Are Feelings and Family Is Family" (no. 115b) and Rivera's three-part "An American Life," which includes "Childhood Arrival" (no. 40a), "Dreams Torn to Pieces" (no. 40b), and "Hitting Bottom, Rising Soaring, Flying High" (no. 40c)—demonstrate the effects of deportation on a population that migrated to the United States at a young age and acculturated to the English language, culture, and values, only to end up forcibly displaced to Mexico.

The narratives of Mendoza and Rivera focus on a range of issues relating

to their status as noncitizens. Notably, in the initial installments of their stories, as childhood arrivals who can also be identified as DREAMers, they reproduce elements of the DREAMer narrative of model immigrants to encompass and articulate their experiences. In general terms, the DREAMer narrative began as stories of "students who had earned college admission but were unable to matriculate due to their status" (Abrego and Negrón-Gonzales, 9). The discourse helped illustrate the sacrifices made by promising undocumented students and the implicit loss for the country that had educated them through high school. As a strategy to support undocumented students, undocumented youth activists and their allies began using this narrative to advocate for their educational rights. This narrative soon became a blueprint for many undocumented students to make a case for their rights in the United States (Abrams; Nicholls). This meant framing their own stories around meritocracy and deservingness as well as national belonging (Gonzales; Negrón-Gonzales, Abrego, and Coll). Likewise, the narrative has been solidified by "the nonprofit industrial complex, lobbying groups, journalists, and researchers" (Abrego and Negrón-Gonzales, 9).

In later installments, the storytellers illuminate their current situation, offering compelling evidence of the harshness of immigration laws for childhood arrivals, which mete out an extreme punishment for a population that cannot be held ethically responsible for their presence in the United States.

CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS CRITICAL THEORY FRAMEWORK

The Childhood Arrivals Critical Theory (CACrit) framework facilitates the study of multiple issues that directly affect migrants who entered the United States as minors. This working framework's components are primarily informed by first-person narratives realized by childhood arrivals for the Humanizing Deportation project. The CACrit framework aims to

a. propose an inclusive and general childhood arrivals definition that goes beyond the standard DREAMer narrative;
b. incorporate the myriad of experiences lived by all childhood arrival immigrants in the United States;
c. make clear that many childhood arrivals who might qualify for protection under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program have already been deported, suggesting that their cases deserve reconsideration;
d. argue that the deportation of childhood arrival immigrants represents not so much a repatriation as a form of diaspora;
e. highlight sentiments expressed in personal stories of childhood arrivals to draw attention not only to their suffering but to their resilience;

f. accentuate the agency of childhood arrivals, the migrant knowledge expressed in their stories, and the recommendations they propose; and
g. propose eliminating deportation as an immigration enforcement tool for this population.

This framework is the foundation for engaging in the analysis of the stories shared by Mendoza and Rivera. Its components are explained in the following sections.

CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS DEFINED

The term "childhood arrivals" as proposed in this study refers to migrants who arrived in their destination country as children and considers different migration paths, including those who migrated undocumented and remained without a lawful status, those who migrated with a visa whose status later expired and was not renewed, and those who obtained permanent legal residency but not citizenship; in all cases I consider only those who stayed long enough to develop deep feelings of belonging to the destination country.

The justification for protecting childhood arrivals from deportation reflects the premise that they cannot be legally held responsible for having migrated as minors, and that they have developed such deep and perhaps even exclusive ties to the destination country that removing them and forcibly returning them to their birth country would essentially cause them great emotional harm. Once children have attended years of school, learned the language, participated extensively in the culture, and developed a sense of belonging in that place, they effectively become cultural citizens. When this process occurs during childhood, attachment to the destination country will likely be much greater than any ties to their country of origin. In many cases, mainly if they migrated as infants or never returned to visit their country of origin, the latter ties might be nearly nonexistent.

THE CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS DIASPORA

In the context of this population's continuous deportations, which reached record levels during the Barack Obama administration, these massive expulsions—not only to Mexico but to countries all over the world—can best be described as a diaspora. The term "childhood arrivals diaspora" encompasses the consequences of this population's deportation phenomenon, signaling that their deep-rooted membership in the United States increases the impact they are likely to experience in the aftermath of deportation—even more so than those who migrated as adults, and even more, perhaps, than those who have lived for more years in the United States. Although these youth migrants are no doubt victims of harsh immigration laws, their own resistance

to fully integrate into their country of birth, even as they attain personal and professional satisfaction there, and insistence on their affiliation with the United States demonstrates their agency: they cannot be made into Mexicans just because they've been told that's what they are and have been sent there.

Despite an increasing body of literature on minors who migrated to the United States and ample testimonies that speak on the migrant coming-of-age experience there (W. Pérez; Gonzales), a clear understanding of who makes up this group is lacking. Furthermore, a clear representation of the aftermath of deportation faced by this population is incomplete, even though the issue has garnered ample attention both in the United States (De Genova and Puetz; Kanstroom, *Aftermath*; Golash-Boza, *Forced Out*; Hing; Nyers; Goodman; Truax, *Immigrant Generation's Fight*) and abroad (Marrero; Anderson and Solis; Boruchoff; de la O Martínez). In considering migrants who entered the United States as minors, however, scholars have focused primarily on those who remain in the United States and are identified as DREAMers (Clark-Ibáñez; Gonzales; Hernández et al.; Michelson).

Nevertheless, some scholars have introduced in their study of deportation the experiences of youth who have been expelled from the United States. Daniel Kanstroom (*Aftermath*) refers to the US deportation diaspora, while the journalist Eileen Truax, through the story of Nancy Landa, inserts the experience of undocumented youth currently in the United States to include the deportation of a DREAMer who was sent "back to a strange world" (Truax, *Immigrant Generation's Fight*, 61). Landa, whose postdeportation story garnered significant attention through her *Mundo Citizen* blog, launched in 2013, had migrated to the United States at nine years old (Truax, *Immigrant Generation's Fight*, 61) and identifies as part of what she calls the "new DREAMer diaspora" (quoted in Caldwell, 7). Spearheading the inclusion of stories of childhood arrivals who have been deported or voluntarily returned to Mexico, Jill Anderson and Nin Solis focus on the DREAMer diaspora through short autobiographical sketches and photography in *Los Otros Dreamers*, a book whose publication is affiliated with the community advocacy and support group Otros Dreams en Acción.

These contributions expose the circumstances faced by this displaced population upon their removal from what they consider their homeland. Building on these works' approach to deportation and the initial studies on the dispersion of DREAMers, I propose here to rethink the childhood arrival diaspora beyond the DREAMer profile and to include even those childhood arrivals whom DACA protections have left out because of their age, education level, or criminal history. This approach acknowledges that deportation effects are especially rough on all migrants who migrated to the

United States as children. Once these migrants are deported, the acute period of isolation, transition, and trauma that accompanies their journey and the emotional, psychological, and physical pain they undergo while seeking the basic needs of life—including shelter, food, legal assistance, social support, and psychological treatment—can lead to feelings of belonging that are always incomplete and uncertain.

LISTENING TO THE ARCHIVE

Deportation experiences can never be thoroughly captured by theory or by statistics. Undoubtedly, first-person testimonies are essential in understanding the actual effects of forced and coerced removal by the "deportation machine" (Goodman). This chapter centers the voices of community narrators as expressed in first-person narratives that illustrate the issues they consider essential regarding the contemporary phenomenon of mass deportation. Our project's approach of listening closely to migrants aligns with the ethical practice of not viewing community narrators as research subjects but instead of recognizing them as knowledge producers (Abrego and Negrón-Gonzales). We believe that their stories can add important firsthand expertise to academic research on the study of deportation.

FIGURE 4.1. Tania Mendoza near the border fence in Playas de Tijuana; photo by Leo Peña

CHILDHOOD ARRIVAL "FROM THE FAMOUS ESTADOS UNIDOS"

Tania Mendoza and Isaac Rivera have much in common. They were both born in Mexico and migrated to the United States in their early childhood, and their families established themselves in California. Mendoza migrated with her family to the United States from Guadalajara, Jalisco, in 1989 at the age of three. She explains that her parents decided to migrate because they "want[ed] to have el sueño americano" (no. 115a). Being raised in Los Angeles from an early age provided Mendoza with the opportunity to acculturate to the country and to assimilate to its customs, traditions, and official language. She explains, "I always thought I was from the famous Estados Unidos, and that is where I feel that I am from" (no. 115a).

Isaac Rivera migrated in 1992 at six years old to the United States with his mother and three siblings. They made the journey to "El Norte" from a small pueblo in Oaxaca to San Diego. There, they reunited with Rivera's father, who had migrated eight months before. In San Diego, similar to Mendoza, Rivera promptly became accustomed to US life (Rivera, no. 40a). Since Mendoza's and Rivera's arrivals occurred at a young age, they experienced an uncomplicated process to integrate and transition to the country where they lived their prime childhood and youth years, and they developed deep feelings of belonging.

THE BEGINNING OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

Beyond stating that her family crossed from the Tijuana side of the US-Mexico border in a pickup truck on their way to Los Angeles, Mendoza's narrative contains no further details of their crossing experience. Because she arrived in the United States at the age three, any recollections of this moment would be difficult to achieve. Instead, in her narrative's introductory lines, Mendoza contrasts the border in 1986 to Tijuana's current border wall. She states that the wall was nonexistent when she migrated to the United States (no. 115a). Now she experiences this wall constantly.

The border wall's presence becomes more recurrent in the second installment of her story, where the imagery presents Mendoza in different border-wall scenes. In several instances, images show her at a Sunday binational church service, touching and facing the wall in Playas de Tijuana. Additionally, her second installment closes with her walking toward the border fence nearby, on the beach, with San Diego in view in the background (no. 115b). Compared to the nonexistent border wall when she initially migrated to the United States, the wall's visible physical presence is prominent in her

digital stories, a theme that echoes many of the arguments presented in scholarship on the consequences of the rise of border-security enforcement policies and of the proliferation of border walls on those who live alongside them (Jones). Through constant interaction with the border wall, Mendoza reveals its layers of meaning beyond that of a structure that seeks to keep migrants away from the United States; it also becomes a symbol of the calamities that arise from punitive policies of expulsion, becoming a public prison, a physical reminder for deported people of their exile and punishment.

Rivera relates the difficulty of the decision his parents made to part from his grandparents. Leaving Mexico meant that his parents would see his grandparents for the last time: "For my mom, it's been over twenty-five years that she hasn't seen her parents or siblings. My dad, on the other hand, never got the chance to see his parents again" (no. 40a). The theme of family separation due to emigration is highlighted at the beginning of Rivera's narrative, foreshadowing its reemergence when he later recalls his deportation.

In this initial section of Rivera's first installment, the visual track enhances his narration of their crossing experience. He shares the sequence of events that allowed them to enter the country successfully. The family flew in to Tijuana, where they booked a room in a hotel in Zona Centro in which they waited to cross the border. Four days later, the family crossed through terrain near Playas de Tijuana, guided by a coyote; this piece of the story is accompanied by a clip tracking movement through dusty terrain not unlike that of the Tijuana area of the border. Rivera expresses the fatigue they felt and the effort he and his brothers made to help their mother with their two-year-old brother by taking turns carrying him. Their only moment of doubt came when they encountered a helicopter, from which they hid in a cornfield. They later arrived at a house, where they showered, received a new set of clothes, and were reunited with their father. At the moment of their reunion, Rivera felt nervous in anticipation of seeing his father after eight months and became shy once they saw each other (no. 40a).

LIKE SPONGES IN AMERICA

Mendoza presents her successful completion of K–12 schooling as a significant accomplishment, echoing the experiences of many childhood arrivals (see Pérez and Solórzano; Greenman and Hall); and while Rivera emphasizes his education as a key element of his integration in the United States, Roberto Gonzales would indicate that this interpretation is because of the role schools play "as the principal mechanism" in childhood migrants' "integration and Americanization" (75). Additionally, Gonzales observes that "many immigrant parents view the public school system as the ideal instrument to realize

the American dream for their children" (73). Clearly, in their narratives, both Mendoza and Rivera position school as crucial to their assimilation and development of an American identity.

Mendoza shares that her high school graduation deepened her sentiment of being an American. She illustrates this accomplishment through her narrative's visual track, presenting a photo of her in cap and gown. Because of the lack of financial support to access higher education as an undocumented student at a time when universities in California (and elsewhere) remained out of reach to undocumented students, Mendoza turned to other opportunities to advance her education. She was able to study at the East Los Angeles Occupational Center, where she became certified as a cosmetologist and administrative assistant. Mendoza recognizes that these acquired skills and her English fluency have provided better-paying work options in Mexico (Mendoza, no. 115a).

Rivera explains that his dad enrolled him and his brother in school as soon as they arrived in San Diego. Even though they started three months after the school year began, they quickly adapted. Rivera shares that they "were like sponges, excited about our future in America." He says that the experience was confusing because of the language barrier, but they were soon able to understand their peers and teachers. From there on, he describes having a pleasant, normal childhood. He grew up in a diverse neighborhood that exposed him to a melting pot of cultures. Rivera feels at home in the United States, which he experiences as a place of deeply ingrained diversity, home to people of many different national heritages whose Americanness is achieved through shared experiences (Rivera, no. 40a).

THE DREAM DISRUPTED

In 1997, at the age of eleven, Mendoza was confronted with the implications of her undocumented status after her parents attempted to legalize the family's status. Dishonest lawyers or notaries tricked the family into believing they were eligible for residency; when they showed up in court, their legal representative disappeared, and the judge had no choice but to order the family's deportation. Although the judge suggested that the family file a lawsuit against whoever had conned them, it did not change the verdict. Even as time passed, the family could not appeal the deportation order and was left to accept the consequences of remaining in the country not only undocumented but with a deportation order against them. Their decision to stay might have been because they were a mixed-status family, with two US-born citizen children and two Mexican-born daughters (see Enriquez).

Despite living most of her life in the United States, the feeling of living

what Mendoza calls "a fugitive life" often weighed on her. She expresses that "my parents started to say that I had to start saying things, and couldn't tell people things. And that's when everything got more confusing." She goes on to explain that even though she had access to some common coming-of-age milestones—for example, a permit that allowed her to acquire a driver's license through her high school—"no one even knew if I was American or not." She learned to keep her immigration status a secret, even from the father of her child: "I don't think he ever knew that I was undocumented or pretty much like a fugitive hiding from immigration." He learned of her status only on the day she was detained (Mendoza, no. 115a).

Rivera shares how he became aware of the real implications of his lack of legal status. He was fourteen years old and in the process of obtaining his learner's permit. In completing his driver's ed class, students were instructed to provide their Social Security cards to complete the Department of Motor Vehicles application. Not knowing what a Social Security card was, he asked his father if he had one, and his dad informed him that he did not. Even though he could not get his driver's license, that did not prevent him from driving (Rivera, no. 40a). This moment positions school as a site of belonging and conflict (see Gonzales). As explained earlier, Rivera's feelings of belonging to the country were directly influenced by his school participation; however, dynamics such as failing to obtain a driver's license put into question these sentiments.

COMING OF AGE UNDOCUMENTED AND THE TRANSITION INTO ILLEGALITY

From 1989, the year Mendoza arrived in the United States, to 2009, the year she was deported, there were no options to legalize her status or pathways introduced to provide deportation deferment, residency, or citizenship to childhood arrivals. Although the DREAMer movement was growing and pushing for undocumented youth rights (Nicholls; Abrams; Truax, *Immigrant Generation's Fight*; Boruchoff), there is no mention of the movement's efforts within Mendoza's narrative. Nonetheless, the title of the first installment of her two-part narrative, "Dreaming in the Shadows," aligns closely with how undocumented youth activists speak of their experiences.

The theme of hiding her immigration status appears multiple times throughout Mendoza's first installment. Her parents mandated this strategy, continuously reminding her not to tell anyone about her status and to stay out of trouble: "I remember my dad always telling me, 'Ay, Tania, no te metas en problemas. Pórtate bien. Pero no lo entiendes. No lo asimilas' " (Ay, Tania, don't get in trouble. Be good. But you don't understand. You don't

get it) (Mendoza, no. 115a). Through code-switching, Mendoza inserts the voice of her father, which in her narrative presents a voice of authority and reaffirms the idea that coming of age undocumented requires good behavior not only to protect herself from triggering her deportation but also to shield her family members, who were living with a deportation order against them. Additionally, the assertive tone of voice she mimics in recalling her father's words evokes a programmed message that she has retained, even after her deportation.

Mendoza transitions from outlining moments that indicate her endeavor of keeping her status a secret to narrating how she moved forward with her life: "So, you know, I still kept working" (no. 115a). Similar to the concepts that make up the DREAMer narrative, persistence in the face of adversity is presented, revealing multiple positive qualities. For instance, Mendoza mentions that she could not legally work because of a lack of a valid work permit, and she therefore "worked in the famous Santee Alleys, also known as Los Callejones. And the only reason I worked there was that I knew I couldn't work. And I did a lot of stuff that every hard-working immigrant does" (no. 115a). Here, she notes her awareness of not working legally, but this barrier did not prevent her from seeking alternative ways to earn a living wage.

In effect, Mendoza came of age undocumented in the United States and thus learned to navigate life "in the shadows." That access to a driver's license allowed her to navigate the transition from her teenage years to adulthood in a normal, relatively privileged environment that was unavailable to many undocumented youth at that time. But this did not alleviate all of the pressures of not having a documented status. After graduating from high school in 2005, Mendoza gave birth to her daughter. Unfortunately, the relationship with the father ended, and the couple separated. Now a single mother, Mendoza had to provide for her daughter and help support her family. As she became accustomed to her new life, her family was supportive and helped take care of her daughter while she went to school and worked (Mendoza, no. 115a).

Her work efforts were inspired by her daughter and the necessity to provide for her. Having a US-born child also increased her ties to the country. But her father's repeated warnings caused her to question this belonging. She shares her father's words, "Es mejor que no les digas nada porque pues algo siempre nos puede pasar" (It's better that you do not tell them anything because something can always happen to us) (Mendoza, no. 115a). This precaution not only silenced Mendoza from sharing her undocumented status with others but also conditioned her to fit into the excellent immigrant profile, one who stays out of trouble, because getting in trouble with the

authorities or disclosing her status could lead to her deportation. She maximized her legitimacy by behaving as a model immigrant but was frequently reminded that neither her sense of belonging nor her responsible behavior could provide real security.

Even though Mendoza and Rivera present their experiences in K–12 schooling as positive, and as an important stepping-stone in living the American dream, they describe their educational endeavors beyond high school as complicated. Rivera details the barriers in the first installment of his narrative. During his senior year, Rivera's noncitizenship once again affected him. In contrast to Mendoza, who had obtained a Social Security card, he was stymied in attempting to apply for college and scholarships, as all of the applications asked for a Social Security number. Additionally, his desire to enlist in the marines after the Iraq War began was turned down because he did not have residency documents. His desire to serve in the military might demonstrate feelings of patriotism, an aspiration that aligns his story, like Mendoza's, with those of DREAMers (Rivera, no. 40a).

After graduating from high school with a 3.5 grade point average and being ineligible to apply to a four-year university, Rivera decided to enroll in Southwestern College in Chula Vista, California. Because of the passage of California law AB-540 in 2001, he was eligible to pay tuition as a resident, regardless of his immigration status. Nevertheless, although the implementation of AB-540 facilitated opportunities for undocumented students to pay in-state tuition, it did not ease the obstacles to apply for financial aid or any other type of economic support (Rivera, no. 40a). Undocumented students' financial strain thus became an issue that pushed many like Rivera to find jobs under the table to sustain themselves and their education (see Pérez and Solórzano).

Now, as an adult and no longer an adolescent driving without a license, Rivera points out that his reasons for driving were to go to school, work, and church. In doing so, he felt paranoid about not having a driver's license or car insurance. These obstacles make it difficult for illegalized migrants to navigate their everyday responsibilities. He goes on to share how his relationship with a fear of cops began. Having to drive, he would do so with caution to avoid any interactions with the cops. He explains, "Every time I would see a cop, it did not even matter if the cop was not behind me, my heart would start racing a thousand miles per hour, and the adrenaline would start kicking in. Let alone when a police vehicle got behind me, I always assumed getting pulled over was a sure thing" (Rivera, no. 40a).

For Rivera, the worry of interacting with the police was frequent. He shares that on one occasion, when he was pulled over, the police officer asked him

to show his driver's license and proof of insurance. The officer proceeded to write him a ticket and towed his vehicle. Rivera asked the officer why he had pulled him over, and the officer replied that Rivera looked suspicious because he was wearing a hat. After losing thousands of dollars over traffic tickets and in cars being confiscated by the police that he could not get back, in 2009, he decided he would no longer drive (Rivera, no. 40a).

DEPORTATION OF CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS

Considering her upbringing and her close ties to the United States, Mendoza's deportation had multifaceted consequences that not only affected her directly but also affected her daughter and immediate family (see De Genova; De Genova and Puetz; Boehm). On April 9, 2009, Mendoza was arrested by Los Angeles police officers following a domestic dispute. Neighbors heard people screaming and called the police. When the officers arrived at the scene, they asked for her Social Security card. She had one, but it required her to show her work authorization permit, which was expired. The narrative's visual track here illustrates the moment of arrest, focusing on the police's presence and an officer similar to the one who interrogated her, emphasizing the lingering trauma she feels from this event.

She was told she would be released, since there were no charges against her. She narrates, however, that "the fact that I just stood there like from a Friday to like a Monday was pretty horrible because I didn't know when I was gonna get out. And then the police officers would tell me, 'No, no one's putting any charges on you. By Monday, you should get out.' But that Monday comes, and everyone was getting out. And I never went home. I got detained by ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement]." Because of her criminalized presence, Mendoza was taken into police custody, and although no charges were filed against her, she never returned home (Mendoza, no. 115a).

Mendoza was apprehended under the rubric of the Secure Communities program, which facilitated noncitizens' removal. Beginning in 2008, local law enforcement officials formally collaborated with ICE, turning over not only convicted criminals but any undocumented immigrants with whom they came into contact. The "intent was to remove serious criminals and to reduce local crime" (Hines and Peri, 2), yet people like Mendoza became casualties.

The events leading to Rivera's removal from the country unfolded on May 30, 2011, as he was on his way to a pastors' conference in Temecula, California, with his then pastor and future father-in-law. The two men were profiled by a passing Border Patrol vehicle while they were on the road. Rivera explains that he observed a white Dodge Charger from the Department

FIGURE 4.2. Isaac Rivera, CrossFit instructor and entrepreneur, in Tijuana; photo by Leo Peña

of Homeland Security following them. Considering his prior unfavorable experiences with the police, this situation caused him to feel extremely nervous. Hopeful that there was no checkpoint ahead, as if he had spoken it into existence, a yellow electric freeway sign appeared: "Slow down, Border Patrol checkpoint ahead" (Rivera, no. 40b).

Because of the "hundred-mile rule," Border Patrol agents are permitted to perform a "warrantless search on anyone who is within one hundred miles of US coastlines and land borders" (Miller, 15). Once Rivera and the pastor arrived at the checkpoint, they encountered a Border Patrol agent dressed in his green uniform waving and letting other cars pass. Rivera shares that at that moment, he was praying not to get stopped. As they approached the checkpoint, however, the officer signaled for them to stop. He then yelled, "Hey, Ortiz, is this the car?" to another officer, who replied, "Yes, that's the car." The agents then began an interrogation. They asked to see their identification. Rivera presented his high school ID. Immediately after, the agent asked him whether he was "an illegal," to which Rivera replied, "No! I'm in the process." Rivera then presented his Mexican passport. Once again, the officer asked him whether he was "an illegal," and Rivera replied once again that he was "in the process" (no. 40b).

One of the agents took their IDs and went to check if Rivera was "in the system." Meanwhile, the other agent asked if they had any drugs or anything

illegal in the car, to which they responded with a "no." Rivera notes that the agent started to get upset and began cursing at them. The pastor was offended by the mistreatment by the border agents, who were fellow Latinos. When he spoke up, one of the agents responded, "You better shut up before I press charges on you for carrying and harboring an illegal" (no. 40b).

The other officer then returned and indicated that he intended to let both Rivera and the pastor go. But the other agent intervened: " 'You know what? This guy was being a prick'—pointing at my pastor—'Just because this guy was being a prick, I'm going to take him.' " Rivera was detained and put in the back seat of the Dodge Charger. Rivera adds that this day would become the first and only time he had ever been arrested (no. 40b).

Rivera's testimonial narrative is poignant as he points out that this was the first time he had ever seen a jail or a detention center; he mentions that not even during school field trips had he ever come across any of these spaces. With no criminal record, Rivera was utterly unprepared to be imprisoned. Once in the Murrieta immigration detention facility, a Border Patrol agent sarcastically said to Rivera, "Congratulations! You are the first person we get for the month of June" (no. 40b).

Rivera shares that he tried to project calm but that inside he was highly anxious. Throughout the entire process that followed his detention, Rivera continued to question many plans he had for his life and wondered about his future and well-being: "What was going to happen to me? What should I do? Was I going to be okay? What was going to happen with my fiancée?" These questions resounded in his mind in the detention center, where he was booked for removal from the United States (no. 40b).

COERCED DEPARTURE FROM HOME

When ICE picked up Mendoza, an agent asked about her father, José Mendoza, undoubtedly because of the removal order that had been issued in immigration court. Perceiving the danger of saying anything that would lead ICE to her father, she stated that she had not known his whereabouts since she had left her parents' home when she turned eighteen. The agent then booked her into the Santa Ana detention center. Mendoza reveals that while in custody, an agent coerced her to sign her consent for deportation by asking her to sign a standard form to confirm her identity, which she signed without reading. Mendoza recalls that although she didn't realize it, "I was signing my way out. So she lied to me" (no. 115b).

Rivera describes his booking into immigration detention, stating that they asked him a series of questions, took pictures of him, did an FBI background check, and fingerprinted him. He was then put in a jail cell. He describes the

condition of these facilities, noting the extreme cold temperatures, adding, "There was a toilet, drinking fountain, and a bench with a type of blanket that looked more like it was made out of thick grass. There was a camera on one corner and a very tiny little window in the middle of the door." (Rivera, no. 40b). Confronted with a situation he defines as "the longest day and night I have ever experienced; it is like if those moments froze in time," Rivera began to panic. In hopes of subduing his anxiety, he started to exercise until he was exhausted. In a moment of stillness, he reflected on the implications of his situation on his current relationship with his fiancée. He indicates that he did not want his future wife to relocate to Mexico if he lost his case. He therefore decided to sign his voluntary departure (no. 40b).

The following day an officer came into his cell with documents that Rivera was to sign to put in motion an appeal of his deportation. Rivera realized that by going ahead with the appeal, he would be in custody for months, waiting to see an immigration judge who would then determine whether he would stay or be forced to leave the United States. Rivera feared that the probability that the immigration judge would rule in his favor was minimal. Additionally, he could not envision the idea of being confined in a detention center for an extended period (no. 40b).

Rivera cried as they transferred him to another detention center in Chula Vista. Officers kept asking him to stop, but he could not control himself. He wanted to leave the United States and not be transferred to a detention center. He continued to beg the ICE agents for three hours until one of the agents prepared the documents for Rivera to sign to indicate his voluntary departure. Rivera describes the experience as follows:

> Long story short, he left for about an hour, came back, and said, "Come over here. Sign here, and you will be on your way to see your grandma." I waited for a few hours, and two agents showed up and escorted me to a bus of Homeland Security, all for myself. In less than ten minutes, we arrived at the San Ysidro international border. That had to be the saddest ride ever and one of the saddest days of my life. (no. 40b)

"FOREIGNER IN MY BIRTH COUNTRY"

Deported at age twenty-three, Mendoza had lived twenty years in the United States. The only time she had been in Tijuana before being deported was when her family crossed the border. Because she migrated at the age of three, she has no vivid memories of Mexico. Additionally, as she states, upon getting "dropped off, 'cause you get thrown like you're nothing," by ICE at

the Tijuana port of entry, she was uncertain of what would happen to her. Luckily for Mendoza, the friend she'd had the public dispute with helped her to get established. She now reflects on the difference it made to have someone's support in this difficult time: "I see how people get thrown out, and they have no family, they have no support from anyone, and they are out in the streets wondering what to do with their lives. I'm glad I had him to help me, comfort me somehow, give me shelter and a place to live. To bring me my car, my stuff, my money I had in the bank" (Mendoza, no. 115b).

Rivera's third installment tells of his life in Tijuana after his deportation. He describes feeling like a "foreigner in my birth country." Like Mendoza, he was returned to the country where he was born but exiled from the one he considers his home. Although Rivera and his family also crossed the border in Tijuana, he had no recollection of the city. Because he spoke "broken Spanish with a weird accent," it became evident to people that he was not from Tijuana (Rivera, no. 40c).

In an attempt to continue their wedding plans, Rivera and his fiancée relocated their wedding to Ensenada, Baja California. But a week before the wedding, they called it off and put an end to their seven-year relationship. This meant Rivera would face his new life alone: "I had no family, no friends, no connections, and to make things worse, I did not have my best friend, girlfriend, confidant, lover, someone I knew since I was about eight or nine years old. The only girlfriend I have had to this day. The girl I believe was the love of my life." In a matter of weeks, his life was transformed. He describes falling into depression, losing motivation. The life and people he lost made him feel as if his soul were gone (no. 40c).

SPEAKING TRAUMA THROUGH FEELINGS

For Mendoza and Rivera, their deportation triggered moments of instability that marked their lives. Mendoza narrates her arrest by Los Angeles police as a traumatic memory that will be hard to forget not only because she was arrested but also because her daughter witnessed the entire scene. Throughout her arrest and deportation processing, neither the police officers nor the ICE agents considered the fact that Mendoza had a young daughter who would now be separated from her mother (no. 115b).

Mendoza was forced to live separated from her daughter because of her deportation and her complex relationship with her daughter's father. Mendoza would constantly ask him to bring her daughter to Tijuana so they could see each other, but even when he promised he would, he never kept his word. As a result, Mendoza had to seek other ways to be in communication with her daughter. She shares that her daughter would send her drawings

and letters. With advances in technology, they were able to see each other via video phone calls. Because Mendoza was using an American phone, she encountered connection difficulties in trying to call from the Mexican side; Mendoza would stand close to the border, hopeful the signal would allow her to reach her daughter (no. 115b).

During the first years after her deportation, Mendoza stayed in touch with her daughter. All of this changed in 2016, however, when the father took the daughter's phone away and prevented any communication with her mother. Mendoza explains that he believed their daughter would be "better off" without her. As Deborah Boehm indicates, "the state does not discipline only individuals; it also disciplines the loved ones of [deported people], regardless of US immigration status" (12). In this situation, although a US citizen, Mendoza's daughter is also forced to experience the consequences of deportation; neither immigration enforcement agents nor immigration judges are required to take into account the potential consequences of a deportation on the children of adults who are detained or deported (Mendoza, no. 115b).

Rivera was deported in 2011 at age twenty-six after living nineteen years in the United States. He states that he remained depressed for more than a year. Rivera explains, "[I] would go to sleep crying, wake up crying almost every day for the first year and a half. I would sleep on the floor because I would cry and cry for hours until I couldn't cry anymore" (no. 40c).

Additionally, he states, "It didn't even matter where I was, I would just start crying all of a sudden, walking, at work, in the taxis." He goes on to explain that he even had a "special crying pillow that became my best friend." Crying and speaking on his sentiments are positioned as an important part of Rivera's transition. Not only did Rivera confess his pain and trauma to his special crying pillow, but he also had meaningful healing conversations with a few coworkers at a call center where he worked (no. 40c).

In his suffering and attempting to remain connected to familiar US spaces, Rivera would spend time in McDonald's and Starbucks. One day, as he was sitting inside a Starbucks, in a moment of reflection on all he had lost, he began to cry. A lady who saw him breaking down into tears approached him and said, " 'Stand up. You don't need to tell me anything, just hug me.' I hugged her and started to cry even more. Making a big scene there at the Starbucks. But hugging someone felt so good in that moment. I felt peace, I felt relaxed. I'm not sure for how long I hugged her, but I was really thankful that God sent an angel" (no. 40c). The release of emotions, the support, and the companionship Rivera felt in that moment inspired a shift in his mentality.

DREAMING IN TIJUANA

Mendoza's digital story significantly centers on the theme of family and the value it holds in her life before and after deportation. For this reason, it is vital to note that in contrast to the perceived blame tied to the parents of DREAMers through the DREAMer narrative (see Abrego and Negrón-Gonzales), Mendoza does not hold her parents responsible for the liminal life she confronted in the United States as an illegalized immigrant. Instead, she commends their action in migrating to the country, even without authorization. She states in her second installment that immigrants "are just trying to have a better life, a better living for our kids," referring to both her parents and her own experience as a mother. She is currently fighting, from Tijuana, for some form of court-ordered contact with her daughter; and, fortunately, she was able to reestablish telephone contact through a court order, but she has yet to get the father to agree to a visit in Tijuana (Mendoza, no. 115b).

For his part, Rivera's displacement to Mexico provided an opportunity to reestablish links with family. In his visit to Oaxaca, Rivera reunited with his grandparents twenty-one years after he'd last seen them. Since his emotional catharsis in Starbucks, a turning point for him, he "made a radical decision to stop living in the past. Playing victim, lamenting on what I had lost, and didn't have anymore." He took the time to acknowledge all he no longer had and what he was left with. He now considered being heartbroken, living away from family and friends, and feeling alone in a country where he felt like a foreigner as the stepping-stone to move forward with his life (Rivera, no. 40c).

Rivera read motivational and self-help books that helped him change his perspective "from victim to thankful. One from depressed to blessed. One from why me to why not me. One from hope to faith. One from disappointment to being grateful. One from blame to personal responsibility" (no. 40c). Additionally, similar to the role the binational border church plays in Mendoza's life, Rivera's growing connection with and faith in God became essential in this change of perspective. The support that Rivera and Mendoza receive from the Tijuana faith community has paved the way for them to seek alternative forms of coping that enable their agency and determination to thrive amid all they have faced. A decade after their deportations, both claim to be doing well. Rivera shares that he has a job that allows him to work from anywhere in the world as long as he has his laptop and an internet connection. Similarly, Mendoza's bilingual administrative assistant certificate has presented better-paying job opportunities.

PREPARING FOR TAKEOFF

Both Mendoza and Rivera were given a ten-year ban, during which they are forbidden from applying to return to the United States, even to visit. Mendoza remains hopeful to return there one day. While there has been no public discussion in the United States of allowing DACA-qualified childhood arrivals who were deported before this program's implementation to one day gain access to a path toward legal residency or citizenship, as the mother of a US-citizen daughter, Mendoza hopes for readmission for family reunification. She finds it particularly upsetting how casually immigration law causes mothers to be separated from their children, especially when the children are US citizens. Mendoza argues that feelings need to be considered when enacting policies and laws that have deep human implications. She then concludes her narrative by stating that she hopes her story brings awareness of hardships faced by migrants and the challenges they face when deported. She highlights that "we are just trying to have a better life, a better living for our kids" (Mendoza, no. 115b).

Rivera concludes his story by reminding the public that at the time that he narrated his experiences in 2018, he had been 2,289 days away from home, family, and the friends he was forced to leave behind in San Diego. He hopes to be able to return to the city he called home for nineteen years. For the time being, he states he will continue to live in the present moment and to work toward the future (Rivera, no. 40c).

CONCLUSION

The stories of Tania Mendoza and Isaac Rivera question the ethics of deporting undocumented childhood arrivals, who face major obstacles in transitioning to life in their birth countries because of their deep or even exclusive ties to the United States. It is illogical to consider their deportation a return home; instead, their forced displacement is much more akin to exile. They are part of a diaspora of American youth, and their stories add weight to many of the key components of the CACrit framework, recalling the work of Roberto Gonzales on belonging and illegality, and the monumental obstacles to adaptation processes experienced by both DREAMers in the United States and "los otros DREAMers" of the diaspora (see Truax, *Immigrant Generation's Fight*; Anderson and Solis).

A focus on the narratives of those who migrated to the United States as children illuminates and moves from the peripheral to the center the stories and the embodied knowledge of those directly impacted by deportation. Of

importance to the inquiry posed in this study, the two case studies' narrators make a powerful argument against deportation as a punishment for migrants brought to the United States as children, who, many now argue, deserve a pathway to legal residency and citizenship.

In many ways, the plight of migrants who came into the United States as minors has helped shape debate on current immigration policies and has led to the implementation of the DACA program. But the removal of young immigrants like Rivera and Mendoza draws attention to DACA's limitations, encouraging us not only to reconsider deportations of migrants who might have met DACA's enrollment criteria prior to their removal but also to think about the cases of deported childhood arrivals who don't meet these criteria. Their deportations not only may imply extreme hardships, including family separation, but also may play out not as repatriations but as a violent diaspora of young Americans. Their deportation represents the banishment of a group of people who have been dealt a traumatic blow by "legal definitions governing citizenship [that] contradict people's identities" (Caldwell, 3), and it urges us to consider establishing protections from deportation and pathways to obtain a legalized status for many more childhood arrivals than those protected by DACA.

CHAPTER 5

DEPORTATION AND MILITARY DISCIPLINE ON THE LAST BATTLEFIELD OF TIJUANA

KYLE PROEHL AND GUILLERMO ALONSO MENESES

THE UNITED STATES HAS A long history of using deportation to serve social, political, and economic ends; it also, toward similar ends, has a perhaps equally long history of employing nonnationals or noncitizen residents in its armed forces. At times, the two ostensibly distinct historical strategies can be seen to converge. Their most recent period of convergence has given rise to the seemingly paradoxical figure of the deported veteran. In Tijuana, currently, there are enough former US military members to have formed not one but two organizations—the Deported Veterans Support House and the Unified US Deported Veterans Resource Center—to advocate for pensions and health benefits, assist with finding work and housing, organize meetings and protests, and petition representatives for clemency. Several veterans have contributed narratives to the archive of the Humanizing Deportation project. In this chapter, we will sketch the parallel and overlapping histories of the policies of deportation and of military enlistment of noncitizens, before turning to an analysis of several of these narratives.

The first studies on deportation in the United States so far this century initially used as a reference the experience of individuals in cities such as Chicago and its links to "illegality" (De Genova), took an international approach to the issue (Walters, "Deportation"), or focused on arrests at the Southwest border with Mexico and the subsequent expulsions or deportations (Alonso Meneses, "Human Rights," "Recesión," "Los muros"). Subsequently, numerous studies have advanced international views of deportation (De Genova and Peutz) or approached its links to labor markets and availability of workers (Golash Boza, *Deported*). As for the literature that looks specifically at deported veterans, much of it tends to focus on the issue either in terms of legal or human rights (see Vakili, Pasquarella, and Marcano; Goring; Hartsfield; Horyniak et al.; Keller; A. Martínez) or as journalistic or sociological profiles (see Caldwell; J. M. Garcia; París Pombo,

Buenrostro Mercado, and Pérez Duperou). Our approach here, rather, will be a critical history of the deported veteran as an *emergent figure*: the digital narratives offer a reflection not merely on legal status or social condition but on the historical development of a peculiar political identity whose immense contradictions are perhaps most forcefully expressed in the words of that figure as it emerges in these narratives—i.e., in the articulations of deported veterans themselves. In addition, our collaborative approach is intended as an implicit commentary on the division in the field of study itself: differences in documentary or ethnographic materials, research experience, and perspective not only differ by author but also depend on whether the discourse is generated within US or Mexican academia. For example, works published in the United States rarely cite texts in Spanish, while the texts produced in the Mexican academy usually incorporate bibliography in English or Spanish without distinction. This shows that the discourses on deportation have epistemic and methodological biases that we cannot address explicitly here but want to bear in mind.

DUAL HISTORIES

Deportation, or forced removal, can be seen as the reverse of the trafficking and forced immigration of enslaved Africans and likewise preceded the founding of the nation itself in the genocide and forced displacement of Indigenous peoples. This originary articulation of violence, enacted before a standing army existed to defend the still-nascent nation's interests and identity, continues to function under various civil and institutional guises, in response to social, political, and economic demands. The development of private-property laws is inextricably linked to the forging of the racial identity category of "whiteness" (Harris); likewise, removals have been interpreted as a multipurpose instrument of ethnic cleansing and demographic and socioeconomic removal surgery (Alonso Meneses, "Recesión," "La frontera").

The nineteenth century saw the removal of legally normalized immigrants after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882—an extension of the women-only exclusions of the 1875 Page Act—was challenged and defended at the highest level of the judiciary. In its 1893 decision in *Fong Yue Ting v. United States*, the US Supreme Court "stated that deportation did not constitute punishment but was merely an administrative device for returning unwelcome and undesirable aliens to their own countries" (Zolberg, 225–226). Some fifty years earlier, the legal precedent for conscripting noncitizens into the armed forces had been established when George Cottingham, an immigrant, challenged the validity of his enlistment contract. His challenge was rejected when the

Supreme Court ruled in favor of the federal power. The case, *United States v. Cottingham*, "offered a rare pre–Civil War display of some of the basic elements of the government's defense of its sovereign prerogative to define noncitizens' duties to the American state" (Bredbenner, 227).

A rough periodization of the twentieth century along these dual lines might home in on three moments or turning points: the world wars, the Cold War, and the war on terror. We use these terms not to emphasize the decisiveness of "war"—we might alternatively frame these periods "economically," as moments of depression, boom, and austerity—but perhaps more simply to gesture at the relation of conflict to policy and, of course, to national identity. Separate at first, the two lines approach and converge on the moment whose repercussions are most directly felt today.

Selective Service, or legal mandatory conscription for all "able bodied" men, whether citizen or "alien," was implemented in 1917 as the United States entered World War I. When just a year later President Wilson ordered that noncitizens of treaty countries be discharged from the obligation, Congress responded by proposing new naturalization laws aimed at forbidding such noncitizen "draft avoiders" from ever obtaining citizenship (Bredbenner, 236–237). The results of the war itself led to the Immigration Act of 1924, which set quotas for immigrant arrivals based on "nationality" and authorized the formation of the US Border Patrol.

After the stock market crash of 1929, the first great mass deportation of immigrants in the history of the United States took place, "one of the most tragic episodes of civil rights violations in American history," as Barkan notes (46). Some authors speak of four hundred thousand deportees of Mexican origin, including children born in the United States (Reimers, 15), mostly in the period from 1930 to 1933. In 1933 the agency known as the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)—or, in more common parlance, "La Migra"—was created. By the 1950s Border Patrol operatives were working far from the border in the interior of the nation.

This capacity enabled the severe impact of Operation Wetback, begun in June 1954 during the Eisenhower administration, when the INS carried out raids in cities and agricultural areas for months and an estimated one million people were removed to Mexico. It was the second major episode of immigrant deportation in US history—although many crossed the border again after their deportation (J. R. Garcia; K. Hernández; Alonso Meneses, *El desierto*). The very name of the operation suggests not merely an atmosphere hostile to immigrants but one of postwar belligerence. Deep into the Red Scare of the Cold War, Congress had already passed the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act, despite its initial veto by President Truman, who called

it "repressive and inhumane," largely based on its discrimination against Eastern Europeans (Leviero, 1). Among its many provisions was one that opened the path to citizenship for those who had served in the armed forces.

The third moment or turning point in our sketch of history can be said to hinge on the year 1996, with the introduction of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA). Implemented under President Clinton, the IIRIRA "toughened" the policies of immigrant detention and deportation. Already in September 1993, less than a year into his first term, Clinton had begun systematic and "hard" control of the border in urban sections with Operation Blockade, soon renamed Hold the Line, in El Paso, Texas. The following year, Operation Gatekeeper began in San Diego, California, and in 1995 Operation Safeguard was implemented around Nogales, Arizona. The IIRIRA marked a significant tightening of immigration-control laws and policies at the border and increased deportations (Eschbach et al.; Alonso Meneses, "Human Rights"). It also greatly expanded the criminal category of the "aggravated felony," originally introduced into congressional immigration law in 1988 to define those convicted of murder or drug or firearm trafficking as ineligible for citizenship and subject to deportation. The new list of offenses, which included, among other things, gambling and passport fraud, was "almost comically bloated," making it possible for shoplifting or writing a bad check to qualify one for deportation (Keller, 47). The result "of the congressional action was that more prior convictions triggered the [. . .] enhancement, which meant longer prison sentences and more aliens falsely deemed 'dangerous' " (Keller, 47). Most, if not all, military veterans who have been deported from the United States were convicted of a crime deemed an aggravated felony.

RECENT REMOVALS

If we analyze the advancement of removals in the last twenty years, three moments can be established. These coincide with the second presidential term of Bill Clinton (1997–2001), the two terms of George W. Bush (2001–2009), and the two terms of Barack Obama (2009–2017). In the 1996 fiscal year, 69,680 removals were reported; just one year later, they doubled, with 114,432 reported in 1997; and they rose again in 1998 to 173,146 (Dougherty, Wilson, and Wu, 6). The first quantitative and qualitative change in the increase in deportations occurred under President Clinton, who, by the beginning of his second term, had initiated an increase in Border Patrol activity.

The second moment falls within the first George W. Bush administration and the months after the September 11, 2001, attacks. Removals (as well as

border apprehensions) actually dropped from 2001 to 2002—from 189,026 to 165,168—but by 2003, they had jumped to over 211,098. This trend was consolidated in the second Bush term, with 246,431 removals in 2005; 280,974 in 2006; 291,060 in 2007; and, the most brutal leap, an increase of over 78,000, to 369,221 in 2008. The Obama terms simply followed the growing trend, surpassing historical records year after year, culminating in 409,849 deportation events in 2012—only to fall almost by half in Obama's last two years in office, to 235,413 and 240,255 (US Immigration and Customs Enforcement).

An important factor that increased removals under the younger Bush was the heightened use of Section 287(g) of the 1996 IIRIRA, which legitimizes raids by local immigration detention agencies. Removals had begun to grow since 1996 under Clinton, but in 2007 and 2008, deportation operated as a factor and resource of immigration control, increasing and amplifying its use. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids, and especially the ability to execute removal orders after the identification and "trial" of repeat offenders, achieved an unprecedented capacity to affect the lives of undocumented immigrants. Along with the historic apprehensions and returns of migrants made by the Border Patrol, which counts "events" rather than people, deportations were positioned on the political agenda and became a focus of the Department of Homeland Security.

Under Bush and Obama, ICE intensified the policy of increasing those investigations covered as immigration enforcement, performing raids far from the border, on streets, in workplaces, and even at homes. Numerous local jurisdictions have signed agreements covered by 287(g)—one famous example being Sheriff Joe Arpaio in Arizona, an enthusiastic ICE collaborator—but there have also been counties and cities that have refused, instead becoming sanctuaries for irregular migrants, such as National City in the San Diego metropolitan area.

Meanwhile, since 2001, the US military's international contractor workforce has been drawn largely from migrants imported from impoverished countries, with no local connections and little to no legal protection for their involvement in international conflict (Li). This might be understood as the blind side to the increasing privatization of the US military in general, a phenomenon that must be thought in relation to decreasing enlistment since the mid-1990s. At least one recent report produced by a military recruitment officer has encouraged the recruitment of noncitizens (ZurLippe). In the face of an increasingly precarious living status, the demand to prove one's "value" through a patriotic sacrifice such as military service—a symbolic act that by no means guarantees a change in legal status, despite recruiters' apparent promises—must loom heavily on the lives of the undocumented. The force

of confusion at the rejection of that sacrifice is evident in each and every deported veterans' digital narrative.

DEPORTED VETERANS IN DIGITAL NARRATIVE

The concept of digital storytelling is included in the broadest tradition of qualitative research: oral history and life stories. Here, digital stories focus on a relevant and specific aspect or event in the lives of the deported migrants or others made vulnerable by contemporary border-control regimes. Oral and biographical histories are an "old source" of information and knowledge, illuminating important perspectives on social realities and human experiences. The turn toward the testimony of "marginalized" people as sources of social knowledge supposed an epistemological break: giving them a voice was revolutionary (Thompson). From a technical point of view, digital storytelling as method operates as a form of condensation and information gathering to investigate the impact of deportation on the lives of these repatriated migrants. It implies a coherent defense with qualitative approaches, methods, and techniques—those in which testimony and human experience prevail, especially of subaltern and marginalized groups.

Digital storytelling captures and condenses patterns of thought and behavior in the narrative. The information that emerges in the testimonies of the Humanizing Deportation archive sheds light on the experience of removals in recent years but also on the polyhedral dimension that marks its epistemological, theoretical-methodological, and historical faces (De Genova). Likewise, digital storytelling is reconfigured as a scenario with multiple levels or layers of discourse, where deported migrants, who speak of their deportation experiences and therefore of "the" deportation, also speak of discursive forces of discrimination or anti-immigrant ideologies. Here, testimony is a discursive fact, much like the actions of ICE or the immigration judges who enforced the laws that make deportation possible and pronounced the deportation of an individual. But their testimonies also speak of the deportation of Mexicans at the beginning of the twenty-first century and of their postdeportation experience.

Removals in different modalities (expedited removals, reinstatements of previous removal orders, etc.) affect migrants in an irregular situation but also those who had a residence permit and committed a crime. A portion of these removals occur with a firm conviction, and in a significant number of cases the deported person has a history of more than one previous expulsion or deportation, something that is also confirmed by numerous stories within the Humanizing Deportation archive.

On its face, the deportation of former military service members may seem like it should be exceptional, a case closer to something like treason. At least, that is, if you follow the rhetorical bombast of the political class's exhortation to "support our troops." One need only have a passing awareness of the elevated suicide rate among discharged soldiers to find such discourse hollow. It's the material support—for the human, rather than the weapon—that is found wanting. But then, after all, it's just a job, one perhaps more violent in its workers' disposability. The demand for this workforce is such that recruits must also come from green card holders; foreign-born residents make up about 5 percent of active-duty personnel. Completion of service with honorable discharge does not, however, guarantee citizenship—it simply waives the application fees. According to Humanizing Deportation's contributors, this process was not always made clear. The process of deportation, meanwhile, carried a bewilderingly forceful clarity. This isolating experience, shared by many, finds unique expression in each of the narratives.

The category of deported armed forces veterans is special because they have organized and challenged their status—in some cases successfully, after many years. Through the two Tijuana-based organizations mentioned previously and a branch office in Ciudad Juárez, our fieldwork teams have met over a dozen deported military veterans, a group empowered to some degree through peer support and articulate in identifying the anomalies of their situation: patriots of one nation expelled by that nation to another one in which they have spent little previous time (all veterans who have shared their stories with us were childhood arrivals to the United States) and that inspires much less devotion in them. Several veterans participated in armed conflicts, going into combat (Madrid, no. 13), and some were decorated. Other contributors are the deported spouses of veterans, usually with US-citizen children (Sánchez de Paulsen, no. 4a). In some cases, the children came to live with their mother for a time, sometimes years, until they returned to the United States (Sánchez de Paulsen, no. 4b). In the case of such family separations, we find the regret of not being able to be with the children as they grow up, to support them and share a life with them.

Emma Sánchez de Paulsen's narrative is the testimony of a mother who, a few months after giving birth, tried to fix her papers in a consulate by returning to Mexico, only to be prevented from reentering the United States—a case of de facto deportation—even though she is the mother and the wife of US citizens and her husband is a veteran of the marines. Her testimony is significant because it raises the question, "How is it possible that they believe that laws that separate families, that separate a mother from her children, are correct?" and because her children relate to her point of view,

experiencing the visits to Tijuana and the hours of waiting at the crossings "when your mother is removed" (Sánchez de Paulsen, no. 4a). After ten years of separation and struggle and over two years of bureaucratic negotiations, Sánchez was finally able to return to her family in the United States at the end of 2018 (Sánchez de Paulsen, no. 4b).

Andy de León crossed into the United States through McAllen, Texas, on January 28, 1955, as a small child, married in 1970, and has citizen children and grandchildren. In 2010, his green card was canceled and he was later deported to Tijuana. He has no relatives in Mexico. His sister supported him so that he could rent a place to live after the deportation, and he learned from the press about Héctor Barajas and the Deported Veterans Support House, which he refers to as a club for deported veterans where they may obtain legal, emotional, and material support, as well as company and friendship. Barajas told him how to access his veteran's benefits, and de León began receiving a pension of $1,000 a month. Six years after deportation, de León declares of his compatriots in Tijuana, "They are my people, but not my relatives" (no. 14).

Jason Madrid's narrative is that of another veteran of the marines, who in 1998 participated in Operation Desert Fox in Iraq. After his military service, he returned to his life in the United States, until one day, after serving out a jail sentence, he was informed that ICE was coming to get him because of a deportation order. "Who the hell is ICE?" he recalls wondering. "Deportation—I didn't even know what it was, until they arrested me." They deported him from San Ysidro, where, he says, his companions on the bus shouted and complained, while he remained silent, preparing for an opportunity to start life fresh. In Tijuana he became, and at the time of recording still was, a police officer, while he considered how to fix his case in the United States. "Where I fit in is in the US, I respect the Mexican flag, but it is not mine, my flag is the US flag, I fought for that flag." And, he states, "I am tired of being here. [. . .] I cannot adapt to it." Despite the resignation he felt on the deportation bus, he is not sure how long he can endure his condition. He observes, "Everyone that gets deported and cannot adapt to society, they end up in the streets, drug addicts, alcoholics, or dead" (Madrid, no. 13).

Only in exceptional cases are deported individuals allowed to return. Héctor Barajas is one of these exceptions. Not long into the first of his three-part narrative, Barajas reveals that his parents were happy when he joined the army because it signaled to them that he was getting away from being a "troublesome kid"—not "a bad kid," but "troublesome." Barajas grew up in Compton, where the lines marking race and among street gangs were sharply drawn. His family, the first non-Black family to move into the

all-Black neighborhood, brought Barajas to the United States from Mexico when he was seven years old—and the tension he recalls experiencing between African Americans and Mexican Americans did not cease until he enlisted. In boot camp he got to know Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and African Americans from outside Compton. If this course of upward mobility (or assimilation) through (military) discipline seems familiar, so should its tragic trajectory. After four years of service, Barajas reenlisted but found in his new assignment a sudden absence of the structure on which he had come to depend. He was arrested for driving under the influence and honorably discharged and barred from reenlisting. In his narrative this led eventually to his arrest and his first deportation in 2003 (Barajas, no. 34a). Unable to cope, he returned to his family and a new life as undocumented, under threat, which led to his second deportation in 2010. In Tijuana he realized he was one of many veterans like himself who had been deported; he founded the Deported Veterans Support House to help others access their military benefits, their pension funds and healthcare (Barajas, no. 34b), and a community, as well as support in terms of food, clothing, or shelter. He credits this work with eventually making his case for US citizenship; after applying in 2016, in 2018 he received a pardon from California governor Jerry Brown, expunging his criminal record and providing him with the documents he needed to cross the border as he pleases—"to go to and fro," he calls it. Barajas is well aware of how exceptional such a pardon is, and he ends his series on a positive note, encouraging us "to live it up, man" (no. 34c).

The exemplary case of Héctor Barajas was made possible through a pardon that purged his criminal record: an official act of forgiveness formally erased a set of actions from his past. Since it is exceedingly rare for these veterans not to express some desire for repatriation, it is worth asking to what extent Barajas's story serves as a model, consciously or otherwise. Some of the similarities arise from the testimonial narrative form itself, which tends almost inevitably toward a construction of identity. This can be glimpsed in the very titles of the Humanizing Deportation narratives, where the dominant theme is individuation, whether through something like possession (Mares Meneses, "Mi viaje de regreso," no. 156; López Rivera, "Mi historia 12 de junio del 2012," no. 151) or as an instance of a broader theme (Solórzano Serrano, "Una nueva oportunidad," no. 147; de la Cruz, "El deportado," no. 93). Even the few narratives by members of the widely publicized Honduran caravan of fall 2018 do the work from beginning to end of separating the part from the whole; personal motivations for leaving and joining culminate in personal expressions of an uncertain future. This separation is on the one hand essential to the experience of migration, of leaving one home for

another, of feeling oneself lumped in with the anonymous and often despised mass category of the immigrant. On the other hand, it is also the shape of the cliché rags-to-riches success story, of the path of the bildungsroman, where personal and national converge, where the individualistic spirit culminates in the desire to be subsumed by a different group and the need for a better authority. Among the veterans, both aspects appear to be shaped by additional layers of discipline.

To linger a moment with Barajas and the process of individuation, he makes a curious distinction in the third part of his narrative. When he attributes the reason for his pardon in part to the organization he helped found, the Deported Veterans Support House, he calls it "the work that I do." But when he turns his attention toward those veterans who have not been granted repatriation, speculating on what they might do or how they might approach their own situation, he says, "We kinda made our own bed, in a way." The positive gets the singular "I," while the negative takes the collective "we"; cooperative effort becomes a means for independent elevation, while separate acts resulting in punishment are what forced these strangers together (Barajas, no. 34c). In contrast, Héctor López, one of the directors of the other deported veterans' organization in Tijuana, the Unified US Deported Veterans Resource Center, speaks barely a word about himself, instead narrating the story of two other veterans who were finally allowed to cross the border, but only as bodies for their own military funerals. López and others appear in several photos taken outside the Unified Resource Center, where the sign above their heads includes the motto "Leave No One Behind." He also appears in one group photo by the border wall with Barajas, but none of the narratives offer any reason for the existence of the two separate organizations. When explaining why Enrique Salas, one of the fallen, came over "here" (to Unified) from "the Bunker" (the Support House), he says merely and somewhat cryptically that it was "because they wouldn't help him with his benefits, or they couldn't, or they wouldn't" (H. López, no. 134). There's no need to speculate on the cause of division; it is enough to recognize the absence of any mention of cooperation between groups from any veteran's video. The silences of the archive are often more resonant than its speech.

Among the veterans, such avoidances are sometimes around the specifics of a crime, sometimes around the details of time spent on the street, sometimes even around military service itself. To be clear, military veterans are not deported for lack of documentation. They must be permanent residents in order to enlist; their deportations are nearly always the product of a conviction for an offense categorized as an aggravated felony. Thus, a conflict

FIGURE 5.1. Alex Gómez Cortés at the Deported Veterans Support House in Tijuana; photo by Leo Peña

arises in their stories: in order to be given a clean slate, the slate must first be dirtied, responsibility confessed; but the reduction through carceral discipline to a number in a cell, and then through deportation to a disposable, useless excess, demands that the veteran be seen acting the role not of a hoodlum but rather of a patriot. These veterans are not standing before a judge or parole board, nor are they submitting to the commands of a drill sergeant. Yet the imprint of these experiences is evident. Any admission of guilt keeps its eye on eliciting pity, while the chronicle of events seeks bestowal of honor. Patriotic feeling is woven through hard times until the contradiction reveals itself and the veteran ends up asking to be accepted by a country that does not exist.

Alex Gómez's two-part narrative bears the title "My Struggle and Redemption" (Gómez Cortés, nos. 58a–b). At the beginning of his story, he introduces himself first by his "Mexican name," Alejandro López Melchor, and then by his name in the United States, Alejandro Gómez Cortés. He prefers the latter, and even has it tattooed on his back, but is stuck with the former. Gómez was adopted in Michoacán when he was six months old and brought to the United States, to Oakland. He remembers what he calls turbulent times: the Black Panthers and the Brown Berets (remembering them in nearly the same breath), Vietnam veterans returning "and *not getting* a welcome" (his emphasis), Bobby Seale and Huey Newton "talking to us on the street corner." While he doesn't say who this "us" is, there is pride in his voice, a sense of realizing the meaning of what he was close to, the unfolding of historical consciousness. But it closes right down, gets sealed shut: "I grew up in a dysfunctional home" gives way to remembrances of sexual abuse, domestic

violence, arguments over lack of money, a mother who "wore the pants in the family," contrasted with a couple of uncles, ex-marines whom nobody messed with and who he saw take down eight cops at a wedding. Following his model of manhood, Gómez enlisted. After his girlfriend back home was killed in a drive-by shooting, he drank himself to discharge, after which he joined a gang, because he had to belong to something. "It shouldn't be any surprise," he says, acknowledging both the family resemblance between the marines corps and street gangs and the discomfitingly familiar trajectory that would follow: in and out of jail, dead-end jobs, bullet wounds, drug habit, disability, "recidivism," in and out of prison, followed by the sexual abuse of his stepdaughter while he was inside.

Goméz worked his way back to a supportive position, driving a truck for a nursery until 2004, when ICE showed up:

> It turned out that when I pled guilty to the sales, conspiracy for sales, possession for sales back in '96, well, I was supposed to go in front of an immigration judge. Back then it wasn't that bad. The Towers hadn't fallen. There was no Homeland Security. INS was still INS, it was not ICE. When they became ICE they had unlimited funds at their disposal.

As tempting as it is to dismiss the "unlimited funds" statement and to get to Gómez's hidden history of the aggravated felony, the superlative claim is revealing. To a man who drives a bus or a delivery truck for a living—not to mention to the vast majority of wage earners in the United States—the resources of a government agency can seem boundless, to the point where its power might begin to appear so unapproachable as to be magical. "Unlimited" means infinite; it means there is nowhere to hide; it means whatever wage being earned by the target is nothing in comparison, and so the target, too, is next to nothing. It is an expression of helplessness. And yet Goméz counters this feeling and the position it determines through resourceful cunning, stated matter-of-factly, almost overlooking his own power of defiance. ICE deported him to Mexico in 2006, but he returned the next day (Goméz Cortés, no. 58a).

Between Gómez's conviction and his detention, a change occurred. The law governing aggravated felonies was implemented in 1996, but the apparatus or process for pursuing its execution lacked authority, and his case was overlooked until 2004. "Back then it wasn't that bad": the "it" is obviously the political climate but indicates as well a turn in economic conditions, a change in the needs of labor. ICE's targeting of places of employment is neither simply convenient nor coincidental. "The Towers hadn't fallen": more

than a symbol of national pride, the World Trade Center was the nucleus of financial infrastructure. Gómez registers this implicitly. Here, as elsewhere in the archive, the voice provides the anchor, while the imagery offers adornment. Stock photos of ICE raids gloss over the reach of Gómez's words, reducing the historical to the immediate. This banal genre of photograph is far too familiar. Agents lead detainees toward a fate that must be concealed, that is already being disguised by the camera's perspective, always from the back, displaying not only the absence of obstruction in the agents' paths but a dubious extension of anonymity, supposedly in consideration for the accused, yet applying equally to the agents, allowing them to pass as mere functions of the unlimited power of their employer. Inevitability adheres to these bureaucratic documents, conjuring a kind of mundane mythology. The photos accompanying Gómez's defiance show automobile traffic at the border, leaving us to wonder (or not) after the dread and exhilaration of making an unsuspected transgression among so much dutiful order. Even such a tiny assumption of power must be unhesitatingly suppressed (Goméz Cortés, no. 58a).

We are already a long way from the patriotism of the soldier. The second half of Gómez's narrative increases the distance. He talks about life in Tijuana, how he dreams in English, how he's called *plástico* ("fake Mexican") by the locals, how he's a man without a country. The issue with the name returns as he is forced to put one he doesn't identify with on his identification cards. After fourteen years clean, he relapses, goes back to using, which costs him, presumably among other things, his marriage. At some point he checks in to a treatment center, and after "nine months of hell" he finds "a new confidence," "a new belief in God." Only then does military service return, and the status of veteran is transformed into another aspect of the identity necessary to make an appeal. Gómez equates the injustice of the recruiter's lies about guaranteed citizenship with the injustice of being deported for life. The gap between the two is no doubt astonishing. Yet regarded simply in the form of a promise of opportunity followed by a shock of expendability—the disenchantment of the American dream—there is not so much that separates the veteran experience from that of any other immigrant. The main difference perhaps lies in the use the veteran is able to make of that patriotism, and of the immediate fraternity he is able to find: "There's about fifty other veterans just like me that are deported over here for some petty-ante stuff." It also appears to offer a kind of rampart behind which Gómez is able to take rhetorical shots at the state. They are rather soft shots, however, and each sentence of critique contains an additional wedge of separation. He thinks the US government really needs to look at its policies, "especially

when it comes to veterans," because "[they] at least served" (presumably in contrast with the civilian) and were willing to go, "especially as a marine" (in contrast, it seems, to those less-willing military branches) anywhere in the world they were told to go (Goméz Cortés, no. 58b). Not only does the critique quickly reverse itself, but the appeal it becomes ends by exulting the indoctrination of compliance as a virtue.

The line between the figures of soldier and criminal is tenuous and easily erased; it may be said that the state of war draws the line, while the side of the fight determines whether the division is upheld or abolished. Contingency, in other words, plays no small part. A cursory knowledge of modern warfare will demystify any claim for heroism being the product of much more than dumb luck. The medals go to those who don't die. Meanwhile, the pomp of the military funeral is still reserved for any deported veteran, whether or not they find pardon while they're alive. This merciless irony haunts every moment of these videos. The appeal to the phantasm of the "American people" shrivels toward a desire to die in peace. Alex Gómez's last words, aimed at the murder rate in Tijuana but extractable to so much else, are "I just pray to God that people change this" (Goméz Cortés, no. 58b). Prayer is the ultimate capitulation.

CONCLUSION

"They are my people, but not my relatives" (A. de León, no. 14); "I respect the Mexican flag, but it is not mine, my flag is the US flag" (Madrid, no. 13); "I'm a 'fake Mexican'" (Gómez Cortés, no. 58b): the violence of deportation rebounds in the need to choose, in the demand to form an identity in terms of describing an enemy, or at least a national opposition. The thought becomes naturalized and is expressed in terms of survival: "Everyone who is deported and cannot adapt to society ends up in the street, drug addicts, alcoholics, or dead" (Madrid, no. 13). This experience of "learning" that "permanent resident" does not mean what it says comes with trauma that cannot be overcome. These stories and testimonies from deported veterans reflect a culture and an experience of people who feel deeply to be American citizens, who behaved like American citizens no less when they served in its military than when they broke its laws. But their Achilles' heel, their vulnerable point, is that they were born in Mexico, they were Americanized foreigners, childhood arrivals, but with the apparent security of residency. Their deportation, seen by some as collateral damage, is seen by them as a betrayal of their oath, evidence that the laws are unjust, that justice has not been done.

FIGURE 5.2. Andy de León at the Deported Veterans Support House in Tijuana; photo by Leo Peña

POSTSCRIPT

In June 2021, Andy de León, now seventy-eight years old and in need of medical care, was readmitted to the United States through a grant of humanitarian parole. A few weeks later, the Department of Homeland Security in conjunction with the Department of Veterans Affairs announced a program that, according to Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, was "committed to bringing back military service members, veterans, and their immediate family members who were unjustly removed and ensuring they receive the benefits to which they may be entitled." A press release claims that federal agencies "will develop a rigorous, systematic approach to review the cases of individuals whose removals failed to live up to our highest values." It remains to be seen how a new presidential administration will approach the paradox of banished patriots and what criteria will be applied to determine which deportations were unjust. A bill currently circulating through Congress, which has obtained multiple endorsements, would favor honorably discharged veterans whose crimes were not violent or seditious in nature. So far, only isolated cases have been successful.

CHAPTER 6

FAMILY UNITY AND PRACTICES OF CARE: DEPORTATION'S EFFECTS ON THE SOUL

MARÍA JOSÉ GUTIÉRREZ

Translated by María José Gutiérrez and Haley Williams

I MET JESSICA NALBACH IN 2018 in Mexico City. At that time, she was a US citizen working at a call center, along with many repatriated Mexican Americans, in a small neighborhood near the Monumento a la Revolución known as "Little LA" because of its sizeable community of people deported from the United States. Little LA is no larger than a couple of blocks and has distinctive but veiled clues about the repatriated community. You can find a barbershop decorated with designs from Southern California, staffed by a Mexican American barber who can speak to you in English about his tattoos and cut your hair in the "LA style." Nearby, a Tex-Mex fast-food truck sells burritos for a couple of pesos, and tattoo parlors with names such as Ghetto Blaster and Punks Life offer urban body art and piercings. A refuge for migrants offers temporary shelter and food for repatriated people with no place to go after being deported. It is also a hub for call centers, the most popular, if not the only, job market available to many recent returnees. For many repatriated people, this place is safe and feels like home, even if it is only because they can speak English or Spanglish and not feel judged. For others, like Christian Guzmán, it does not guarantee protection but rather seems to attract police harassment. Guzmán has been detained a couple of times, falsely accused of drug possession because of his appearance, and forced to pay bribes for his release (Guzmán, no. 92b). For Guzmán, the Mexican police have learned to recognize individuals like him, and they know that Little LA is the place to find them. Guzmán and migrants with similar trajectories have spent time in detention centers and have experienced the difficult process of deportation to a country that most of them do not recognize as home.

Jessica Nalbach's migrant trajectory, however, is somewhat different. She is a white US citizen who became a migrant in Mexico with her children after her husband's unexpected deportation. Her involvement with the migrant

community started earlier, during her childhood in the United States, when she decided to run away from foster care. Nalbach ended up working with migrants in the fields, experienced homelessness, and fell into substance abuse. Later on, she met her husband, and they set about raising a family in an economically and emotionally stable environment, until his deportation because of a criminal record from ten years before interrupted their plans. Despite Nalbach being a white American woman and not having been directly deported herself, her story reveals the ways in which processes of deportation affect the configuration of the heteronormative family and the possibility of carrying out care practices. Her story offers the perspective of a mother and a wife who, despite her citizenship rights, experienced the effects of deportation through the obstacles her husband's deportation posed to taking care of herself and her family.

This chapter analyzes Nalbach's two-part narrative, "Deportation Effects on the Soul" (nos. 66a–b), to ask how the (im)possibility of caretaking influences the desires and decisions involved in processes of migration. This approach enables us to think further about the effects of deportation in relation to the loss or the reconfiguration of affective and caring networks in binational families, as well as to think of notions of citizenship and belonging as not grounded in birth rights but in caring practices.

FIGURE 6.1. Jessica Nalbach at New Comienzos in Mexico City; photo by Leo Peña

LOOKING FOR CARE

Nalbach's narrative centers caretaking as an important factor in making sense of her decisions to leave the United States, despite the privileges that she and her children might have been afforded as US citizens, to join her husband in Mexico. Her story enables us to think of the concept of care in terms of what feminist scholars have called life-sustaining practices with ethical, affective, and political implications (Pérez Orozco; M. Murphy; Puig de la Bellacasa). As an analytical concept, care has been situated within feminist epistemologies as a way to bring attention to the private sphere of life whose day-to-day practices have historically been negated as spaces of knowledge production (Ticktin; Puig de la Bellacasa; Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran, and Vieten). In the same vein, scholars of feminist migration studies have framed reproductive practices as care, pointing out the importance of considering reproduction not only as labor but as practices of making home in contexts of migration (Gedalof; Ticktin). Irene Gedalof, for instance, points out how scholarly accounts of migration often frame migration as a narrative that overprivileges change, mobility, and agency while neglecting the relevance of reproductive work and, more broadly, the reproductive sphere, which has been framed in terms of immobility and monotony. What Nalbach's narrative highlights in this regard is the relevance of reproductive work in a scenario of forced and voluntary mobility. Her decision to migrate, for example, is tied to the possibility of taking care of her children after her husband was apprehended: "When my husband was detained my two sons were in and out of the hospital. In the United States if you can't be with both of your children twenty-four hours a day it is considered neglect. So, I made my decision. I took my children, made my husband sign the voluntary deportation, packed everything up, and left" (Nalbach, no. 66a).

Nalbach shifts in her narrative from a focus on economic motivations to affective and emotional needs. In this case, the motivation to migrate comes not only from the impossibility of taking care of her children in a context where neglect is framed in terms of constant presence, but also in order to avoid family separation. Family separation is a common situation that is named and narrated as the cause of migration and the desire to return in many of the digital stories of the Humanizing Deportation archive (see, for example, de los Ángeles, no. 60; Palma and Mandujano, no. 88a; Guzmán, no. 92a; Ceja, no. 94a; R. Hernández, no. 140b). Most of the mothers who have been deported, however, highlight the importance of ensuring their children's ability to remain in the place that has become their home. For instance, Tania Mendoza describes an acceptance of the experience of family

separation, recognizing the importance of her daughter's remaining in the United States for the sake of her emotional stability (Mendoza, no. 115b). Nalbach, on the other hand, privileges affective ties over economic needs by stressing her own emotional instability in the United States. Nalbach relates that she experienced the effects of mental illness in the stages prior to her husband's deportation and relapsed on drugs when she returned to the United States for a short period of time. In Nalbach's story, therefore, the United States is posited as a place where life cannot be reproduced and sustained, with Nalbach emphasizing the importance of affective networks and emotional needs in choosing the right place to raise her children.

The emphasis on affective and caring needs in Nalbach's narrative is expressed from the beginning, when she points out that it was the lack of supportive networks in foster care that triggered her desire to leave and to seek refuge with migrant communities. She explains, "After running between foster homes and shelters, I got tired of it and I escaped. I was looking for love and I ended up working with migrants in the fields" (no. 66a). Her own story of personal agency does not account for migration as a function of economic precarity, but rather privileges the fulfillment of emotional needs. As Papadopoulus, Stephenson, and Tsianos express, the desire to escape might be seen as a transformative action taken by "interested, careful, concerned actors" (65). Connecting her childhood story of escape with her later migration to Mexico, Nalbach emphasizes the notion that the migrant subject is not a victim, disempowered by systems of expulsion and control, but is an "actant" (Isin and Nielsen) with the ability to affect his or her social conditions. Papadopoulous, Stephenson, and Tsianos further note that "escape instigates an intensification of committed constructions and efficacious interventions" (66). In Nalbach's narrative, adolescent escape itself is a practice of caring for herself and her affective and emotional needs, and it is this notion that influences her later decision to migrate to Mexico and join her husband.

Facing the possibility of family separation and being in a position to decide, Nalbach chose to leave her country and become a migrant. Her narrative highlights the importance of decision-making in the processes of mobility, even in the case of her husband's voluntary deportation. She asserts agency when she speaks about her children and their decision-making abilities, relating, "When they are older, I will take my kids back so they can make a decision for themselves whether to stay in the US or go back to Mexico" (Nalbach, no. 66b). Despite the fact that deportation is still depicted as a forced displacement, with all the negative emotional and economic consequences that that entails, Nalbach's narrative highlights the autonomy

of migration (see Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos, 202–221) and the coexistence of the possibility of decision-making processes in cases of forced mobility. Nalbach exposes what feminist scholars in Latin America have called *desesidades*, which point out the desires and needs that underlie political claims and decision-making processes (Pérez Orozco).

The relevance of autonomy in Nalbach's accounts is, nonetheless, entangled with vulnerability and concern for her physical and emotional needs. In the second part of her narrative, she discusses her illness, demonstrating how, despite the possibility of living and working in the United States, her country refused to provide medical treatment for her. Because of this, she does not consider it the right place to sustain an affective network for herself and her children. She explains:

> I have a liver disease and the US refused to give me my treatment. My job here in Mexico paid for forty-eight weeks of treatment, something my country didn't even give me the opportunity to [have]. Say if I were to die there, my kids would go to foster care and will be given up for adoption. If I die here, at least my children will have a family that will take care of them. (Nalbach, no. 66b)

The decision to stay in Mexico is also informed by the possibility of treating her health condition and the possibility of taking care of her children. Care, in Nalbach's account, is as much about herself as it is about her children and involves the possibility of providing affection. This claim exemplifies what Maria Puig de la Bellacasa has pointed out about questioning the ways in which care is framed within neoliberal conceptualizations of a biopolitical morality of self-care and individual autonomy (30). Nalbach does bring in the notion of individual autonomy, but it is one that does not exclude vulnerability, the recognition of dependence, and the reliance on affective networks as ways of sustaining life. An important aspect of how care is privileged in Nalbach's story is that she represents herself first as a vulnerable US citizen who has suffered neglect and violence in spaces of care, such as foster homes, and who later experienced the effects of mental illnesses and drug abuse; but she also portrays herself as an autonomous subject able to make decisions even in a scenario of forced mobility. Vulnerability, dependence, and autonomy coexist in her story, which portrays the intertwining of these categories in processes of migration.

Feminist scholars have also highlighted the entanglements of these categories in order to conceptualize notions of care that are not grounded in moral imperatives to relieve suffering but in practices of more everyday well-being,

with ethical, political, and affective implications that are in constant tension (Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran, and Vieten; Murphy; Puig de la Bellacasa; Pérez Orozco). Nalbach's uses of care encompass both the vulnerability that comes with processes of forced migration and the autonomy of decision-making in the face of the complications in sustaining affective networks in places of origin and destination. Her articulation of care is constituted by overlapping notions of vulnerability and autonomy, which are what ultimately define the migratory experience, according to her. But Nalbach's place of origin and racial characteristics (namely her whiteness) need to be taken into account as subject positionalities that enable her self-representation as an autonomous migrant subject. She has the privilege to be able to choose whether to remain in or leave the United States, an autonomy that her husband lacks. Nonetheless, by demonstrating the entanglements of autonomy and vulnerability in cases of forced mobility, she presents the complexities behind decision-making processes that families encounter in the face of separation. In opposition to an understanding of autonomy as individual free will, Nalbach illustrates how autonomy refers to the ability to make decisions that will enable the maintenance of affective networks and attachments in the family. The autonomy she acquires as a US citizen is not absolute, since it also depends on her husband's condition as an unauthorized migrant and her children's emotional needs. Therefore, Nalbach's understanding of autonomy does not rely on the individual self, but on a series of relational practices that involve other actors, such as her family network and the state.

CITIZENSHIP OF CARE

Nalbach's narrative and the centrality of care as a category in her articulation of migrant motivations and experiences permit us to reflect on citizenship and belonging. Nalbach's childhood experiences in the United States—specifically, the lack of care and the precariousness in which she lived—are articulated in connection to her desires to stay in Mexico. Nalbach expresses her belonging and the relationship she establishes with the United States in affective terms: "What I feel right now toward my country is so much anger. And I am embarrassed to say I am an American citizen" (no. 66a).

Nalbach's act of speaking with anger and shame about her citizenship can be seen as a *careful* and concerned speech that demystifies the United States as a privileged place of well-being, questioning the notions of autonomy that ground US citizenship. In so doing, Nalbach contributes to an already extensive discussion about how contexts of transnational mobilities challenge the meanings of citizenship. For example, Nira Yuval-Davis states that

liberal democratic citizenship until the 1990s was framed in terms of rights and local boundaries that shape forms of belonging associated with a particular territory. Yuval-Davis notes, however, that the global chains of care arising from transnational mobilities have broken down local boundaries of belonging by highlighting the importance of care as an ethical principle that transforms liberal democratic citizenship. Martha Escobar extends this argument by showing the characteristics of a neoliberal form of citizenship that is no longer defined in terms of rights but by contractualism (labor market relations), which has ultimately created the figure of the "good migrant," who is tied to notions of hard work and neoliberal forms of multicultural inclusion. In Escobar's account, belonging is attached to a notion of individual economic contribution and autonomy. What Nalbach adds to this debate is a questioning of that notion of citizenship that takes for granted social and civil rights for those born and raised in the United States. She points out how this understanding of citizenship recognizes forms of belonging associated only with individual contribution and autonomy. Despite Nalbach's legal status as a US citizen, her condition as a once-homeless child who is now the wife of a deported migrant puts her in a position of repeated neglect and abandonment by the state. Her belonging to the US territory is questioned when she refers to the lack of social protection in terms of access to health care and the ways in which she has been a subject of custody and control in what were supposed to be caring institutions.

Speaking about asylum seekers' children in detention centers, Nalbach states,

> When I see in the news and what they are doing to the children, injecting them with medication to subdue them like they did to me when I was six years old. I remember everything from the day they took me away from my mother and put me in a mental hospital for six-years-olds. They used to tie me in bed and inject me with Thorazine every time I had a temper tantrum. They are doing that to these children. (no. 66b)

Nalbach brings up her experience in the foster-care system in order to highlight the similarities of her experience as a foster child and that of immigrants' children, showing how both subjects share similar positionalities as nonbelonging subjects vis-à-vis the state. This acknowledgment articulates belonging in terms of lack of care and not in terms of citizenship or place of birth. Nalbach's critique of American citizenship comes from the lack of caring practices in state policies toward immigrant and nonimmigrant vulnerable subjects alike that make the maintenance of life impossible. Her

decision to not return or to not let her husband cross the border again are expressed in terms of precarity and the impossibility of sustaining herself and her family: "My husband says, 'Why don't you go back? You can go back and send us money.' What? On a minimum-wage job? Having to live there and send money back? What am I going to send? Twenty pesos a week?" (Nalbach, no. 66b).

Nalbach's critique also demystifies the so-called American dream by highlighting the precarity of the labor market for those who have to sustain transnational families and who have been rendered as vulnerable and unproductive. The reference to vulnerability in speaking about her condition as a citizen of the United States is something that appears in Nalbach's narrative in order to illuminate how the lack of care is what actually defines her relationship with the state. This further complicates the category of citizenship by highlighting the practice of care as fundamental in accounts of belonging to a nation-state. Her insight relates to Sayak Valencia's critique of "citizenship" as an insufficient category to account for different forms of mobility and new forms of agency in the contemporary world. Valencia proposes instead the concept of "cuirdadanía," a term that plays with the words "cuidado" (care), "ciudadanía" (citizenship), and "cuir" (a locally situated understanding of queer epistemologies in Latin America) to reject notions of a normative citizenship grounded in neoliberal frameworks that render vulnerability as weakness and as a condition of victimhood. For Valencia, the category of citizenship has been built on the basis of exclusionary practices of bodies that, because of their sexuality or race, do not align with the figure of the citizen as the able-bodied, white, male, productive subject that can sustain the nation-state as a modern/colonial form of social organization. Valencia proposes to think instead how, in scenarios of mobility, communities are built on prioritizing practices of care that highlight forms of survival and the expansion of the category of vulnerability. In that sense, the latter is no longer understood as a victimized condition but rather as a potentiality to create interdependent communities.

In Nalbach's narrative the concept of vulnerability is not presented as victimization but as a way to account for the migrant experience in terms other than economic ones, and as a possibility to build a life beyond the limits of the nation-state. In addition, her articulation of vulnerability is not devoid of acts of resistance in the ways in which she manages to escape those "caring" institutions to look for affective networks within migrant communities. Likewise, her desire to migrate is influenced by the lack of possibilities to sustain her family in the United States. The way Valencia frames *cuirdadanía* is reinforced in Nalbach's narrative by her assertion of that which remains

invisible in media narratives of the migrant experience—namely the affective needs and the work of care. The inherent vulnerability that emerges in processes of mobility appears in Nalbach's story as a potentiality to negotiate forms of belonging aside from the categories of citizenship.

Belonging, in Nalbach's experience, is negotiated and exercised through the reproductive and sick body. This negotiation of belonging has been framed by feminist migration studies scholars as fundamental to the experience of migration, especially regarding decision-making in relation to where to give birth, and with respect to the acts of homemaking that many migrant women carry out (Unnithan-Kumar and Khanna; Gedalof). Nalbach seeks to fulfill the physical and emotional needs that are not being addressed by the home country. Her drug relapse upon her short visit to the United States and her mental health are conditions that determine the way she relates to and expresses her belonging to the United States. Nevertheless, the decision to raise her children in Mexico while keeping open the possibility of a return to the United States through dual citizenship, as well as the voluntary deportation of her husband, are ways of negotiating forms of transnational belonging to the United States.

CONCLUSION

Jessica Nalbach has provided an important contribution to the Humanizing Deportation archive because of her position as a white, female US citizen who, in speaking about her experience with deportation, articulates the necessity to account for the practices of care in discussions about forced mobility. She adds to the extensive testimonies of migrant women who have highlighted the gendered effects of deportation, principally in relation to family separation and its emotional effects (see chapter 3 in this volume). Nalbach incorporates a new profile of these experiences of deportation, showing how this process affects the constitution of binational families and the decisions they make around potential family separation. By emphasizing migrant autonomy in decision-making processes, she demonstrates one's agency in determining the configuration of the family in cases of forced mobility and the sometimes unexpected solutions that families may find by taking into consideration factors such as affective and emotional needs. Additionally, through her lived experience in institutions of care, such as foster homes, and the lack of attention to her mental and physical health that she endured, she critically points out that citizenship is not a guarantee of access to social rights. Nalbach has raised questions about a notion of US citizenship that excludes vulnerability from its accounts, by demonstrating how it not only deprives

immigrants of care and state protection but also may neglect people of apparent privilege, including white citizens like her. She has thus illuminated the deficiencies of the neoliberal notion of citizenship as an exclusionary category that disregards vulnerable bodies, making life-sustaining practices of care impossible.

CHAPTER 7

INFRAPOLITICS AND DEPORTATION: EVERYDAY RESISTANCE FROM DIGITAL STORYTELLING

ANA LUISA CALVILLO VÁZQUEZ

Translated by Haley Williams

THE UNITED STATES' HARSH MIGRATORY laws and policies in the current context of mass deportation and related expulsion processes, the intense criminalization of migrants, and the family separation that occurs with deportation constitute a pedagogy of punishment that multiplies the penalties people face for an irregular migratory status. The consequent ruptures in the lives of migrants play out at personal and familial levels as the process dismantles all that gave certainty to one's life: family, home, work, and culture.

When people are sent back to Mexico, arriving without their belongings, proof of identity, or resources to meet basic needs, such as housing, food security, and the ability to obtain employment, they are put into a defenseless situation, on the borders of survival. Added to this is the fact that having resided in the United States for extended periods, many returned people find themselves without social networks in Mexico, which often leads to a prolonged or worsened integration process. All of this implies, as Nassim Majidi points out, that deported migrants experience a significant loss of control and autonomy in their lives and markedly reduced levels of social participation (138).

Using the concept of infrapolitics as proposed by James C. Scott, deportation can be framed through a relationship of domination, because people not only receive punishment for having transgressed immigration laws but also, upon expulsion, become a new marginalized group with limited civil and political rights in their country of origin. At the same time, deportation constitutes a rite of domination due to the extension of its effects to the families of returnees as well as to the migrant community in general in the form of publicly visible disciplinary or preventative measures.

The offense committed by one's illegal presence in the United States requires, as symbolic reparation, that people who have been deported request a pardon from the consular authorities upon completion of the penalty time

imposed with their expulsion in order to apply for a visa to return to the United States as a visitor or, in some particular cases, to regularize their immigration status. But there are no guarantees that the necessary permits to reenter the United States will be granted, further perpetuating the subjugation of those who face these processes.

As Scott articulates, from their suffering, all groups of oppressed peoples produce a hidden discourse or a discourse of resistance through which they express what cannot be said openly to power, arising from an inability to defend themselves and from the consciousness of oppression. This discourse is expressed in specific social spaces where control and vigilance from the oppressors is not present, or in which, if it is present, it can be evaded. The social spaces in which hidden discourse takes place are created by the people themselves as a safe zone in which they may express themselves without fear of reprisal. They are spaces in which people can share thoughts, secrets, and revenge fantasies, as well as engage in game play and blaspheming in order to release social suffering, discontent, and frustration. Therefore, these spaces are reinforced by the social cohesion constituted by shared experiences of oppression.

In this sense, although the official public website of the Humanizing Deportation community archive was created by people at the University of California, Davis, to facilitate the expression of the community directly affected by deportation and deportability, and not by the people with deportation experiences themselves, in the strict sense of the construction of the social space as conceived by Scott, the archive itself can be thought of as a socially symbolic space because it recovers, unites, preserves, and transmits the voices of a community who lack the power to openly express themselves publicly. In this series of digital narratives, the community locates a means to express their life lessons, experiences, knowledge, opinions, and wisdom about deportation and other mechanisms of migration control in the public sphere.

On one hand, it is a situational community, following the conceptualization of Miguel Martínez (182), since people are in different geographical spaces and do not know one another but share a discourse as well as a common experience that provides them with a certain sense of belonging and social cohesion. On the other hand, digital narrative as a participatory methodology based in the community is supported by a perspective of self-representation: community storytellers themselves decide what to express and how to do so without a stage director guiding their politics. The purpose of the digital narrative is to restore self-authorship, to provide a means by which one is able to recognize one's authority to speak about what is not

known or is taken for granted in the public sphere, given that the "voice is not democratically distributed" (Lambert, 41).

When a narrator addresses a potential audience, this requires an acknowledgement of the self as a social actor, as well as recognition of the presence of others who may be one's peers. In this sense, digital stories not only promote access to public media for people who have been excluded from public discourse (Lambert, 131) but become a space in which people can meet and give resonance to their experiences. The Humanizing Deportation archive is thus a social space for the articulation of hidden discourse. Although these are not narratives that give free rein to contestations, it is possible to identify in the narrators' voices such discursive techniques as irony, utopian thought, and imaginary subversion that constitute daily resistance and the attributes of infrapolitics.

To highlight this discourse, I will focus on three digital stories narrated by people who emigrated to the United States in the 1980s and the 1990s and remained in the country without legal authorization for ten to thirty years: Luis Gonsaga Hernández's "La ilusión y los obstáculos" (no. 36); Anonymous's "Futuro secuestrado" (no. 39); and Candelario González Ramos's "De mojado deportado en México, sí se puede" (no. 50). The experience of these three migrants traverses important immigration laws and reforms in recent US history, including the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986; the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act and the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, both of 1996; and the USA Patriot Act of 2001. These stories offer a combined vision of insight about the transformation of migratory practices and dynamics in recent decades.

The objective of this analysis is to highlight the micropractices of resistance that people who have lived the experience of deportation engage in, and to offer an interpretation and assessment of the discourses they employ as a means of vindication in their digital stories.

INFRAPOLITICS: A DISCOURSE OF RESISTANCE

"Infrapolitics" is defined by James C. Scott as the discrete realm where the struggle of oppressed peoples takes place—that is, their resistance to domination. Infrapolitics are what is said and done behind the backs of the powerful in certain social spaces. As Scott points out, practices and discourses of resistance exist in any space of power, especially in highly stratified societies.

According to Scott, the exercise of power produces frictions because it is not possessed at once and for always but must be maintained, consolidated, and perpetuated. To do so, it resorts on the one hand to the apparatuses of

ideological domination and, on the other, to constant demonstrations of both physical and symbolic power through technologies, artifacts, and practices that reinforce the hierarchical order.

Physical punishment, when public, constitutes a rite of domination because it serves to demonstrate the existence of an apparently stable, effective, and enduring system that aims to remind oppressed peoples that their only option is to obey (Scott, 66), while symbolic punishments function to reinforce submission because the subordinates' remorse is more important than the punishment itself. As Scott notes, "One deserter shot, one assertive slave whipped, one unruly student rebuked; these acts are meant as public events for an audience of subordinates. They are intended as a kind of preemptive strike to nip in the bud any further challenge of the existing frontier" (197).

But even within a scheme of domination in which individuals are conditioned by the various structures that oppress them, there are spaces in which oppressed peoples find a way "to refuse what is anyway refused" (Pierre Bourdieu quoted in Scott, 76). In other words, resistance arises from the power relations themselves in response to systematic exploitation.

This resistance is not manifested in a form of pure thought, nor is it organized and formal, but is an everyday resistance constituted by alternative methods of channeling dissident attitudes through hidden discourses. These discourses can be expressed through verbal language or nonverbal and bodily language, as well as through specific acts and practices in both the public and private spheres. The employment of these discourses is a form of ideological subordination that serves as an escape valve to mitigate social suffering.

To be effective, however, these hidden discourses must remain between the lines, since their purpose is to avoid repression and defeat. Therefore, the use of hidden discourse implies a set of verbal skills that oppressed peoples develop in order to maintain a sense of self-control while brandishing a subversive discourse of opposition and vindication that, for security reasons, is kept disguised and hidden. It is a counterhegemonic discourse that reveals tensions and contradictions, although it appears to be marginalized dissidence: "Suffering from the same humiliations or, worse, subject to the same terms of subordination, they all have a shared interest in jointly creating a discourse of dignity, of negation, and of justice. They have, in addition, a shared interest in concealing a social site apart from domination where such a hidden transcript can be elaborated in comparative safety" (Scott, 114).

Some examples of social spaces where hidden discourse takes place are private settings and secret meeting places, as well as community and public spaces where marginalized peoples meet with their peers to let loose their protestations, to voice their dreams of freedom, and to proclaim all that has

been denied them and trampled upon. In these spaces, as Scott affirms, hidden discourse appears completely uninhibited if it is sufficiently removed from the oppressors but resorts to more complex speech techniques and strategies within the proximity of the oppressors, thus requiring interpretation.

When hidden discourse manages to enter the public discourse, it is not completely literal, because marginalized groups deliberately act in a "cryptic and opaque manner" (Scott, 137). Everyday resistance therefore takes the form of residual expressions, sayings, jokes, irony, popular songs, utopian thought, the subversive imaginary, carnivals, popular theater, and celebrations of rebel heroes or martyrs from resistance movements, among other strategies. Hidden discourse locates a free space in these manifestations as expressions of nonconformity that remain protected by the masks that cover them. Marginalized peoples thus insinuate their criticism of power and denounce social injustice, thereby liberating themselves from oppression, if only momentarily.

These forms of dissent, when accepted and understood by a broader community and even incorporated into the culture, become collective cultural products. As Scott affirms, "an individual who is affronted may develop a personal fantasy of revenge and confrontation, but when the insult is but a

FIGURE 7.1. Luis Gonsaga Hernández by the Tijuana River canal, along the US-Mexico border; photo by Robert McKee Irwin

variant of affronts suffered systematically by a whole race, class, or strata, then the fantasy can become a collective cultural product" (9). Thus these discourses of everyday resistance, even in disguise, are a reclamation of the dignity of oppressed voices and a way to speak back to power. If the oppressors can maintain and extend their material control, then marginalized peoples can also conquer symbolic freedoms that allow them to reverse this appropriation.

THE IMMIGRATION HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY NARRATORS

Luis Gonsaga Hernández (no. 36) emigrated to the United States in 1979, while Anonymous (no. 39) did so in the 1980s, and Candelario González Ramos (no. 50) arrived in the 1990s. But while Gonsaga settled permanently after his first emigration (despite having a prior deportation), Anonymous and González resided in the United States and then returned to Mexico, where they remained for some time until emigrating again. This circular migratory practice is inherited from the braceros of the 1950s, who worked in the United States for an established length of time, according to their labor contracts or according to the harvest seasons in the fields.

Another practice that was carried out in the 1970s and 1980s was the "repeated attempts model" (Massey, Durand, and Malone, 54–56), which refers to the actions of migrants who were detained by immigration officials and who returned almost immediately after removal or deportation. Immigration laws, especially the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, established sanctions for employers who hired workers without the authorizing documentation to work in the United States, but in practice, a permissive system tolerated irregular migration based on the needs of immigrant labor, as has been widely analyzed in academic literature. The testimonies of migrants from these different periods give an account of these practices. Many of them experienced more than ten expulsions from the United States without this being an impediment for them to reenter the country, find work, and develop a long-term life project (Roldán, 45, 70). Furthermore, irregular migration was not yet classified as a serious crime, and a biometric record of detained persons was not kept, which made it possible for many to reenter repeatedly.

Anonymous (no. 39) and González (no. 50) had these experiences of repeated entry without legal consequences. Anonymous recalls that he was detained "many times," while González was also expelled on multiple occasions. This was part of the risk they assumed for entering or remaining in the United States irregularly: "They would get my name but not my fingerprints. Eight hours, or right away after two hours, they would kick us out.

We would not get punished. It was really easy to cross illegally" (González Ramos, no. 50).

In fact, González recalls that the immigration officials in the United States once wished him better luck on his next attempt: "You'll make it next time" (no. 50). In other words, there was a shared knowledge and a certain implicit tolerance in which removal functioned as a regulatory mechanism and not as a cancellation of migratory flows (Massey, Durand, and Malone). For this reason, deportation did not represent the end of one's migration project but was a transitory state that could be reversed with a new, successful reentry. Because of this, people who returned to Mexico had the habit of remaining in the border areas while awaiting the right moment to return to the United States.

This was the result of the contradictions in US immigration policies that, in certain situations, tolerated irregular migration, as was the case in the context of the world wars, and even during much of the Bracero Program. Even today, as Izcara points out, some agricultural entrepreneurs continue to encourage the arrival of undocumented workers (70–71).

Both Gonsaga's (no. 36) and González's (no. 50) work experiences represent typical cases in which they worked in spaces where their irregular migratory status was overlooked, such as in the fields or in construction. All three narrators report that they managed to adapt to the country, to learn the language, and to assimilate into the US way of life.

Gonsaga (no. 36) remained in the United States for more than thirty years and started a family with a US citizen, fathering his three children there. Anonymous (no. 39) was in the United States for nearly twenty years; his family has a mixed immigration status, with children born in Mexico and a son born in the United States. González (no. 50) only spent ten years in the United States and does not make reference to having had children or to starting a family in the country.

In the discourses employed by these narrators, it is significant that González refers to himself as "mojado" (wetback), while Anonymous and Gonsaga describe themselves as "ilegales" (illegals); both terms are marks of the hegemonic discourse of the time in which their migratory trajectory was developed. For this reason, the narrators express an ideology of what can be considered the generation of undocumented immigrants after the braceros.

THE NEW MIGRATORY PARADIGM

Beginning in the 1990s, the migratory dynamics that had prevailed between Mexico and the United States throughout the twentieth century changed.

This new migration paradigm had its roots in the Clinton presidency, when laws such as the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) and the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) were enacted, establishing the effective criminalization of irregular migration. In addition, the militarization of the border was underway, as well as the construction and expansion of walls, while the criminalization of acts that could lead to deportation was increasing.

The AEDPA law—which emerged in response to a bomb planted by foreign terrorists that exploded in the parking garage of the World Trade Center in New York in 1993 and the bombing (by domestic terrorists) of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995—associated irregular migration with terrorism, establishing expedited removal of any foreigner who had crossed the border without proper documentation or who had committed a crime categorized as an aggravated felony, even if the individual already had legal residency (Massey). The IIRIRA law established unauthorized reentry after a previous expulsion or deportation, which had characterized the immigration practices of previous generations, as a serious crime (aggravated felony) at the federal level; this implied a prison sentence, a new deportation, and the temporary or indefinite prohibition of return to the country.

These measures were to be reinforced following the 2001 terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in New York, with the enactment of the Patriot Act during the presidency of George W. Bush. This law would permit the deportation of any foreigner, with or without legal residency, who was presumed to be involved in acts of terrorism, without it being necessary to present evidence in this regard (Massey). The struggle against irregular migration was combined with the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking, multiplying the deportation risk for both people with an irregular migration situation and people with legal residency in the United States.

The three narrators—Gonsaga Hernández (no. 36), Anonymous (no. 39), and González Ramos (no. 50)—experienced these new expulsion measures firsthand. González relates that he was apprehended three times when he tried to reenter the United States, in 2000, 2015, and 2017, and that with each arrest, his punishment was increased from five to twenty years of prohibition of return, effectively changing his status to that of a "criminal." As he recalls, "Illegal immigrants were blamed of being terrorists, of being the drug traffickers. We, immigrants, just go to work and get money for our families who live in Mexico" (González Ramos, no. 50).

For his part, Gonsaga experienced discrimination and violence at the hands of immigration agents the two times he was deported in 1979 and

2017. On the first occasion, an immigration officer hit him in the stomach because he believed he was ignoring him and then forced him to clean the floor: "He told me to clean the floor because I was an illegal in the US and that those people deserve to be treated like dirt" (Gonsaga Hernández, no. 36). During the second expulsion, when he was detained on the street with another person, the two were forced to bathe with a pressure washer because, according to immigration officials, "we were dirty and carried Mexican infections" (no. 36). As Gonsaga affirms, "If they've got you in a detention center, who looks at you, nobody looks at you, nobody can defend you, not even your family. They can kill you. And that has happened. They call it an accident. And that's what happened one time. They said it was an accident, but it wasn't. They beat up the guy, then sent him to the hospital, and he died there from the beating" (no. 36).

Like Gonsaga, Anonymous (no. 39) mentions that he was treated as "the worst criminal" in the detention center, although, in his case, the immigration officials encouraged him to sign a form of voluntary departure from the country, with the promise that he would not have problems in the future when he regularized his immigration status. This turned out to be a false promise, however, as they formally imposed a ninety-nine-year ban on his return to the country. Additionally, according to Anonymous, his Mexican-born daughters are unable to obtain visas to enter the United States because of their affiliation with him.

EVERYDAY RESISTANCE IN GONSAGA'S, ANONYMOUS'S, AND GONZÁLEZ'S STORIES

In the framework of the new migration paradigm, people know that they are defenseless in the face of the different border-control mechanisms; deported migrants might therefore turn to irony as a defense mechanism, to feel less vulnerable or to momentarily alleviate the consequences of expulsion. Anonymous demonstrates this by relating that each time he went to the United States, "of course I went illegally" (no. 39). Using this phrase, the narrator affirms himself as an irregular migrant—that is, he owns his undocumented status, thereby negating any form of imposition.

Furthermore, Anonymous appears to flaunt his mobility practices, allowing himself to recover from deportation with dignity. For this reason, despite the multiple expulsions he experienced throughout his migratory trajectory, he affirms, "But I had crossed more often than they caught me" (no. 39). In other words, Anonymous balances the frustration of having been deported with the fact that he was unable to be stopped at other times. On those

occasions, in the game of border control, Anonymous, not the immigration authorities, was the victor.

The irony of Anonymous's speech nullifies, for a moment, the reality he faces with a ninety-nine-year ban that prevents him from returning to his son's side in the United States. According to Scott, the attitude of minimizing reality is also a part of individuals' everyday resistance strategies; it is a defensive attitude and, at the same time, a defiance that shows the oppressor that the punishment did not defeat them and that they remain standing.

Later, when Anonymous relates that an immigration agent assured him that he would have no problems if he signed the voluntary departure form, when in reality they would impose a lifelong deportation sentence, Anonymous declares that the agent "lied to me like a criminal" (no. 39). With this expression, Anonymous reverses his experience of being treated as a criminal by the immigration authorities, instead insinuating that the immigration authorities themselves are criminals. Thus, from the hidden discourse and the anonymity from which he chose to produce his digital story, he returns the blow.

Finally, faced with the dilemma of his daughters' inability to obtain visas, Anonymous (no. 39) argues that he will have to change their surnames to prevent them from being linked to him, thus reaffirming that despite his immigration experience, he still has the ability to find a loophole to reach his objectives. In this way, his speech demonstrates a resistant political conduct that is based on knowing how to navigate authorized and institutionalized border-crossing spaces.

For his part, Gonsaga, whose detention experience was violent and traumatic, considers that an irregular migratory status comes with many sacrifices and humiliations. After working in the construction and restaurant industries in the United States for more than thirty years, he now finds himself in precarious conditions in Tijuana, Baja California, surviving through informal labor that he refers to as "running errands" (Gonsaga Hernández, no. 36). In his case, the experience of physical abuse at the hands of immigration agents and the impossibility of crossing the border, as he had done in the past, are so overwhelming that he can only have faith that one day the situation will change and he will be able to return to be with his wife and children. He states, "I would like to be with them, but I am here in Tijuana. May God give me the strength to be with them again in the United States" (no. 36).

At the end of his digital story, Gonsaga sends a message of faith to other migrants who are in the same situation, to convey utopian thought, the form that his hidden discourse takes: "I suggest that everyone who wants to cross to the United States be patient, and wait for the day that they open

the gates and let us back across. Who knows? If immigration agents don't block the way . . ." (no. 36). The beliefs of migrants of his generation—for whom deportation was not a definitive state, since it was enough to wait for the conditions to change to return to the United States—can be identified in his discourse. His utopia is that the door, the border, will be opened by divine will, although, at the same time, he recognizes that reality is different.

In Scott's interpretation, utopian thought is not just a form of comfort in which a person places their hopes on a redemptive force but is actually a discourse of resistance that expresses "a more or less systematic negation of an existing pattern of exploitation and status degradation as it is experienced by subordinated groups" (81). It is, therefore, a way to release feelings of oppression by relying on a higher power that can reverse that reality. Likewise, it can be interpreted that if Gonsaga is certain that the situation will change, it is because this has historically been the case; his duty as an immigrant is to know how to wait.

Finally, González Ramos conceives of irregular migration as constant suffering because the fact of not having legal documentation to work in the United States ensures that people face more obstacles and must remain in the shadows, hiding from the police or immigration authorities and trying not to make a mistake that will get them deported. But what González considers to be more serious in the current context is that irregular migration has been classified as a serious crime, and as a result, he was imprisoned the three times he was detained. He states, "It is great suffering and the United States government makes the suffering even greater" (González Ramos, no. 50).

González relates that he worked in US agricultural fields for a decade and maintained the discipline of sending money to his family to build a house and purchase vehicles as a way to invest in the future. After the last time he was removed, in 2017, with a twenty-year ban on his return to the country and a criminal record for having reentered illegally, he decided to remain in Mexico permanently. Reintegrating into his community in Mezcala, Jalisco, was not easy, since he had to start from scratch, much like when he went to the United States for the first time. When he realized that there was no ride service in his town, however, he used the vehicles he had purchased and turned them into taxis. Additionally, he took advantage of his command of the English language to serve the tourist market and also started other small businesses.

Even though his digital story expresses optimism about the transformation he experienced as an entrepreneur, González also articulates a hidden discourse, reflecting that when the United States deports migrant workers, it undermines its own economy. He relates, "That government is closing the

doors to us, but they do not realize that by closing them they are closing themselves, because cheap labor is always what one does, and they believe that by closing the doors to us we will be affected, but the ones who will be most affected are going to be them because there won't be someone who will want to work in the fields" (González Ramos, no. 50). In his discourse, the narrator depicts a hypothetical scenario in which, if all agricultural workers were removed, the US government would be forced to rethink its immigration policies. His opinion does not seem to be a naïve one, if one recalls that this scenario presented itself in the late 1930s, following the massive expulsions of the first half of the decade (Durand, *Política*, "El Programa"), or with the commercial and labor boycotts that the Latino community undertook through the Day without Immigrants campaigns in 2006 and 2017 (Santamaría).

González's assertions express an ancestral knowledge about the unwritten rules of migration and demonstrate what Scott refers to as "imaginary subversion" (Scott, 160), another form of hidden discourse. Imaginary subversion functions as the defense of a common ethos that keeps alive the desire to overcome what seem to be insurmountable obstacles: if oppressed groups can organize, they will be able to form a force capable of fighting against the abuses of power.

Later, González reinforces this argument by declaring, "With so much discrimination by the US government, we can put a stop to it, because we are also capable of achieving a lot of things here" (González Ramos, no. 50). Here he demonstrates that he believes migrants can regain the respect they deserve as workers and as individuals, even in an irregular immigration situation.

CONCLUSION

In the three cases analyzed here, the narrators emigrated to the United States in search of a better future than what they envisioned for themselves in Mexico. They understand deportation as a consequence of irregular migration that was not experienced in the same way in earlier times, and whose greatest cost in the current context is its permanence, often implying the extreme consequence of family separation. Furthermore, they faced forms of discrimination and racism when they were apprehended, processed, and expelled from the United States.

Although the narrators assume responsibility for having remained in the country illegally, through hidden discourse they also demonstrate that they did not emigrate for a handout but to earn a place in the United States by complying with what was expected of them as migrant workers. For them, therefore, deportation represents an injustice, an unduly extreme punishment.

The narrators manage to convey their opinions via an assertiveness, showing respect for themselves by recognizing their rights as individuals and as migrants in the face of exclusion, stigmatization, and criminalization practices, thereby brandishing a discourse of dignity and self-affirmation. At the same time, through irony, utopian thought, and imaginary subversion, they legitimize their mobility practices, supported by the ideological position that their work in the United States dignified their status as irregular migrants.

The everyday resistance expressed in these digital narratives allows the narrators to deal with the frustration of having been expelled from the United States and to express their opposition to different forms of border control. Furthermore, the narrators reject the criminalizing discourse of migration by highlighting that being a migrant is not synonymous with being a criminal, questioning and challenging the ideology that supported their deportation. Above all, they express that even though the deportation deeply affected their lives, it does not mean that irregular migration will end, as they will continue to seek out ways to reenter the United States.

These three migrants signal that if neoliberal capitalism generates wealth and power by appropriating and mediating the formation of identity and what it means to be human, capitalism can also be subverted in the realm of meaning (Mumby et al., 32–33). These narrators' discourses contain within them a form of migrant knowledge that is constantly poised to engage in an ideological struggle for the legitimacy and persistence of irregular migration.

CHAPTER 8

BEYOND SOCIAL DEATH: NEW MIGRANT ONTOLOGIES

BROOKE KIPLING

CENTRAL AMERICAN MIGRANT REPRESENTATIONS

Fleeing gang abuse, domestic violence, poverty, hunger, the devastation of climate events, and governmental neglect, migrants from Central America arrive in Mexico and the United States, where they continue to be marked as disposable bodies. In his essay "Necropolitics," Achille Mbembe illustrates how disposable subjects are marked and produced by sovereign powers: "In this case, sovereignty means the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is *disposable* and who is not" (27). Subjects of racial global capitalism and ongoing colonial violence, Central American migrants bear the mark of disposability as they cross both material and immaterial borders of racialized violence. They both satisfy racial capitalism's need for an underclass of cheap and disposable labor and also reaffirm the state's production of racialized citizenship and its security state. The impossibility of their inclusion into the state "is a form of social death; it not only defines who does not matter, it also makes mattering meaningful" (Cacho, 6). They are assigned to a class of "nonbelonging"; they are pawns in the global order, used to meet the demand for labor and to reinforce notions of legality and illegality.

Over the past twenty years, literature and scholarship on Central American migration have brought attention to the unjustified violence that targets Central American migrants. In response to the recent waves of large-scale and highly visible migration from Central America to Mexico and the United States, scholars have sought to address the violence implicit in the specificity of the Central American migrant experience through both audiovisual and literary productions on Central American migration. Complicating migrant subjectivities and defending migrant humanity, these publications not only have sought to influence policy change but also have given the public access to intimate experiences of migrant pain and suffering.

These scholarly, literary, and audiovisual representations of Central American migrant experiences primarily depict migrant subjects circumscribed by experiences of violence, victimhood, and vulnerability. Kaitlin M. Murphy critiques the overrepresentation of violence in visual productions on Central American migration: "When migrants are represented, it is generally as victims of a larger system, as in *El Norte* (1983, dir. Gregory Nava), *The Other Side of Immigration* (2009, dir. Roy Germano), *Which Way Home* (2009, dir. Rebecca Cammisa), *Norteado* (2009, dir. Rigoberto Perezcano), and *Sleep Dealer* (2008, dir. Alex Rivera). [. . .] [T]he vast majority of mainstream films represent the border and migration through lenses of drugs, gangs, and violence" (20). In these works, the migrant is a subject who is condemned to unimaginable pain and suffering. Narratives that draw upon this unremitting pain can turn migrants into commodified subjects of unlivable existences who become part of "a market for suffering: victimhood is commodified" (Kleinman, Das, and Lock, xi). Murphy describes this "market of suffering" as a "visual economy that migrants get caught in and defined by" (K. Murphy, 21). When scholarship reinforces the theme of hopelessness in migrant narratives by commodifying pain, it risks trapping the migrant into a subjecthood that is contingent upon being a victim whose survival is made possible only through institutional recognition. Such representations, especially when deployed in the service of ideological projects, whether of the Right or the Left, can speak over migrant experiences and erase possibilities of nonnormative migrant subjectivities and radical migrant futurities.

NEW METHODOLOGIES: MIGRANT THEORY

In this chapter, I examine Central American migrant subjectivity in a way that neither demands the inclusion and absorption of migrants into human rights discourse nor depends upon their victimization. I illuminate migrant subjectivities that not only challenge mainstream racialized and gendered representations of migrants but also articulate alternative migrant ontologies through other ways of relating to each other, to home, and to the world. In *Cruising Utopia*, José Esteban Muñoz theorizes new ontological possibilities that emerge from the departure of a stabilized definition of the human. Muñoz articulates this departure from the human as queerness in relation to the human: "But queerness in its utopian connotations promises a human that is not yet here, thus disrupting any ossified understanding of the human" (26). Muñoz illuminates how queerness not only interrogates notions of the human but, further, by rupturing a seemingly "ossified understanding of the human," conjures new ways to exist in the world. These queer

relationalities—ways of existing and relating beyond the stable categories reproduced by the state—help to illuminate the ways in which migrants strive to become the architects of their own freedom.

Documenting migrant life from the embodied and spoken articulations of a Central American migrant, this chapter locates knowledge production as coming from within migrants themselves. By listening and testifying to the violence articulated in both speech and corporal acts, I illuminate the ways in which migrants create life and new possibilities of being in places of "un-survival." Seeking out possibilities of life amid death and violence, I turn to the theoretical traditions of Black and queer studies that refuse frameworks of inclusion and recognition and that look elsewhere for survival. Thinking with the Black studies scholar Tiffany Lethabo King, I urge a conjuring of theory from the knowledge of the flesh: "Existing outside the borders of liberal humanism's stable individual, the fungible bodyflesh is an always-unfolding space of possibility" (King, 7). At the same time that King asserts how Black abjection and nonbeing is violently marked on the flesh, she also illuminates how Black people conjure other modalities of being from their very disavowal. King does not speak over the violence and disavowal of Black humanity in order to conveniently open the door of the human to Black being. Rather, King both acknowledges the impossibility of the inclusion of Black being into the matrix of the human and sits with this site of violent disavowal. At the site of disavowed flesh, King theorizes other possibilities of Black being.

In this project, I think with and through King's theorizations of the flesh and their ontological possibilities to consider the ways in which Central American migrants articulate other modes of being. Though I do not conflate the experience of Black being with non-Black being, I argue that attention needs to be given to the ways in which Central American migrants speak and act outside liberal humanist frameworks to conjure modes of being from the very site of their disposability. Thus, I look to the everyday experience of violence enacted on flesh as a site of migrant ontological possibility.

To illustrate how migrants theorize their experiences from the flesh, I weave their knowledge production into and out of academic theory. The environmental sociologist Enrique Leff describes this weaving as a theoretical process in which "new theoretical and political discourses are invented that interweave, hybridize, mimic, and confront each other in a dialogue between communities and academy, between theory and praxis, between Indigenous and scientific knowledge" (16). Leff's description illuminates how different theoretical fields are constantly in motion as they "interweave, hybridize, mimic, and confront each other." Following this vocabulary of movement, I refuse to trap modes of knowledge production into a hierarchy

of value, examining the intersections and confrontations that occur as these theories and acts of knowledge production move through each other. Entangling what is conceived of as proper theory with theory from below, I examine the ontological sites of possibility that emerge from these theoretical frictions and incongruities.

DIGITAL STORYTELLING AND REALMS OF NEW SUBJECTIVITIES

Digital storytelling has emerged as a new and unconventional site for migrant knowledge production. A method that departs from more normative testimonial genres, such as documentary film and written memoir, digital storytelling opens an accessible narrative framework for storytellers. It is a process that "elevates oral culture, situating storytellers in a place of empowerment and thereby reframing subjectivity" (Lizarazo et al., 16). Storytellers not only directly participate in the narrative process of digital productions but also mediate their own representations, constructing their own subjectivities through an assemblage of videos and images. Inviting storytellers to "reframe" their own subjectivities, the digital storytelling process potentiates new representations and narrations of migrants' experiences.

Although digital storytelling is not completely safe from reductive theoretical analyses and critiques, its aspirations to minimize academic mediation in the production process can challenge mainstream representations of the migrant experience. Digital stories challenge the researcher: "It is not immediately obvious what one 'should' say about them. This is because for too long we have been interrupting the ordinary voice, speaking instead of listening. [. . .] Too often 'the people' are reduced to 'the textually delegated, allegorical emblem of the critic's own activity' " (Burgess, 209). Scholarly representations of Central American migrants risk commodifying migrant experiences, erasing migrant subjectivities illegible in academic frameworks. Digital storytelling aims to significantly revise these dynamics.

In the digital storytelling process, the storyteller wields the power to determine the framework of the story. By narrating their own stories, the authors-as-subjects deconstruct and reconstruct their subjectivities through narration, attending to the complexities of subject representation: "Identity becomes a site of mediation in that the assemblage of selfhood, as part of the process of storytelling, brings the storyteller to become aware of life's contradictions and complexities. This fragmentation of identity categories highlights the 'multivoicedness' of digital narratives, alluding to the intersectionality and instability of identity" (Lizarazo et al. 16). The authors of

FIGURE 8.1. Manuel Ecardo Mallorquín Aguilar outside the Barretal migrant camp in Tijuana; photo by Israel Ibarra González

the digital narratives assume multiple narrative roles—they narrate their stories, they are their stories, and they construct their existence from their multiple subjectivities. The flexibility that the digital storytelling framework offers lends itself as a crucial space for subjects whose experiences become inarticulable once incorporated into dominant institutional frameworks. This narrative methodology urges us to listen to the rough and incongruous assemblages of experience that speak into being migrant existence.

I dedicate the following pages to a close analysis of "La vida de un indocumentado hondureño" (no. 139), a digital story directed and narrated by Manuel Ecardo Mallorquín Aguilar, a Honduran migrant. Crossing Mexico twice, the first time at just nine years old aboard the infamous train La Bestia and the second time as part of the Central American migrant caravans that arrived in Tijuana in October 2018, Mallorquín's five-and-a-half-minute testimony is a rough assemblage of internet images of the 2018 caravan and shaky video footage of Mallorquín himself displaying his scarred and tattooed body in his makeshift home on the streets of Tijuana.

MALLORQUÍN'S EXPERIENCE: LIVING WITH VIOLENCE, LIVING BEYOND IT

As a Central American migrant in Mexico, Mallorquín experiences ongoing racialized violence, where the state either subjects him to incarceration and

deportation or denies his right to live, pushing him toward death as he lives in complete precarity on the streets. In general, Central American migrants anticipate a violent journey through Mexico, where they are faced with state and structural violence exercised by governmental agents, drug cartels, human smugglers (coyotes), and the nefarious Bestia, the cargo train that transports them northward. In *The Beast*, Oscar Martínez captures the violent dehumanization that Central American migrants experience in Mexico: "There is, simply put, nobody to assure the safety of migrants in Mexico. [. . .] Migrants try to travel the paths with the fewest authorities and, for fear of deportation, almost never report a crime. A migrant passing through Mexico is like a wounded cat slinking through a dog kennel: he wants to get out as quickly and quietly as he can" (124). Martínez conveys the precarious existence of Central American migrants in Mexico by illustrating them as debilitated animals, an open target of the state.

Mallorquín recognizes his reduced, death-bound subjectivity through his understanding of its origins. He exposes how migrants are subjects of state violence that is reproduced and normalized: "The government doesn't help; what the government does is what? Nothing, nothing." He adds, "If you get in trouble, we're talking about Mexico, if you get in trouble, you go to jail, or get killed. Why? Because you were looking for it" (Mallorquín Aguilar, no. 139). Mallorquín identifies how the Mexican state proscribes Central Americans to premature death and imprisonment. In contrast, Mallorquín's rhetorical question ("Why?") demystifies the origin of violence from the accidental or natural and reveals the normality of the mechanized state violence that migrants experience. The "accidents" on the migrant journey are not in fact coincidental but rather form part of the Mexican government's necropolitical regime against Central Americans. Mallorquín continues, "Migration [authorities], all they do is reject you, toss you out, humiliate you. You're not Mexican. Listen, but if we speak the same language? Believe me, Migration is rude, disrespectful." Using the verbs "reject" and "toss out," Mallorquín theorizes how the state positions him as a disposable subject (no. 139).

As Mallorquín's words articulate his existence as conditioned by the state, his fleshy embodiments explore both the limits and the possibilities of his disavowed being. Taking his injured body and brandishing its scars and mutilations at the camera, he narrates his experiences of pain and violence through the flesh. As Mallorquín lifts his tank top, he recounts his perilous experiences riding La Bestia: "I never thought that the gang would throw me off the top of the train, and well, they knocked me off and I lost a lung and two ribs [. . .] and I'm really fractured from it" (no. 139). Mallorquín twists

and turns his body to show the deep scars and grooves that line the side of his torso and his legs. Adding "I'm really fractured" to his experience of pain, Mallorquín collapses a violent episode of the past to his present. The scars he bares in his present narrative are not marks of healing so much as undulating rips and tears of flesh that have never healed and that continue to assert themselves into his existence. As Mallorquín's fractured body and wounded flesh take over the screen, his narrative slips beyond the grasp of legible homogenous time.

Distancing itself from a linear framework that forces pain and suffering toward remedy and repair, Mallorquín shows how violence dwells and lives in his flesh. In *Habeas Viscus*, the Black studies scholar Alexander Weheliye illustrates how the flesh is the site in which the ongoing violence of racialization continues to be reproduced: "As a result, the flesh epitomizes a central modern assemblage of racialization that highlights how bare life is not only a product of previously established distinctions but also, and more significantly, aids in the perpetuation of hierarchical categorizations along the lines of nationality, gender, religion, race, culture, sexuality, and so on" (43). Racializing processes are produced and reproduced through the flesh, relying upon violently visual distinctions. Through his fractured and punctured flesh, Mallorquín articulates the violence that structures his existence and conditions his past, present, and future. By staying with his abjection, he refuses a narrative of repair.

As he narrates experiences of state violence in Mexico, Mallorquín captures how violence is an ongoing condition that exceeds temporal binding. In doing so, Mallorquín refuses to trap violence in an event or episode that evades the present. Mallorquín's recognition of violence as a structure that orders his existence echoes Weheliye's definition of racialized violence: "Racial violence is always already beyond the law under a constant state of siege. In other words, the normal order is differentially and hierarchically structured and does not necessitate a legal state of exception in order to fabricate the mere life of those subjects already marked for violent exclusion; in fact, we might even say that this is its end goal" (Weheliye, 86–87). Mallorquín weaves together his past and his present onto himself as he articulates how violence conditions his existence. In doing so, he does not temporally freeze violence into an event but unfolds it onto himself to show that this violence constitutes part of his existence.

Mallorquín's embodiment of violence in an ongoing ontological condition complicates migration narratives that attempt to frame the pain and suffering of migrants within a timeline of repair, where violence dissipates through inclusion. Weheliye asserts,

> Even more generally, the acknowledgment and granting of full personhood of those excluded from its precincts requires the overcoming of physical violence, while epistemic and economic brutalities remain outside the scope of the law. Congruently, much of the politics constructed around the effects of political violence [. . .] is constructed from the shaky foundation of surmounting or desiring to leave behind physical suffering so as to take on the ghostly semblance of possessing one's personhood. (76)

Mallorquín speaks to and embodies the violent racialization that makes disposable subjects. By embodying the ongoing violence of his existence, Mallorquín shows the limits of restorative or reparative discourses that attempt to resolve migrant suffering by "repairing" migrant subjects and compensating for pain and suffering through liberal discourses of inclusion. Mallorquín continues to describe his negated existence, narrating his exclusion from the migrant caravan camp at El Barretal in Tijuana: "When I got here, they wouldn't let me in" (Mallorquín Aguilar, no. 139). Mallorquín's exclusion is total. He is not only disavowed by the state but also rejected from the migrant camp, the supposed safe space created to shelter migrants like him. But Mallorquín does not fight against his disavowal. By staying with his abjection, he refuses a narrative of repair.

Mallorquín recognizes his nonexistence in the present world and begins to reveal a space in which his nonexistence speaks itself into another existence: a lean-to he has constructed from objects found just outside the Barretal camp. Theorizing with Asma Abbas, Weheliye tends to the possibilities of world making that emerge from a politics of suffering: "Consequently, rather than assuming that suffering must always follow the path of wounded attachments in search of recognition from the liberal state, and therefore dismissing any form of politics that might arise from the undergoing of political violence as inherently essentialist, my thinking is more in line with a materialist reconceptualization of suffering" (Weheliye, 29). Asma Abbas does not conscript minoritarian suffering to the realm of individual ressentiment used in the service of gaining liberal personhood but instead argues for an "understanding of suffering that allows us to honor the suffering and hope of others not because we are humbled by their impenetrability and unknowability, but because of how we see our sufferings and our labors as co-constitutive of the world we inhabit, however homelessly" (Abbas, 229). Mallorquín's abjection also becomes a site of world making, where violence and suffering become "co-constitutive of the world we inhabit, however homelessly." Moving with the pain, Mallorquín finds life at the very depths of negation, where he exists beyond the violence without denying it.

By living through and with the violence that marks his flesh, Mallorquín finds life within abjection. Weheliye tends to the possibilities that arise from the flesh of racialized subjects: "Put simply, they bring to the fore those transformative assemblages of the flesh that acknowledge the social life found in those bottomless circles and circles of sorrow around political violence" (113). Narrating the violence that constitutes his existence through his flesh, Mallorquín orients himself toward the other lifeworlds that are "found in those bottomless circles and circles of sorrow around political violence." Turning into his "bottomless" nonexistence, Mallorquín's narrative also turns itself toward a site where abject flesh and discarded objects evoke possibilities of new forms of life relations.

Along the edge of El Barretal, a semi-enclosed concert venue repurposed as a temporary migrant camp in December of 2018, on a dusty street, where concrete and trash meet the disposed bodies of houseless asylum seekers and deported migrants, Mallorquín locates a site of possibility. A material site unfolds where disavowed objects and flesh meet to find a sense of place in the world. Leaving behind sites of exclusion, Mallorquín reorients his narrative to document an unlikely assemblage of home. He professes, "But I'm living here, take a look, I made this place, I made it and that's where I am" (Mallorquín Aguilar, no. 139). Mallorquín's words insist on situating him not within the state-sanctioned and heavily guarded place for caravan migrants but in another place assembled by Mallorquín's flesh. With his emphasis on "I made," a phrase he repeats, Mallorquín articulates a sense of place and being. Sitting on a sidewalk in the unhospitable present world, Mallorquín brings us into a space of life possibilities.

Mallorquín continues narrating as he brings us into his "place," with images of his torso in a dark and cavernous tentlike structure giving place to his words: "So I find out how to get by; if they throw something away, I take it, sell it, to survive" (no. 139). Inside Mallorquín's place, the dark clutter makes it hard to distinguish between Mallorquín's body and the objects huddled around it. As he feels through objects that are both the architecture of his home and the economic possibilities of his survival, the borders between living and nonliving matter dissolve. The waste that Mallorquín collects constitutes both his continual survival in the present world and his existence beyond it. Recognizing himself as disposable flesh, Mallorquín encounters other possibilities of survival, and even life, in other disposed matter. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing affirms the possibilities of life that can emerge from abject places: "Global landscapes today are strewn with this kind of ruin. Still, these places can be lively despite announcements of their death; abandoned asset fields sometimes yield new multispecies and multicultural life. In a global

state of precarity, we don't have choices other than looking for life in this ruin" (6). Mallorquín not only encounters the possibility of survival in the disposed matter of the world but also discovers a relationship between his own flesh and matter that offers him life "in this ruin."

As layers of discarded mattresses, pillows, blankets form a shelter around Mallorquín's body, leaning in so close that flesh and fabric rub against each other, Mallorquín continues to narrate into existence his place: "Why not? I didn't have a roof over my head, but someone threw away this canvas, so I picked it up. I picked it up for myself to enclose my tent, I hung it up to shelter me at night." From the discarded objects, Mallorquín erects a "tent" to cover him at night. From a shared sense of disposability, Mallorquín narrates a relationship between himself and the discarded objects, finding possibilities of life in objects that others have marked as dead. Gay Hawkins theorizes the set of relations that emerge from human and waste interactions: "Waste doesn't just threaten the self in the horror of abjection, it also *constitutes* the self in the habits and embodied practices through which we decide what is connected to us and what isn't" (4). Hawkins draws an important connection between waste and humans, elucidating how human subjectivity is contingent upon waste. Through the entanglement of disposed materials and disposed flesh, Mallorquín conjures a different way of existing and being in the world. Mallorquín's encounter with waste is subject forming:

> This is why styles of waste disposal are also styles of self and why waste management, in all its cultural mutations, is fundamental to the practice of subjectivity. It is part of the way in which we cultivate sensibilities and sensual relations with the world; part of the way we move things out of our life and impose ethical and aesthetic order. No matter how insignificant putting out the garbage may seem, the way we do it reflects an ethos, a manner of being. (Hawkins, 4)

Suturing the division between living and nonliving matter, Mallorquín patches together a different existence through his own politics of disposability. It is through the recognition of shared disposability that he cultivates new world-making relations.

José Esteban Muñoz theorizes ontological possibilities that emerge from the "intermeshings" between the living and the nonliving: "The incommensurable thought project of inhumanity is the active self-attunement to life as varied and unsorted correspondences, collisions, intermeshings, and accords between people and nonhuman objects, things, formations, and clusterings. In trying to render a sense of brownness, a term that is indebted to the histories

of theorizing blackness and queerness, it is incumbent to attempt to attune oneself to the potential and actual vastness of *being*-with" ("Sense of Brownness," 210). Muñoz elucidates how Black and brown queer acts potentiate other forms of "being with" and relating to the world. Mallorquín narrates an "active self-attunement to life" through his intermeshing with nonhuman objects. By "being with" these objects, Mallorquín materializes something like Muñoz's "sense of brownness," where new ontologies emerge through his disavowed brown existence.

Mallorquín's narrative shifts from an intimate documentation of violence on flesh to a spatial narration where living flesh and nonliving objects enmesh to create the possibility of life in a world that is built on the very disavowal of their existences. In *The Black Shoals*, King theorizes the possibilities of relations that emerge from Black nonbeing:

> The pore of the body is the shallowest place on the skin/epidermis, acting as the first surface that interacts with other, ostensibly nonhuman matter. [. . .] A focus on the fungible flux of Blackness can temporarily arrest the tendency to assume that Black life always already orients itself around the human as the center of space and life. As an open and porous state, Blackness possesses various openings, entry points, and ways of orienting itself to social and organic constellations. (118–119)

Theorizing from the site of Black exclusion from the human, King illuminates the unforeseen relations that emerge from nonbeing. Mallorquín conjures "social and organic constellations" at the site of disposability, finding possibilities of life in a shared state of abjection.

LISTENING AND LEARNING: MIGRANT WORLD MAKING

Mallorquín constructs his home through the unwanted residues of society: he uses his disposability as a site that affords possibilities of living. As a traveler with the caravan, Mallorquín relates an outsider positionality and emphasizes a residual feeling of loneliness that characterizes narratives of those without a home, a destination, and even a community. But Mallorquín's narrative does not culminate with the loneliness and despair of a disposable migrant. Rather, in his narrative, Mallorquín takes what is foreclosed and abject—his own disposed migrant subjectivity and the abject urban landscape of waste in which he resides—and finds other possible modes of existence. In an unlivable present, Mallorquín effects an encounter between the disposed that potentiates migrant life and home in the most violent and hostile of spaces.

By centering Mallorquín's narrative, I illuminate the ontological and world-making possibilities that emerge when migrants articulate their own experiences. Mallorquín's digital story illuminates how migrant productions can be essential sites of knowledge production that cannot be ignored and urges us to more closely attend to the ways in which migrants theorize themselves outside predetermined institutional frameworks that bind them to the spatial and temporal logics of racial capitalism and colonialism, including those of liberal humanism.

Mallorquín's story is not an anomaly within a body of Central American migrant literature. Rather, it evidences existing past, present, and future migrant productions that have remained in the shadows of humanist frameworks (for another, less abject but equally extraordinary case, see Irwin's analysis of the migration narrative of Douglas Oviedo in the following chapter). This close reading of Manuel Ecardo Mallorquín Aguilar's story invites us to reevaluate the ideological frameworks that we speak and write onto migrant narratives and that erase other migrant ontologies and worlds that are invisible and even illegal in the settler state. In doing so, we can return to our work and hold ourselves accountable to the very struggle that makes our work possible. As scholars, organizers, writers, and others, we must ask ourselves how we might not only validate but also facilitate the world making presented to us in Central American migrant cultural productions.

CHAPTER 9

THE MIGRANT KNOWLEDGE OF A *CARAVANERO*

ROBERT MCKEE IRWIN

IT IS INTUITIVELY EVIDENT THAT migration is a profound learning experience. Without a doubt, the experience of migration teaches migrants a great deal about themselves, the different local and national cultures with which they come into contact, the diversity of people whom they meet, the political dynamics around migration, and the social and institutional responses to their presence all along their migrant trail. While migrants no doubt continue learning in the places where they ultimately settle, the process of migration is itself a potent source of life lessons, and of world making. This chapter looks closely at a single migration story told in four parts in order to tease out some of the ways in which lessons learned on the migrant trail translate into larger-scale political actions at the US border. The community storyteller in question, Douglas Oviedo, is one of the Hondurans who fled imminent danger by joining the caravans that departed from San Pedro Sula in the fall of 2018, heading for Tijuana and the US border. His story is in many ways extraordinary, but the knowledge he imparts regarding unity among migrants, the power of hope and will, and the forging of cross-cultural connections applies broadly.

This caravan (in reality several different caravans traveling during the same period) drew the attention of the world as global media followed its movement northward, and it became a political flash point across both the United States and Mexico. Indeed, highly sensationalized and polarized dueling discourses emerged in both countries, arguably redefining the dynamics of migration in North America. Much of what emerged from the caravan in terms of public opinion, legislation, and policy might be attributed as much to the noise surrounding the caravan—sometimes lurid and often biased news coverage, highly inflammatory political rhetoric, and activism—as to the facts regarding the lives and intentions of the migrants who comprised its ranks. While deciphering this noise and understanding the actions it

provoked is a worthwhile endeavor, I argue that the many experiences of the migrants traveling within the caravan also provoked the production of migrant knowledge that helped them develop strategies to address the personal disequilibrium implicit in forced migration; the experience itself offered a learning experience that helped some migrants remake their worlds and the worlds around them over the course of their journey. I propose to draw attention here to what might be learned from the migrant knowledge expressed in the story of this remarkable "caravanero."

What might be said, following Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos, is that migrants such as Oviedo, who initially leave their homes in flight, in a dynamic of "escape," end up challenging "today's configurations of political sovereignty with an imperceptible force which renders the 'walls around the world' irreversibly porous: this is the autonomy of migration" (211).

CONTEXT AND CIRCUMSTANCES

Migration from Central America to the United States was not a new phenomenon in 2018; however, this particular migration route garnered new and unprecedented attention with the formation of the fall 2018 caravans. For decades migrants from countries such as Guatemala and El Salvador have been seeking escape from horrific living conditions by migrating to the United States. While at times some have had access to Temporary Protected Status, Central American migrants have often crossed into the United States undocumented and have conformed to the paradigms of "clandestine" travel, settlement, labor, and life that have also characterized decades of large-scale Mexican migration (Durand and Massey). While Central Americans have to travel farther and must endeavor to avoid getting caught not just in the United States but also while crossing through Mexico, their experience of avoiding registration with state authorities and striving to remain as inconspicuous as possible in most social spaces is not unlike that of most Mexican migrants of the last half century. No doubt the dangers have been greater for many Central Americans, who for many years opted to move through Mexico via the network of freight trains collectively known as La Bestia, there subject to detention and deportation by Mexican migration agents and police and assault, extortion, kidnapping, or worse by organized criminal syndicates as well as corrupt state officials (see O. Martínez). But informal migration in the Central America–Mexico–US corridor has long been well known to be a phenomenon dependent upon invisibility (see Massey, Durand, and Pren).

The formation of a huge caravan—which actually consisted of several separate large contingents, each composed of several thousand migrants,

all moving northward from Central America over several weeks beginning in late October 2018, and totaling well over nine thousand migrants by the time they arrived in Tijuana by mid-December (see Torre Cantalapiedra and Mariscal Nava)—brought a new level of visibility to this migration route. While much-smaller-scale caravans had been organized in prior years, sometimes more as political gestures than as viable vehicles to enable large-scale movement, the magnitude of this assemblage of migrant groups had never been seen before, and as government authorities and international media took notice, this much-trodden route of clandestine migration suddenly became reconfigured on the global stage. Observers and migrants alike realized that migration en masse offered much greater safety and even seemed to generate new forms of aid, including large-scale shelter and bus transportation at some points along the route (see Gandini, Fernández de la Reguera, and Narváez Gutiérrez).

Likewise, border-crossing points in Tijuana and elsewhere along the Baja California border had long been known mainly for clandestine movements. What had once been the border's most transited crossing points for unauthorized migrants had been gradually closed off with the construction of the border wall, campaigns such as Operation Gatekeeper, and the installation of lights, sensors, cameras, and other means of border control beginning in the mid-1990s. But even as border crossings shifted from more convenient and visible areas in and near Tijuana, the stretch of border running from Playas de Tijuana to the end of the Tijuana border wall at El Nido de las Águilas, extending through the mostly desolate landscape stretching from Tecate across the mountainous La Rumorosa region, and continuing farther eastward from Mexicali into the Sonoran desert, like much of the US-Mexico border, has continued to experience significant undocumented border crossing. While many caravan migrants no doubt crossed the border unperceived, hoping to sneak beyond the reach of the Border Patrol and to settle in the United States under the same paradigm as the many generations of undocumented migrants before them, many more chose to seek legal asylum in the United States (see Nevins; Alonso Meneses, *El desierto*).

The option to apply for asylum, never considered by the vast majority of Mexican migrants, also represented something of a new trend. Caravan migrants were not the first Central Americans to seek asylum as refugees: the highly publicized arrival of large numbers of unaccompanied minors from Central America several years earlier represents one important and very recent precedent (Rosenblum and Ball). But the strategy that many caravan migrants assumed in crossing the border—whether awaiting their number at a legal crossing point for an appointment with immigration authorities to

initiate their asylum application process, or by jumping the border wall or crossing at other unauthorized points and turning themselves in to Border Patrol officers in order to accelerate an asylum process by this unsanctioned means—was notably different from that undertaken by the vast majority of Mexican and Central American migrants who had crossed this same border over the past decades.

Never had such a large group of migrants been so visible, and never had they attracted so much attention across North America and the world, bringing this migration route and these Central American migrants into the public eye to a degree that had not previously been seen. The migration process for these migrants, then, was unprecedented in both its form and its reception at every point along the migration route. The political controversy surrounding the caravan, which was denounced and disparaged by high-level officials, including the president of the United States, also generated a great deal of emotion, as strident and polarized factions formed in opposition to and in support of the migrants in both the United States and Mexico (see Irwin, "Making Sensation," parts I–II; Irwin and Silva).

The following analysis traces the experiences of Douglas Oviedo from his departure from his home in Tegucigalpa in October of 2018 through his settlement in the United States in September of the following year, focusing on the knowledge he obtained and applied over the course of his gradual

FIGURE 9.1. The *caravanero* Douglas Oviedo in Hercules, California; photo by Robert McKee Irwin

migration process. His story, sometimes of mere survival, sometimes of world making, helps one to understand the dynamics underlying the flows of migrants from Central America toward the United States while also offering ample evidence for understanding migration not only as a movement from one place to another but as a deeply felt experience that generates knowledge that might positively transform both migrants' lives and the world around them.

SENTIMENTS AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE CARAVAN

Douglas Oviedo's story is one of what Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos call "world making": "Even if migration sometimes starts as a form of dislocation (forced by poverty, patriarchal exploitation, war, famine), its target is not relocation but the active transformation of social space" (211). Over the course of Oviedo's migration, recounted in the first two parts (nos. 166a–b) of his four-part digital narrative, "Historias de la caravana," a number of key moments of emotional intensity help him to assess his own situation and that of his fellow migrants and to extract several concepts—which might be encapsulated in the key words "unity," "hope," and "connection"—that become central to both his own migration strategy and the public politics he develops around it. He carries out the latter in the form of creative production, musical performance, event organizing, and community activism that he realizes while waiting out his asylum application process in Tijuana, which he recalls in the final two parts of his digital story (nos. 166c–d).

One of several extraordinary elements of Oviedo's migration story is that he wrote a book about it. While in Tijuana, he befriended a prominent local arts activist, Gaba Cortés, who sponsored the writing of a text that has been published as a "testimonial drama." *Caravaneros* tells the story of the migrant caravan through the experiences of a handful of representative characters. While the story introduces some allegorical or collective elements (e.g., characters known as "Organization," "Human Rights," "Caravan"), it tells of real events from the perspective of the migrants who lived through them. While this text is not the main object of this analysis, I'll occasionally turn to it, as I believe it offers some additional insights into Oviedo's thinking.

Oviedo left Tegucigalpa for San Pedro Sula on October 22, 2018 (a week after the first caravan contingent had departed from the latter city), crossing quickly into Guatemala and heading for Tecún Umán at that country's northern border with Mexico. Here, in part one of his digital story, Oviedo offers his first expression of emotional intensity as he describes how the group he was traveling with had the good fortune to catch a ride, etching

a vivid memory in his mind. He recalls, "A very big door opened in the road I was taking. I came with friends of mine, and I will never forget their names, faces." It is interesting that in his expression of gratefulness in being offered a ride, what he recalls is not the vehicle or the driver but his traveling companions, the bonding already becoming a key element of his migration experience (Oviedo, no. 166a).

His small group crossed into Mexico but had barely gotten beyond the city of Tapachula, just thirty-some kilometers north of the border, when they were caught by Mexican immigration agents and deported back to Honduras. He not only admits to crying, emphasizing his sadness in repeating the verb—"I cried, I can't deny that. I cried because I didn't want to return to my country"—but also reproduces his sentiments visually, in a clip that someone from his group recorded on a smartphone showing Douglas seated in the deportation flight bound for San Pedro Sula, his face damp with tears (no. 166a).

Oviedo and his companions were not discouraged, setting out again the very next day. This time they ran into the very same truck driver, who offered them a ride to the Mexico border for a second time, which Oviedo interpreted as "not a coincidence; because of God [they] were at the border" again. This is the first important attribution of positive developments along his journey to divine will (no. 166a).

The ease with which Oviedo overcomes this early setback infuses his story with an initial jolt of optimism. Deportation here is not the kind of deep traumatic experience that we see through most of the Humanizing Deportation archive, as Oviedo is not being uprooted from his life or separated indefinitely from his family; his clash with migration authorities is quickly nullified by a higher authority. The deployment of spirituality as a means of empowerment is a major theme in Oviedo's *Caravaneros*. One of the characters, whom Oviedo has confirmed to be based on himself (see Varela, Oviedo, and Parra), is a preacher, referred to as El Pastor, who frequently addresses the caravan with prayers and sermons, often evoking the biblical story of Exodus. At a later moment in that text, following the tragic death of a fellow migrant, when many *caravaneros* are feeling particularly discouraged, this character evokes the departure from Egypt toward "a promised land" as a model for the Honduran exodus, insisting, "I do have faith, faith that many doors are going to open for us and that we will arrive at our destination because God has told us so." El Pastor adds, "May our children know that we are brave parents, that we embarked on this journey to see it through and not to turn back. God is with us. We trust that we will arrive" (Oviedo, *Caravaneros*, 129–130).

Returning to Oviedo's digital story, this sense of hope was strengthened as he and his traveling companions arrived at the Mexican border and found themselves not alone but with a crowd of some four thousand migrants. This was not the original caravan, which had crossed this border a week earlier, but a second contingent that formed later and would follow roughly the same route northward, eventually joining the original caravan in Tijuana.

But the scenario at hand was one of intense struggle. This huge crowd of migrants was being held back, prevented from crossing the bridge across the Suchiate River into Ciudad Hidalgo, Mexico—just as had occurred with the first caravan contingent, as recounted in the digital story of a Honduran migrant who had been part of that group (see Un Migrante Hondureño, no. 124a). The initial comfort that Oviedo felt upon stumbling into this second caravan contingent ("I wasn't alone") was soon superseded by alarm as the scene turned violent (Oviedo, no. 166a).

As Oviedo describes it, on one side of the border were thousands of migrants, including "children, women, men, and all types of people, elderly people, young adults, all anxious for the journey to the United States." On the other side was "a wall with federal police, Immigration, navy, all waiting to prevent us from entering." What happened on the afternoon of Sunday, October 28, provoked "the greatest pain" he had felt so far on his journey, as the Mexican agents began firing rubber bullets and tear gas into the crowd of refugees, and he witnessed two migrants die after being hit in the head. He describes it as a war scene, with the Mexicans firing into "our territories" at a defenseless crowd: "The children were crying in pain, you could hear the suffering in their screams." He assigns the tears here to children, and then to women, with this battle scene leading to "a very sad night, a night of terror, a night of tears" (no. 166a).

The next morning, however, the migrants decided to abandon the bridge and cross the river through the water, defying the authorities. What he remembers of this scene is that some children drowned and that a military helicopter hovered above "to scare us, to fill us with fear to return to our country, and not touch Mexican territory." He reflects, "I have always wondered why the authorities always have to wait for death, for there to be blood and pain, in order for things to be solved. When someone knocks on your door for help it's best to open the door in a kind way, a better way. But it was not so easy to enter Mexico, knowing very well that left behind there were wounded people and those who had died during the journey" (no. 166a). Lessons were quickly learned: the Honduran migrants would not be welcomed as refugees, and Mexican authorities would resort to violent means to deter their advance. But just as Oviedo did not allow himself to get

discouraged upon being deported, the will of these four thousand migrants ensured their eventual passage into Mexico. Whether we attribute this to the will of God or to the will of the people (what Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos refer to as "the autonomy of migration" [202–221]), it is clear that despite the powerful and often intimidating barriers of migration-control technologies, migrants can collectively will their way forward.

Migrant will and its regeneration emerge early in part two of Oviedo's narrative. Once the migrants cross the Mexican border, this second caravan moves northward, finding moments of joy in the rivers of Chiapas: "Every river that we got to was like our vacation." Aside from bathing and washing clothes, these breaks from walking gave the migrants opportunities "to have a little fun, and be able to smile and recharge our spirits, and to say, 'We have to keep walking because we are going to make it.' " Oviedo asserts that he "will never forget" these intervals. In contrast with the traumatic experience of fighting their way across the Suchiate River, the Huixtla, Tonalá, and Mapastepec Rivers delivered "the most beautiful" of his experiences on the migrant trail (no. 166b).

Jumping into the rivers offered some respite from the otherwise constant fear with which the caravan migrants lived, "fears of the narcos, of the Zetas, of the gangs along the way, that they were going to hurt us, that they were waiting for us." Aside from organized crime, migration agents were also a constant threat, as everyone knew that apprehension inevitably led to deportation. Oviedo conceives of this fear not as mere emotion but also in terms of knowledge: "Each one of those memories [of fear] will always be on my mind since no one knows the struggle that a migrant goes through in order to get to a border"—that is, living with fear implies a constant struggle to remain safe from its cause, and struggle here means applying whatever knowledge is at hand to survive. This is why Oviedo stresses here not just what the migrants feel but what they know. The migration trail is a learning experience; the farther along they travel, the more they know about how to stay safe and continue advancing (no. 166b).

Some places along the way offer shelter and humanitarian aid, for which Oviedo expresses gratitude, but never are the migrants guaranteed safe and comfortable passage. He relates another "very sad" experience in which he ended up at the tail end of the caravan, leaving Mexico City with a group of some forty migrants who were unable to get a ride to their next layover in Querétaro. This is another segment of the journey that he "will never forget." They "had to walk kilometer after kilometer [. . .] to arrive at the shelter, but even then we didn't lose anyone: all forty of us arrived together." He measures success not in arriving but in arriving together. Unity is clearly

a strength, an important element of the will that keeps the migrants going (no. 166b).

Another emotional factor that constantly motivates the migrants is hope. Oviedo mentions that there was a great deal of uncertainty about what their experience would be upon arriving finally at the border, "without knowing if that wall would open up." He emphasizes, however, that "we came here very hopeful," and as the *caravaneros* moved closer to the border, they were "dreaming and dreaming more every day" (no. 166b).

In *Caravaneros*, Oviedo's omniscient narrator summarizes the collective experience of the migrants in encountering great dangers while trekking across Mexico: "They don't want to die in a land that's not their own; they didn't leave their homeland to die, but rather to live full of hope. That's how they left Central America, hopeful to arrive on US soil" (129); indeed, this narrator employs the same phrase "full of hope" multiple times to describe the migrants' mood at different moments on their journey (59, 122, 129, 139).

These emotional intensities, and the knowledge to which they give rise, are often communal. But their collective union holds together only through individual relationships. Oviedo acknowledges this when he pauses in his digital story to consider "a lot of people" whom he has met on the migrant trail. In addition to deep friendships, "you meet people that become an example for you, they become your leaders, not because they seek to guide the caravan but because they are willing to take the food from their mouths and give it to another person; they are willing to take a child on their backs and say to that woman, 'Let's go, let's walk together'" (no. 166b). Here, it seems that these helpful, even altruistic individuals hold the collectivity of the caravan together. They not only serve as an ethical example but also demonstrate how to maintain the unity that was the force ensuring that the caravan would arrive together at the border. A caravan of more selfish individuals would likely have split apart and would have had a different history.

In Oviedo's case, they all did arrive, finally catching up to thousands of other migrants in Tijuana, including many of those who had traveled in the original caravan contingent. Arriving in Tijuana meant the end of the endless hiking and hitching rides. But as Oviedo recalls, it also generated a new fear, "because [. . .] to arrive here in the middle of the storm, and experiencing cold, and knowing that things were going to get harder" meant new uncertainties. And all the negative publicity around the caravan was not helpful: "No one believed in us; that is the most terrible thing in the world, knowing that [. . .] no one believes in your dream." Here again, the sentiment of fear translates to knowledge—in this case the knowledge that they are very much on their own, that the success of their migration journey would, more than

ever, depend on themselves. Oviedo continues, "So I think that it is time to get things going; I think it's time to make it possible. If no one helps you, then go at it alone, brother" (no. 166b).

As part two concludes, the narrator does find people who help him. Oviedo took a number and awaited his date to cross and meet with Border Patrol agents, but once he was allowed to cross, he was soon disappointed when he was sent back to Tijuana to wait out his asylum application process through the Migrant Protection Protocols program newly launched in late January of 2019. This second part of the narrative, published four months later in Tijuana, concludes with Oviedo, optimistic, asserting his will: "And still here I am, hopeful and knowing that my dream will come true one day" (no. 166b). Interestingly, once again, when he makes reference to a sentiment ("hopeful"), he connects it to knowledge ("knowing").

POSTCARAVAN MIGRANT POLITICS

Humanizing Deportation first came into contact with Douglas Oviedo at the opening reception of a two-week exhibition we staged at Enclave Caracol in downtown Tijuana in February of 2019. Caravan migrants were all over the city, as the Migrant Protection Protocols had been in force since late January, meaning that most migrants who were applying for asylum were being forced to "remain in Mexico" through the entire months-long process, entering the United States only on the days of their scheduled court hearings. Our exhibition was focused on the stories of deported Mexicans, with whom we had been working for nearly three years in the city.

The reception drew a large crowd. I remember that about a dozen community storytellers were on the first-floor stage dialoguing with the audience, which included other deported Mexicans, community activists, and concerned local residents from both sides of the border. At the same time, a legal advocacy group, Al Otro Lado, was on the second floor offering counseling to migrants, at that time mainly Central Americans who had arrived with or soon after the caravan. Our discussion revolved around the human consequences of deportation and the strategies of deported migrants in overcoming the trauma of forced displacement, family separation, and stigmatization. The exchange with the audience was lively and sometimes emotional.

At one point a hand went up from the back of the audience, where a voice projected forward with what seemed to be a manifesto in defense of the migrants of the caravan. Douglas Oviedo's articulate and passionate pitch impressed our team, and we were delighted that he accepted our offer to incorporate his story into the Humanizing Deportation archive. One of our

team members who was cohosting the exhibition, John Guzmán, facilitated the production of what became a two-part story.

I next encountered Oviedo a month later when I was at Danny Ruiz's office, deliberating about the details of Ruiz's story. Ruiz is a deported childhood arrival who found professional success in the call-center sector, eventually starting his own phone merchandising business. At that time he was in the process of establishing what would become the first iteration of the Borderline Crisis Center, a space that would offer a range of services to migrants, including both deported Mexicans and migrants in transit to the United States (see Ruiz, no. 165). As we were chatting, Oviedo called Ruiz to ask for a loan of some tables and chairs for a cultural festival he was organizing that weekend.

I attended this event, titled Juntos Somos Más (Together We Are More), which featured performances by Haitian and Central American migrants, as well as Mexicans, and transnational musical collaborations—and, to my delight, the first outdoor screening of material from the Humanizing Deportation archive, which Oviedo had arranged with John Guzmán. Oviedo was becoming a community activist and within a few months would transform himself into a well-known and beloved figure among those interested in the plight of migrants in Tijuana and the surrounding transborder region. Months later, in the final months of 2019, from California, I would work directly with Oviedo in documenting these later developments in his experience in Tijuana from January to September of 2019.

Oviedo begins part three of his story from a position of ignorance, recounting uncertainty, what he didn't know. He recalls signing up for a number, being on the waiting list for appointments to cross to the United States, which he did despite "not knowing what would happen; I was unsure." There were rumors that the number system was itself a lie, that everyone was getting deported, that everyone was being sent for months to migrant detention centers. "I really didn't know what would happen," he repeats (Oviedo, no. 166c).

Once he got across, however, his first interview (the "credible fear" interview), made several things clear. He noted that everyone was being processed and that although he had been publicly identified as a caravan migrant, he was not being treated differently than others were. This was not necessarily good; as he remembered, "the ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] agents came and started saying offensive things against Central Americans." His own "credible fear" interview was with "an agent who seemed completely xenophobic because [. . .] he called me a 'damned immigrant.' " Yet Oviedo survived the process: he was not sent back to a holding cell, nor was he deported. Instead he was sent back to Tijuana to await his next hearing. He

again "didn't understand what had happened," since the Migrant Protection Protocols had been launched that very day (no. 166c).

While this new uncertainty was upsetting, at the same time, he narrates, "I realized something within me. Back in Honduras I'd been a well-known pastor, preaching the Word, giving concerts, organizing events, youth camps, and I also loved music." He began thinking through how he might put his prior experiences, talents, and skills to use as a migrant. Music was a particularly attractive resource for him: "Music especially filled my life. [. . .] Music fed my spirit." So he turned to music, which "fed my soul, to allow me to go on with my life in Tijuana" (no. 166c).

Oviedo tells of meeting other musicians and forming a band composed of people from the United States, Mexico, and Honduras, writing songs, and soon performing publicly as The Bridge / El Puente. One of their first songs, "Juntos Somos Más," was emblematic of their music, which promoted unity, solidarity, and optimism. And soon Oviedo, through connections he was beginning to make around the city, became the main catalyst and organizer of the Juntos Somos Más festival mentioned previously.

Oviedo's prior experience as a youth pastor required him to be in touch with the needs of young people in Honduras who might be vulnerable to being drawn into criminal gangs or substance abuse. Now having learned firsthand the kind of support and inspiration that migrants in Tijuana needed, he mobilized his repertoire of skills and sought out social connections to help him promote a positive image of and a spirit of solidarity with Central American migrants. This included the festival itself but also media coverage at a time, March 2019, now four months after their arrival in Tijuana, when interest in the caravan had faded significantly.

Oviedo's time in Tijuana was radically different from that of the vast majority of migrants who had passed through that city for decades, and it also contrasted significantly with the experiences of the vast majority of fellow caravan migrants, who tended to prefer to make themselves as invisible as possible, to stay far from the public eye, and to remain anonymous. Oviedo's considerations regarding his skill set as a community organizer, youth pastor, and performing artist led him instead to seek out ties with artists, activists, and community leaders and to become a community leader himself, a public figure in a city he had thought would be a mere transit point (see also Irwin and Silva).

It is no doubt the prominence Oviedo quickly achieved in Tijuana as an articulate leader that got him support from a legal organization, Centro Legal de la Raza, that offers pro bono support to migrants, an organization with a very limited capacity in the face of the thousands of migrants who arrived in succession in late 2018. When he crossed over to the United States for his

court dates, Oviedo was usually the only asylum seeker in the group who had legal representation.

In part four of his story, Oviedo tells about "the biggest project of [his] life," that of the migrant shelter Casa Hogar el Puente, an ambitious venture that began with an idea to rent a space and open it up to migrants in need but eventually grew as Oviedo's allies in Tijuana located a property that was available but in need of rebuilding. Oviedo and a group of caravan migrants essentially built Casa Hogar el Puente, a new migrant shelter, which they continue to run to this day (no. 166d).

Other projects included a memorial event (Clamor for Those Unable to Fulfill Their Dream) inspired by the tragic news of the death of a migrant father and daughter who drowned while trying to cross the Rio Grande to the United States, a concert promoting unity (Activismo y Migración en Mi Comunidad), and funding for a celebration of Children's Day in the impoverished community of Villanueva, where Oviedo had lived in Tegucigalpa. His final public event in Tijuana was the inauguration of Tijuana's first migrant shelter built and administered by migrants, Casa Hogar el Puente, which doubled as a going-away party, as his final court date was set for just a few days afterward. During this period he also wrote the book *Caravaneros* (no. 166d).

While of course Oviedo drew from his entire life experience, including his years as a youth pastor, a rap musician, a poet, and a community organizer, in carrying out all of these projects in Tijuana, without a doubt his experience and knowledge acquired through migration also constantly informed and shaped his vision. In his digital stories, when he narrates the moments of greatest emotional intensity during his journey, he frequently connects those emotions to cognitive experiences. Among the themes that emerge most often are those of unity, hope, and will as the most important factors in ensuring the caravan's successful arrival at the border. And these same themes crop up again and again in his activist endeavors in Tijuana, where he quickly realizes that the migrants' position is strengthened through not only bonds of internal unity but also connections with those around them, motivating him to forge relationships of solidarity with potential allies among activists, artists, academics, social service providers, neighbors, and other migrant groups.

The phrase "juntos somos más" is the name of one of the most memorable songs that Oviedo composed with Adam Elfers as well as that of the cultural festival that marked his debut as an events organizer in Tijuana. "Juntos somos más" is a call for unity, with the attractive implication that solidarity implies a better future not only for migrants but for everyone. The phrase is without a doubt emblematic of Oviedo's arts activism in Tijuana. The lyrics

of the song, a clip of which plays during the credits of part two of his digital story, also includes the chant "sí, se puede, sí, se puede" (yes, we can, yes, we can), advancing the idea of success as the outcome of persistent struggle and ardent will. It also posits migrants as "the hope of Latin America" (a phrase that the migrants of *Caravaneros* chant for inspiration on various occasions; see Oviedo, *Caravaneros*, 95, 103, 146), reversing the vector of hope as an emotion belonging to migrants in search of a dream and instead aligning hope with the migrants themselves as symbolic figures of overcoming hardships. In a longer version of the same clip, posted on the website of The Bridge / El Puente (https://www.thebridgeelpuente.com/new-page-97), the informal collective behind the projects carried out by Oviedo and his collaborators in 2019, a series of key words and phrases flashes across the screen, among them "unity," "community," "juntos somos más," and "sí se puede."

Likewise, the concept that has come to be most associated with Oviedo's activities in Tijuana, that of the bridge, reflects the same spirit of alliance and unification. The Bridge / El Puente is the name of the musical group that Oviedo headed along with Elfers; it is the name of their organization, the collective project of a loose group of friends and allies of Oviedo in Tijuana, the United States, and Honduras; and it is also the name of the shelter Oviedo and his compatriots built in Tijuana (Casa Hogar el Puente). The concept of bridging came to be associated so strongly with Oviedo's activism in Tijuana that Elfers and Kei Kurimoto, in the prologue to *Caravaneros*, assert that Oviedo "is a bridge." The notion of a bridge not only implies community building but also presents a clear symbolic alternative to the structure that most visibly impedes the final culmination of the caravan's project of migrating to the United States—the border wall. Tijuana is a city that is visually defined by a wall that residents and migrants alike must face should they want to try and cross to the United States; the wall also abuts the city's downtown, stretches along one of its main thoroughfares (Vía Internacional), runs for several kilometers from the city's center and its main crossing points to Baja California's coastal highway, and is a major landmark, decorated profusely with murals, in Playas de Tijuana's Friendship Park, where it extends out into the sea. Oviedo's reiteration, again and again, of making bridges no doubt resounded with many migrants as well as long-term residents of the city. A welcoming bridge to the United States is surely what many people living in or passing through Tijuana would prefer to a tall metal wall topped with barbed wire—or to a government checkpoint that is approached only by waiting in line, sometimes for hours. In this way, Oviedo's concept of the bridge is about more than unity; it is also another expression of migrant will, a proposal for a different world construed from

migrant epistemologies, a product of migrant autonomy (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos, 202).

CONCLUSION

Oviedo is one of a small percentage of migrants who have successfully found a legal means to escape threats of violence in Honduras through migration in recent years. While many caravan migrants either have returned to Honduras on their own or have been deported—and may have given up on the idea of emigrating altogether—Oviedo found his path to legal residency in the United States. He perceived what he was up against as a Central American migrant aspiring to reach the United States in the late 2010s and also came to understand a range of strategies that would help him and other caravan migrants arrive safely at the US border and then maximize his and their chances of getting across without being deported back to Honduras. He reflected on his experiences on the migrant trail, accumulating knowledge that he would apply to finding himself a new and more secure life project in a new home and to developing a politics aimed at giving a better and more fair chance to all migrants. His contributions to the Humanizing Deportation archive allowed him to document what he learned, both about the ever more diverse logistical, infrastructural, legal, and human impediments that migrants face in trying to reach safety, and about the ways they can challenge, dodge, and overcome them.

William Walters avers that "migration [. . .] is a truly world-making phenomenon" ("Reflections," n.p.). It is also a "creative force within [. . .] social, cultural and economic structures" (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos, 203). Oviedo not only employed the knowledge he attained along the migrant caravan trail to find his own solution for security; he also applied it creatively and collaboratively while in Tijuana, where he engaged in some profound world making. His music and public events took active control in revising the image of Central American migrants, countering the stereotypes of criminality, victimhood, and entitlement. His highly collaborative enterprises and message of unity, solidarity, and bridge building emphasized commonalities, as he both preached and enacted joyful integration, inviting alliances with all those willing to listen. His more permanent works, including his digital stories, his book, and most especially Casa Hogar el Puente, will likely have a longer-term impact. Oviedo was immobilized in Tijuana for ten months, but during those ten months he and other migrants from the caravan mobilized locally, finding opportunities for world making, for "the active transformation of social space" (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos, 211).

EPILOGUE

RECLAIMING OUR VOICES, STORIES, AND KNOWLEDGE

NANCY LANDA

MY NAME IS NANCY LANDA and I am a deportee. This is a greeting I often use to introduce myself when I am invited to speak at academic conferences, attend migration expert forums, or am interviewed by mass media outlets. I can never predict how this introduction will be heard, but it frequently evokes a sense of discomfort. Perhaps audiences are more comfortable reading about stories of deportation than actually meeting a real-life deportee. Nonetheless, I have learned to embrace this identity, because I want to make it evident that a deportee is present in spaces where we are usually absent; that we can also be heard as experts who are able to engage in analysis and debates on migration issues. A deportee label is only a simplified version of my complex and evolving identity, but my ability to publicly claim this label resulted from a decade-long process of understanding the consequences that deportation has had on me, an event that ended a life of twenty years I had built in Los Angeles and forced the beginning of a new one after deportation, constructed on top of the shattered pieces of a past life that no longer exists.

I have been public about my deportation story since 2012 (Guzmán Garcia), sharing the effects of immigration policies enacted under the Obama presidency, especially those with a particular harshness directed at undocumented families with established lives and strong emotional bonds in their adopted homes in the United States. I am part of the subgroup of childhood arrivals (see chapter 4 of this volume) who have practically no ties to their country of origin—in my case Mexico. But I was part of an older generation of undocumented youth who existed long before a DREAMers political identity began to surface. My deportation also happened prior to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy. The political discourse at that time, however, was that people like me were protected from deportation. My story showed otherwise.

FIGURE 10.1. The migration researcher and advocate Nancy Landa; photo courtesy of Nancy Landa

My ten-year reentry bar expired in 2019, yet a legal return to the United States was an illusion that began to crumble over the years, as current immigration policy is unlikely to offer me a real option to return to my adopted home, even with a tourist visa. When I came out of the shadows

of deportation, it never occurred to me that the political and social context would be much more complicated. I confess I began this public journey with a false sense of hope that my circumstances of exile and a lack of mobility to and from the United States would somehow change. They haven't. But other possibilities did begin to emerge.

It will not come as a surprise that a subject so personal would become part of my professional trajectory, a subject that despite the odds, I've been able to integrate as an advocate, a researcher, and an advisor on migration and displacement. It is an uncommon path for someone with my life experience to somehow find a way to position herself as a producer of knowledge. My public deportation story made its way into research articles, books, and journalistic pieces. I became research subject and case study, with their implicit advantages and disadvantages. It meant that my experience was shared across many platforms with wide reach, which certainly contributed to positioning deportation in the public eye in Mexico, the United States, and beyond. It also exposed my vulnerabilities and pain for others to consume and to feel entitled to emit opinions and judgements about my life choices and circumstances. "Traitor," "gringa," and "criminal" are some of the recurring characterizations that my story also evoked. Contrary to generating sympathy, it brought out harsh reactions, including from those who felt I deserved to be deported, an opinion shared by audiences on both sides of the Mexico-US border. Over time, experience taught me to develop coping strategies so that I could confront such situations and deliver the message I was determined to share, particularly because the notions of nationality and belonging we often understand were being challenged by my own existence as a bicultural individual, feeling *ni de aquí y ni de allá*, neither from here nor from there. These are some of the risks no one tells you about making your story public, one of them being that sometimes it feels like it no longer belongs to you.

The years 2012 to 2017 were the most intense of my public presence, and toward the latter part of this period, I was reaching emotional exhaustion. I was done talking about my deportation; recounting it was becoming retraumatizing, and sometimes, depending on the type of questions asked, it was revictimizing. My deportation exists in the public domain, and my story can be consulted on my blog *Mundo Citizen* and easily found by googling my name. But as deportation became a trendy subject, people wanted to hear the drama of the experience, seeking details that could be converted to catchy quotes or headlines. "What happened when immigration detained you? What did you see when you arrived at the Tijuana border? And now do you consider yourself Mexican or American?" There was less interest in the complexity of rebuilding one's life after deportation, or in my thoughts

and feelings and aspirations as a person, woman, and daughter who was trying to overcome a traumatic experience. There came a point when I declined interviews that inquired about details of my deportation story, as it was no longer serving a purpose. I wanted to become more than a research subject or a source. I thought that pursuing a postgraduate degree in migration studies would solve this dilemma for me or, at a minimum, provide me the tools to transcend my story. I also felt I had insights and analysis to offer the field; however, they lacked the form, structure, and format of acceptable knowledge, of the scholarly, peer-reviewed article or publication. My knowledge appeared in these mediums only when I became someone else's research subject.

A master's degree did offer me a way to describe the in-between space within this continuum of subject-researcher that I have more recently found myself to be in: the "insider researcher" (Voloder and Kirpitchenko). This concept, along with the pathway set forth by critical genres of qualitative work, has enabled me to counteract conventional approaches to the production of knowledge (Landa, "In Search of Belonging") and to begin a process of reclaiming my experience through authorship. I admit, however, that I can do this because I hold a position of privilege afforded me by educational mobility, which is not available to others like me. From this standpoint, I can recognize the importance and contribution of this book and the Humanizing Deportation digital archive, not only in centering a reflection on deportation and deportability from a lived experience but also in advancing an ethical argument and insisting on crediting storytellers as authors and directors (see chapter 2 of this volume) and recognizing their/our agency and capabilities to produce knowledge—migrant knowledge.

My story resonates with the lived experience shared by many of the story collaborators of the Humanizing Deportation archive, although mine is not featured in it. Nonetheless, in this epilogue I hope to share a few reflections and to contribute to the dialogue on the *why* and the *how* of migrant knowledge, while also acknowledging, drawing from my own experience, some of the risks associated with a coming-out process, risks that should be considered by any project that seeks to amplify stories, particularly of a community that has yet to find a collective voice and strength to counteract a victimizing framing of its narrative. I begin by sharing how the Humanizing Deportation project and I crossed paths.

In February 2017, I decided to return to Tijuana after having left to pursue a master's in global migration in England in the fall of 2013. It was not my plan to return to a city where I am constantly reminded of that traumatic past I wanted to leave behind. Those visible border walls and fences are not

only a symbol of state violence but actual barriers that remind me of my mobility limits. Part of me wanted to give this city a second chance, mainly because my immediate family, who had also been deported, was already settled there, but also because I returned with a desire to do more for migrants with similar experiences of displacement. My time spent living in Europe, including London and Germany, and working in Mexico City and the state of Chiapas had expanded my perspective of the migrant struggle. At that time, I was also starting to articulate criticisms of US immigrant-led efforts that fed the discourse of the "deserving" migrant in political narratives and negotiations in the immigrant justice agenda, where deportees continue to be left out (Landa, "Border to Border") or seen as a lost cause.

I had also returned to Tijuana with what I now see as lessons learned from migrant advocacy in the Mexican context. Even with all the problematic aspects that one can observe of the immigrant movement in the United States, the voices of migrants still have a central role. In Mexico, it is an incipient development, with a handful of visible migrant-led organizations that have emerged, particularly in Tijuana and Mexico City. A painful lesson I personally experienced as someone who lent *testimonio* (Landa, "In Search of Belonging") and knowledge on public platforms is that it can become an exploitable commodity for US and Mexican researchers and civil society organizations, while at the same time, the role that deportees have had in placing the issue on the public agenda is not acknowledged. The first reforms in Mexican federal education policy in 2015, which aimed at facilitating the revalidation of foreign education, is one example I can highlight from many other anecdotes I have collected. Our experiences and insights were an important catalyst in media attention that resulted in public pressure and forced Mexican authorities to review the bureaucratic challenges we were encountering with the recognition of our US education (Landa, "Mexican Secretariat"). This contribution remains invisible, as it is claimed as a victory and attributed as the success of individuals and organizations that participated in an aspect of this process that I am certain would not have occurred without the presence of the deportees and returnees. I have utilized the few opportunities I have been given in academic spaces to begin to document our role in this change in education policy (Landa, "Barriers"). These experiences taught me that I needed to look for alternative ways of collaborating, with approaches that can openly recognize the unequal dynamics we confront in institutional projects, including with academic institutions and civil society organizations. Those of us who lack institutional affiliations can rely only on our own individual resources. In my case, it was my *Mundo Citizen* blog, the social media presence I had built at that point, and my own knowledge

and ideas. As a result, I decided to take an independent route as a way to resist the extractivist practices I have been subjected to.

On a Sunday morning, I attended a binational mass that regularly takes place at the iconic border wall in Playas de Tijuana. There, I met and talked to one of the collaborators of the Humanizing Deportation project, and upon sharing that I was a deportee and what I had been working on, she invited me to submit a story for the digital archive. Although I was excited to learn about the project—I knew the power of storytelling—I politely declined the invitation. My story was one that had already been told (Truax, *La lucha*, *Immigrant Generation's Fight*; Anderson and Solis). I also had the platforms to share whatever was on my mind, even if only to a small following. I felt that the Humanizing Deportation project's efforts would best serve the voices and perspectives that had limited platforms or had not yet been heard.

This would not be my only encounter with Humanizing Deportation. The project's reach in terms of collaborations and presence in Mexico was palpable, and I had friends, colleagues, and acquaintances in academia and civil society who knew about the project or were themselves collaborators. Meeting and talking with Robert Irwin was only a matter of time, and it happened while I was conducting field research in Baja California during my stay in Tijuana. I was coordinating a project for El Colegio de la Frontera Norte that explored the economic, social, cultural, and political factors that hinder the reinsertion of return migrants and their families (Yrizar and Landa). Robert kindly accepted our invitation to interview him and shared with us what he was observing with the stories being compiled in the digital archive, which also aligned with our findings of the barriers and vulnerabilities deportees face in their reinsertion process. From an external position, it was clear that the Humanizing Deportation archive was becoming an important resource for other qualitative research projects, including those I was working on.

A surprising element of my future interactions with Robert is that he was aware of my public story, and I eventually learned that he had come across it through my blog. This is an interesting aspect of navigating as an insider researcher with a public story: you are bound to encounter people who will recognize you even when you do not introduce yourself as "Nancy Landa, the deportee." We talked about the possibility of my joining the digital archive, and my rationale for not doing it, and I personally witnessed the care and respect that the Humanizing Deportation team had for our choices—what we decide to do, or not do, with our stories.

I believe that one of the most important characteristics of the Humanizing Deportation project is that it seeks to be guided by the autonomy and

perspective of displaced migrants, and this is precisely where I see its potential to realize its objective: to counteract the lack of understanding of and indifference toward the consequences of deportation. It allows for ownership and appropriation of the content. A digital archive also leaves a footprint for those stories to be accessible to its contributors, rather than remaining confined to a scholarly text that will be out of reach in format and language, virtually reducing its impact as a possible tool for change and advocacy by those who should be at the epicenter of that change: migrants themselves. The Humanizing Deportation archive is a proposal and an invitation for a more horizontal approach to migration research. Amplifying migrant perspectives is the *why* of migrant knowledge, while the *how* lies in the use of research methodologies that center migrants as (co)producers of knowledge, capable of the "articulation of wisdom" acquired from lived experience and not merely subjects to be observed.

Migrant knowledge production also comes with its limitations, and at the heart is the answer to the following questions: To what extent will publicly sharing one's migration story lead to changes in one's own life circumstances? Is the exposure worth it?

Being a researcher myself, I understand this dilemma. I have participated and managed projects, both qualitative and mixed methods, with perhaps a false sense of optimism that their findings, insights, and recommendations would lead to real impact, only to see them crumble and be reduced to reports, lying there in the oblivion of the institution that commissioned them. This tendency is the reason I have steered away from projects with purely academic objectives and have sought to conduct research that can inform action in humanitarian work. While research approaches that constrain the researcher to a structured format of consultation may permit less creativity and flexibility than alternative research methods, the objectives in those projects clearly arise from a desire to understand what is happening on the ground in order to guide action and strategy. I can rarely say the same about academic initiatives and endeavors, and I believe this is the challenge that initiatives like Humanizing Deportation must face when it comes to knowledge production. Despite such knowledge's importance, producing it is not enough to effect change. What will we do with it? This inquiry brings along another layer of the *why* of migrant knowledge. We can't expect for change to happen without having an intention of propelling it somehow. Perhaps it is a tall order for any project to embrace, but such a project should allow itself to be confronted with a sense of commitment and responsibility to migrant communities. When I decided to share my story publicly, it wasn't for it to remain solely in a news article, in an academic article or book, or

on a blog. I was seeking a change for myself, for my family, and for those who have experienced deportation. This is where the radical potential lies in these endeavors. They can serve as catalysts when such projects contemplate community-building processes. This dimension remains to be explored.

From a research standpoint, I also propose that we listen to and view the stories, this mosaic of migrant knowledge, as a piece of a multidimensional experience. As someone who has documented her feelings, thoughts, and key postdeportation moments in various forms of writing, I have observed changes and evolution in my experiences, including in my coping strategies, ascribed identity and sense of belonging, navigation back and forth in the continuum of exclusion and belonging, or (non)belonging (Antonsich). Although some feelings have remained consistent, others have been revisited and have shifted as I continue a never-ending healing process, peeling back the layers of an experience in a process, one hopes, that will help to reveal a freer version of oneself. I can theorize that this will be the same for the hundreds of stories in this digital archive, which opens an array of exploration on the evolution of one's feelings and perspectives over time.

One constant and fundamental aspect in the postdeportation experience, as emphasized in the first chapter of this volume, is that there is a difference between imagining migrant experiences and feelings and living them firsthand. I also believe this to be the case in analyzing and researching such experiences. The concept of insider researcher that I have explored in some of my work (Landa, "In Search of Belonging," "Barriers") has given me an opportunity to navigate migrant knowledge from a place where I have explored the tensions and opportunities of being at the center of the research that I undertake. Most notably, in doing this work from a marginal space, references to my story seem to be more valuable in academia when I am a subject of research (outsider) and less so when I write an opinion piece or an academic text (insider), which are rarely cited. But it is promising to encounter scholars who extend their platforms (Landa, "Border to Border") and propose collaborations (Jacobo and Landa; Landa, "Barriers"; Landa and Varela-Huerta), so that I am able to share my work and perspective, including the opportunity to write this text. I am witness to the transformative power that knowledge can have in how we view and make sense of our own life experience, and more so when that knowledge empowers one to take action, be it at a personal level or in a community. Beyond the concepts and analysis that emerge from Humanizing Deportation's digital archive, I have no doubt that the archive has already ignited reflexive processes among its digital collaborators, with effects that may be beyond our sight and understanding.

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Guillermo Alonso Meneses, who earned his PhD in anthropology from the University of Barcelona, is a professor in the Department of Cultural Studies at El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Tijuana. His publications include *El desierto de los sueños rotos: Detenciones y muertes de migrantes en la frontera México–Estados Unidos 1993–2013* and *En busca de la poesía del fútbol: Una aproximación a su genealogía, rasgos culturales y sentido*. He is a coeditor (with Robert McKee Irwin) of *Humanizando la Deportación: Narrativas digitales desde las calles de Tijuana*.

Lizbeth De La Cruz Santana is a graduate student in Latin American literatures and cultures with a designated emphasis in human rights at the University of California, Davis. Her dissertation focuses on childhood arrival migrants to the United States. Among other awards, she has received a UC President's Pre-Professoriate Fellowship and a Mellon Public Scholars Fellowship, along with awards from Imagining America and the National Humanities Center. She is the designer and coordinator of the Playas de Tijuana Mural Project.

Ana Luisa Calvillo Vázquez obtained a PhD in education, arts, and humanities from the Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua. She is author of *Manual de géneros biográficos* and coauthor of *Nadie me sabe dar razón: Tijuana; Migración y memoria*. She also authored, in collaboration with Roberto Rangel, the award-winning testimonial narrative *Me decían mexicano frijolero*.

Maricruz Castro Ricalde is a professor of humanities at Tecnológico de Monterrey. She has authored or coedited more than a dozen books, including *Global Mexican Cinema: Its Golden Age* (with Robert McKee Irwin) and *Mexican Transnational Cinema and Literature* (with James Ramey). She is a member of the Mexican Academy of Sciences and has received a number of awards, including the Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez medal (State of Mexico), the Cultura de México prize (Mexico's National Endowment for Culture and Arts / Brown University), and the Chaire Amérique Latine (University of Toulouse–Jean Jaurés).

Sonia Guiñansaca is an international-award-winning queer migrant poet, cultural organizer, and social justice activist. They have been awarded residencies

and fellowships from the Voices of Our Nations Arts Foundation, the British Council, Creative Time, and the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics; have performed at the Met, the NYC Public Theater, and Lehmann Maupin gallery; and have been featured by PEN America, *Interview*, *Ms.*, *Teen Vogue*, *Diva*, and PBS. They self-published their first chapbook of poetry, *Nostalgia & Borders*, and coedited the forthcoming anthology *Somewhere We Are Human: Authentic Voices on Migration, Survival, and New Beginnings*.

María José Gutiérrez is a PhD candidate in Latin American literatures and cultures with a designated emphasis in feminist theory at the University of California, Davis, where she has been awarded a Provost Fellowship and a Margrit Mondavi Graduate Fellowship. She was also awarded a scholarship for the National Humanities Center's Regional Podcasting Institute's "Podcasting the Humanities" workshop. She is part of the collective Corredores Migratorios, where she has published and collaborated with the Escuela Popular en Derechos para la Movilidad Humana. Her dissertation looks at the role of affect in how undocumented migration from Ecuador is being lived and told.

Brooke Kipling is a PhD candidate in Latin American literatures and cultures at the University of California, Davis, where her dissertation on Central American migration focuses on migrant narratives and performances that reveal processes of world making that challenge liberal humanism and signal possibilities for liberatory futures. She is recipient of a Mellon Public Scholars Fellowship that allowed her to develop a community project on migrant food justice in Tijuana.

Nancy Landa is a childhood arrival migrant to the United States and a graduate of California State University, Northridge, where she became a prominent community advocate as a board member of the campus's Volunteer Council and was elected the Associated Students' first Latina president. After being deported to Mexico, she earned a master's degree in global migration from University College London. She authored the acclaimed *Mundo Citizen* blog and is currently an advocate, researcher, and advisor on issues of migration and displacement.

Robert McKee Irwin is a professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and deputy director of the Global Migration Center at the University of California, Davis. He authored *Mexican Masculinities* and coedited (with

Mónica Szurmuk) the *Dictionary of Latin American Cultural Studies* and (with Guillermo Alonso Meneses) *Humanizando la Deportación: Narrativas digitales desde las calles de Tijuana*. Since 2016, with support from UC MEXUS-CONACYT, UC Humanities Research Institute, UC Davis Academic Senate, and UC Berkeley's Health Initiative of the Americas, among others, he has coordinated the Humanizing Deportation project.

Kyle Proehl is a PhD candidate in comparative literature at the University of California, Davis, where he is working on a dissertation on the allegorical and baroque character of graffiti. He previously earned an MA in critical theory and the arts from the School of Visual Arts in New York. He has written for the *Marx and Philosophy Review of Books*, the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Art Handler*, *X-TRA*, and others.

Yairamaren Román Maldonado obtained a PhD in Latin American and Caribbean literatures and new media from the University of California, Berkeley. She is a writer, an independent researcher, and a communications strategist. She authored *Interfaces*, the doctoral dissertation "Indebted Pasts, Alternative Futures: Caribbean Digital Imaginations in Twenty-First Century Literature," and critical articles such as "Cultura digital, protesta y descolonización en Puerto Rico: Algunos apuntes sobre #rickyrenuncia" and "'Nuestro nowhere': Encierro e histeria en Everglades." Her work has been supported by the Ford Foundation, the OpEd Project, and the University of California.