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Los Angeles

The Force of Intimacy

in a Honduran Community

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in Anthropology

by

Wanda Quintanilla Duran

2023

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2023

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Force of Intimacy

in a Honduran Community

by

Wanda Quintanilla Durán

Master of Arts in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2023

Professor Jason Patrick De León, Chair

This ethnographic work follows the experiences of 18 Honduran migrants, who at the time of data collection (2016), all resided in Atlantic County, New Jersey. The thesis explores their decision-making process when leaving Olancho, Honduras for New Jersey, United States and the "navigational strategies" they employed when seeking labor opportunities once in New Jersey. The research methods used were participant observation at participants' towns/cities, homes and jobs, semi-structured interviews, and *pláticas** (informal conversations)[1] where often, *testimonios** (a situational narrative of personal and communal experience)[2] emerged. I also share excerpts from my own family's letters sent transnationally in the years 1998-2003. Drawing on this data, I argue that Honduran

[1] Flores Carmona et al., "Theorizing Knowledge with Pláticas," 2021.
[2] DeRocher, Patricia, *Transnational Testimonios: Translating Worlds, Staging Activism*, 2018: 15.

migrants choose to migrate: 1. As a "*liberation strategy*" from the [harsh conditions and various forms of violence] (framed in a political economic history), 2. To seek labor opportunities in order to provide for their families and/ or 3. To reunite with a loved one. I find that "*intimacy"* plays a central role in propelling the lives and decisions people make and that they are often entangled in "*intimate reliance*" (communal support of labor and care) in order to thrive in the United States, even when relationships are fraught with tension and even when they are subjected to violence that follows people across multiple borders and territories.

This thesis of Wanda Quintanilla Duran is approved.

Philippe I. Bourgois

Laurie K. Hart

Jason Patrick De León, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2023

To my family and friends who

trusted me with their stories,

and to the teachers and professors who

loved me well.

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I would like to express my gratitude to my Spanish Literature high school teacher Sra. Socorro, who encouraged and provided me information and resources so I could attend college, even after an academic counselor (unjustifiably) said I should reconsider my desire to pursue college. Sra. Socorro has since passed away, but I am certain that if she were *here* today, she would still be cheering all her students on.

I am also so grateful to mentors once I was in college, beginning with Prosper Godonoo, Liliana Sanchez, and Ulla Berg for encouraging me to pay attention to those things that I gravitate towards, for showing me that caring for a community and people can coincide with academic research.

Thank you also to the Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS) at Rutgers University for supporting the research presented in this thesis with a small grant during my undergraduate years.

Lastly and most importantly, my most sincere *agradecimiento* to *los catrachos* for making this research possible.

Prologue

Clarity: A Creative Funk

"I can't see through that smoke in the air
That's the smoke in the air"[3]

"*Ya viene el fin del mundo*"
Catacamas, Olancho, Honduras (2022)

I have been trying to process where this feeling of being 'stuck', which keeps me from 'producing' as the world expects, derives from. I have been trying to make sure that a self-reflective approach to my writing does not result in an autoethnography titled "Behind the Scenes of an Anthropologist's Thought Process" (a title of one of the many drafts of this presented work). After very challenging

[3] Song writers: Gabriel Azucena / Andrew Mineo / Daniel Steele / Chad Gardner.

couple of years trying to produce this work, perhaps its completion can still generate some *hope**, a hope that retains the pain, heartbreak, despair, apathy, and empathy of ethnographic fieldwork.

I collected the data presented in this thesis during my undergraduate years at Rutgers University. Initially, it began as a curiosity, a "side" project influenced by anthropologist Ulla Berg's "Latino Ethnography" course, which I took to complete a last-minute major in Latin American Studies when my "Theater of the Hispanic Caribbean: Migration and Memory" Professor Camilla Stevens pulled me aside one day and said, "I noticed you have taken quite the number of Latin American literature coursework. Have you considered a major in Latin American Studies?"

Spanish was my mother tongue, and so I found a sense of comfort taking Spanish literature courses. I am now grateful that Prof. Steven's encouragement led to a Latino Ethnography course where Ulla Berg introduced me to the possibility of anthropology. Prof. Berg encouraged me to turn my final research paper into an anthropological senior thesis and she introduced me to the influential works of two of my current research advisors Jason De León and Philippe Bourgois.

I am truly grateful to those who write, document, and mourn; whose works/words *inspired** (revealed) and *propelled** me. Writing is like an artifact; it is meaning materialized if we [*Šə-maʿ] (listen*)*[4] and decipher the message/s. I write to *remember*. And I hope that as I wrestle with my nakedness, you can remember the lives of [*los catrachos*] (the Honduran people) I write about. I am mostly grateful to them and their openness to share their life stories with me.

---

[4]"Shema" is a Hebrew word to mean "hear" or "listen." Shema is a very common word in Hebrew Bible since 'hearing' is a very common activity of the ears (i.e., sound waves entering the ears). However, Hebrew biblical authors also use it to mean "pay attention", "to focus," or most relevant here "to *respond*" to what you hear. When the Israelites asked God to *act*, they asked Him to Shema or when God asked the people of Israel to *listen*, He says [Shema] (2x), in which instance, it means: "listen closely" (all of it related to the "keeping of the covenant"). In biblical Hebrew there is no word for "obey", so if you want to commit to a course of action, you simply say you will "shema." In short, *listening* and *doing* constitute each other. Real listening takes effort and action. This explanation of the word "Shema" comes from non-profit The Bible Project, where I often access *free* biblical theological resources and teachings. <u>Positionality statement:</u> Before starting my PhD program at UCLA, I was enrolled in theological seminary at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, in a MA in Christian Thought track. Unable to keep up with 2 full-time graduate program enrollments, I withdrew the Christian Thought MA program and focused solely on my Anthropology degree/s at UCLA.

INTRODUCTION

Existing and Resisting

"…Can any good thing come out of ~~Nazareth~~ Honduras...[5]

How could I forget all the years of school festivals, where [we] (Honduran children) sang in unison:

> *No hay otro pueblo mas* [*macho*] (all children stump their feet) *que el pueblo* [*catracho*] (all children stump their feet) del cual vengo yo"[6]

A song declaring Honduras the most *macho* of people (later balanced out with other feminine descriptions). Every stomp, you felt as if the foundations of the Earth were shaking. No wonder when I first arrived at South Jersey at age eleven, I evoked the *catracho*[7] (Honduran) nickname in a new way—I wanted *to show*[8] I was proud to be Honduran,[9] even when this alliance could further decrease the

[5] The quote is an edited reference from the biblical story (in John 1:46 as it appears in NASB translation in gospel of John). The reference is what a man named Nathaniel responds to his friend Philip when Philip excitingly and almost too directly tells Nathaniel that that the man the Jewish people have been waiting for *is here* (according to the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Messiah that would liberate the Israelites from powers of oppression, mainly the Roman empire). Nathanael's response "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" refers to the fact that Nazareth was a small town of people, marginalized even within [Galilee] (which also held secondary status within the larger Jewish communities due to [the effects of frequent contact] with non-Jews (ie. 'mixed' people, Greek-Aramaic bilinguals, cultural-religious deviation)). As a *Catracha* (Honduran) myself, I often felt/heard people ask similar questions about Honduras.

[6] "Corrido a Honduras" by Tino López Guerra.

[7] It was only recently I learned where the term "*catracho*" derives from while reading a draft of De Leon's forthcoming book *Soldiers and Kings*. Apparently, a rich American soldier tried to colonize Central America in the 1850s. In response, a Honduran resistance, led by General Florencio Xatruch emerged. When the colonizer was caught, the Honduran government executed him by firing squad. The group of Honduran soldiers in the expedition came to be called "Xtruches." But since many struggled pronouncing their group's name, it overwent a linguistic transformation, becoming the term we know today as "Catrachos" (Dudley 2020).[7] Steven Dudley, *MS-13: The making of Americas Most Notorious gang* (Toronto: Hanover Square Press, 2020), 59.

[8] My desire to show implicates that I wanted to be seen. This showing/being seen indicates there is a gaze already to which I am doing the act of showing. In the mentioned case, it was the gaze of white supremacism.

[9] I grew up in a small town near Atlantic City (A.C), with a predominantly white population. During my middle school and high school years, I experienced racism in various forms. Some examples: 1. Some schoolteachers often prohibited me from speaking Spanish in the school halls or in class, stating "Spanish is for Spanish class only." 2. Even after I acquired English, I helped guide other 'English as Second Language' (ESL) students, there was a group of all white schoolmates that would often tell me (and other ESL students) to go back to our countries, one day going as far as throwing their school lunch at me (the students' behaviors were never corrected). When my Ecuadorian (white passing) friend defended me by throwing a piece of food back to them, they told her: "It's people like you that make us look bad" (since they assumed she was a white person defending me). 3. One of my middle school boyfriend's mom would prohibit him from seeing "the Spanish girl," she went as far as hiring a person to intimidate us as we walked around our neighborhood –My family and I were the only people of color residents along with one other black family. 4. School teachers were often "surprised" by my academic performance and more than once, I was brought up front to showcase to my white peers that

incorporeal and material benefits I could get from "power",[10] and even when I was confirming most of my teachers' and neighbors' suspicions that I (in fact) do not belong to the United States (even as a naturalized citizen). More than a form of identity crisis, I believe/d this name was/is a symbol of a people of *resistance**, to firmly align ourselves with the truth that we have been born in a territory that today is called many things: Honduras, poor, underdeveloped, violent, corrupt […] *macho*, *bello*, *cariñoso, con gente linda* […].It is a form of speaking out *what is*, of giving context.[11]

The stories I share in this thesis are based on my interviews with 18 adult Honduran migrants, 9 women and 9 men, all from my parent's network of friends and [clients] (from my dad's *encomendero* or parcel business). At the time of the interviews (in 2016), they were all residing in Atlantic County, New Jersey. In these interviews, I learned that [we] (*Catrachos*) have a lot to get off our chests and minds, we have a lot of "theories" about why Hondurans (in general) continue to migrate, we have a lot of "stories"[12] about why [we] migrated, and we can sit for hours talking about *how* we continue to live (and skip death too) (in Honduras, in-transit, in the US, etc.), about *how* we navigate, and *why* we continue. In this thesis, I challenge myself to "*listen**"[13] to these 18 voices and experiences in exchange with my own voice/s and experience/s, in order to present to you answers to the following research questions:

1. Why did this group of Hondurans migrate to the US (and South Jersey)?

"even Wanda can get this grade. You should be ashamed of yourselves!" [I was racialized and othered, and assumptions were made about me, many which were 'racist'- assumed I was intellectually inferior]

[10] I define "power" here in the way that Tarek Younis in chapter 4 "The Duty to see, the Yearning to be Seen," in Asim Qureshi's book *I Refuse to Condemn : Resisting Racism in Times of National Security* (2020). In this chapter, Tarek Younis uses "power" to refer to the ideologies of capitalism (and global military-industrial complex) and nationalism (and the management of belonging)- the greatest ideologies intersecting "The War on Terror." In reflecting about the Muslim relationship to War on Terror, he explains that not exalting the nation in which you reside sets you outside of the 'populace,' and holds immense material and incorporeal consequences. In my alliance with my Catracho identity, I was perceived as exalting Honduras and not the US].

[11] in continuous discourse with my evoking of nickname Catracho; giving the context aka affirming that *I** am in fact Honduran.

[12] Storytelling is used as a method. See methods section for more.

[13] See footnote #4 from prologue section to read an explanation of how exactly I like to think of the act of "listening."

a. What were the conditions/ what was happening in their lives and surroundings when they made the decision to migrate?

b. What were the motivations/ what propelled them to migrate?

c. What strategies of movement (i.e. land, plane, visa, immigration policy, guide services, etc.) did they employ?

2. How are the members of this group of Hondurans navigating their lives while in the United States?

   a. How are they accessing [local] (Atlantic County, South Jersey) labor?

3. How are the members of this group of Hondurans navigating transnational families/lives/ties?

This thesis contextualizes the everyday experiences of Honduran migrants, who like me, arrived in Atlantic City and surrounding towns between the years 1990- 2016.[14] I contextualize the lives of this group of Honduran migrants by *listening* to the "things" (i.e. *amores*, *dolores*, *sueños*, structures, infrastructures, laws) that *stop* and *propel* their very lives. When there is resistance, there is also a clash of interpretations of that which is experienced, or a "*point of encounter**" (if recognized as such and as I will explain more later). When there is resistance, there is always an ['object'] (visible/invisible, material/cultural) to which it resists. In a phenomenological sense, I share with you some "point of encounter" dialectics of the Honduran experience; perhaps seeing something I (and/or you) have taken for granted.

***

As an anthropologist in training,[15] I quickly became aware of the challenges which face the discipline— starting with the fact that throughout our discipline's history, we have continuously failed

[14] Some crossing borders via land, others via plane.

[15] I hold a BA in Linguistics, Spanish Language and Latin American Studies. An MA/PhD degree would allow me to use the title of 'anthropologist' more rigidly.

to *listen**[16] to (act in the best benefit of) the communities that embraced [us] (often *strangers*[17]). We are now an anxious discipline, concerned with our ethnocentrism, exoticism, essentialism (to mention a few) and with some other quarrels within the discipline. Through this, I have come to recognize that our obsession with the ethnographic encounter opens a way to better understand the human experience, – one that acknowledges that we *exist with** people, other living things, inanimate objects, structures, etc. – [One][18] that understands we *co*-exist* with other human beings, who are also experiencing the world; and who like us, are *affected* by other people, forces, and global processes. With that understanding of our shared human experience, this thesis tells a story of the unequal structural conditions that brought me and my interlocutors to Atlantic City (AC) and small surrounding towns and that continue to manifest and create new vulnerabilities even in the United States. I show how AC and surrounding towns are a perfect *rincón Hondureño* (Honduran corner) to observe migrants experiences, encounters, interactions with larger structural processes, building and nurturing social relations, and strategizing for survival.

Through my interactions with these 18 *Catrachos*, I *saw* "*intimacy**" anew –as a desire/need for other-[closeness] (although not necessarily [physical] (where material bodily presence in space-time is required)), which was within all of us and as affected/constituted by external forces; as a "connection" (though not necessarily one of 'equality') between social beings; as requiring *vulnerability* of letting oneself be *known* or *seen*; and as playing a central role in our migration stories. I learned that since *intimacy* requires *vulnerability* to others, there is risk involved in social relations; as others might come

[16] Misinterpreted their lives, meanings, cultures, etc. and failed to choose a course of action that positively affects the lives of our interlocutors.

[17] The "peculiar" to social group functions for its members as an unquestionable scheme of reference (Schutz, 1944). Not just the anthropologist as the "stranger" attempting to interpret the patterns in other people's lives, but as everyone capable of such encounter; and our job as anthropologists being that which simply serves as a "pipeline"—. Unlike Shutz who defines the "stranger" as: "an adult individual of our times and civilization who tries to be permanently accepted or at least tolerated by the group which he approaches" (p. 499), I consider all involved to be strangers to each other's world (inner and even material (since living conditions may vary even when we reside in the same world, city, etc).

[18] That is 'a human experience'.

to know our needs, they may not necessarily act in our best benefit—a response that perhaps derives from our own *intentionalities* (even our unaware ones). I learned that in that way, [we] (people) can rupture intimacy but that there are also other actors in our environments that deeply affect it such as state immigration policies and unequal structures. I argue that while state immigration policies and unequal structures rupture migrants' intimacy in the form of family structures and other social relations, migrants dealt/deal with the painful realities of separation, and the damage to intimate expression (and understandings of family and relations) through resisting and more *intimately* relying on social relations.

Thesis Structure

In what follows in this introduction, you will find a discussion of the methods and the theoretical and conceptual avenues used to make the conclusions made; and a brief background/history on Honduras' political economy and how it impacts migration. In the main body of the thesis, you will see glimpses of the worlds (in Honduras and in the U.S) of the Honduran migrants that spoke to me.

In chapter one, I explore the intersection of violence, intimacy, and migration, showing how people's intimacy and family structures are impacted by the process of migration. I share stories about family separation due to migration and its effects on mothers, fathers, and children. I argue that migration is a *liberation strategy** –a response to various forms of violence and poverty and for love and dignity, and a strategy of survival; and that parents deeply engage in *affective practices** to conserve a connection (*intimacy*) with their children when geographically apart. In chapter 2, I explore the *intimate economies of migration**, showing how this group of Honduran migrants, cope and strategize while living and working in south Jersey. I show that the violence/s that this group of migrants experienced are not only present at home in Honduras, but these follow them to South Jersey, and it are produced at the nexus of state and structural forms of violence. I argue that *intimate reliance** (communal support and resource sharing) is the major strategy used to obtain a job in the local economy and avoid

deportation; even when sometimes, social relations are fraught with mistrust and tensions. I conclude the thesis by sharing *los sueños* (hopes and dreams) and a further description of the everyday lives of this group of migrants. I make an invitation to engage in painful self-reflection, not just to the anthropologist, but to the migrant/interlocutor and other readers- to see how we might also be participants and/or accomplices of violence/s, to see how we might be failing to acknowledge our power and its effect on others, hopefully understanding that we can all be both victims and perpetrators.

Methods: Living in Tension

Before I share the stories, I must take space to explicitly explain the methods/ measures I used to draw my conclusions. I first need to admit that I try my best to avoid exerting violence into the world/ lives of people and in order to responsibly do that, I have come to follow a life of what I call: "Living in tension." Living in tension admits we *co-exist**.[19] By this, I take seriously how my actions, words, presence *effects/affects* the other/s. I believe there is a "*point of encounter*" or a 'moment' in which varying points of view (clash of interpretation of that which is experienced) come in contact with one another— and this point we hold possibility to allow exploration or exposure of affects/intensities and meanings. While I admit that I cannot "control" all outcomes of my words, actions, and decisions, I do wonder, how can I strive to become a different kind of subject[20], one that steps outside of a form of blindness? One that admits I exist and am affected, but that in that mode of existence, I can make an effort to become aware of my *intentions?* I am ultimately seeking well-being, but never in a way that

[19] "Living in tension" is a state in which I constantly *wrestle* to *listen,* where *listening* entails an action, a response by the one who hears/listens, who is aware that a better response in this *being-with* might be an *effort* to *being-for*. In this state, *being-with* is the fundamental condition arrived to through a phenomenological approach, and because one *listens* to the demand which comes from other, one moves to *being-for*. This is relevant to my research because I am interested in 'contribution'/ 'collaboration', and a phenomenological approach seems to allow this. Writing about Hondurans, even as a Honduran myself does not exempt me from the possibility of failing them or to replicate a form of violence already experienced by the Honduran people.

[20] A subject that perhaps is aware of how my being is affected and therefore, I can stop to assess my own intentions in all my social encounters? See process of "subjectification" (Faucoult; Bordeiu; Altseeser) as concerned with wellbeing, which tends to be entangled with our humanity/ existence in this material world.

provides superficial comfort but in fact invites us to live in a constant and painful self-judgement as a first action in the world.

In this project, I engage in storytelling as a collection method. I am deeply interested in understanding what it means to "exchange" and storytelling holds this possible. Storytelling is often considered a "political" process. Historian and political philosopher Hannah Arendt argued that the "political" is best understood as a power relation between private and public realms, and that storytelling is a vital bridge between these realms - a site where individualized passions and shared views are contested and recombined.[21] For this reason, I find storytelling an accessible and helpful tool for a new possibilities and alternatives if one takes people seriously. In what we have come to call the "ontological turn", Viveiros de Castro speaks of a "method of controlled equivocation" as his way of "taking people seriously,"[22]"without *smothering** them with our own ways of thinking and acting".[23] For him, the problem is political and how we, as anthropologists, are prepared to take the people whose lives we seek to explain and 'equivocation' "happens when you try to translate across 'native' and 'anthropological' conceptual regimes" (if assumed ontological difference).[24] However, if we assume that we are never talking about the same thing, we allow others' understandings to inform/shake our very own foundations –moving away from the violence of *erasing** people when/if not taken seriously. I use storytelling as a method, centering the following questions: Can we as anthropologists practice a form of constant death to self (to desires, intensions, and assumptions)? How do we become another kind of subject, which takes seriously the other/s (allowing them to teach us what we need to learn about the human experience)? In order to get closer to what I wish to achieve,

[21] Michael Jackson, Politics of Storytelling: Variations on a Theme by Hannah Arendt (Denmark: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2013).
[22] Martin Holbraad and Morten Axel Pedersen, 2017, *The Ontological Turn: An Anthropological Exposition*, p. 184; Eduardo Viveiros De Castro, 2004, "Perspectival anthropology and the method of controlled equivocation."
[23] Martin Holbraad and Morten Axel Pedersen, 2017, *The Ontological Turn: An Anthropological Exposition*, p. 184.
[24] Martin Holbraad and Morten Axel Pedersen, 2017, *The Ontological Turn: An Anthropological Exposition*, p. 185.

I also engage in something I call "revelation practice," where I must be open to "discover" or receiving a "revelation" one can say. In short, I reflect on what it is that I might not be seeing, hearing, or understanding from my encounters with my interlocutors.

On par with the practice described above, in this project, I employ Humphreys and Watson's semi-fictionalized ethnography approach.[25] In this writing practice, the ethnographer can incorporate multiple ethnographic investigations into one story.[26] I first encountered this approach in Jason De León's work in *The Land of Open Graves*, where he brings disparate data sets together to phenomenologically connect the reader closer to what is experienced by those who spoke to him—migrants who encountered the terrors of the Arizona desert.[27] I also use a semi-fictionalized style of writing as it helps protect people's identities as I mix the details of the original stories. Doing this is no easy challenge, especially when one has a multiplicity of voices to listen to.[28] Either way, as an anthropologist, I have to come to peace with my own limitations as I take a deep breath and… type.

Participant Observation, Interviews, *Pláticas, Testimonios*

In the field of anthropology, we often embark in what has been called "deep hanging out"[29] or "participant observation." An engagement in long-term relationships with communities in order to provide an in-depth description of peoples' experiences and the forces (sociopolitical, economic, historical; visible and invisible) that shape them. For this project, I shadowed my dad who owns an *encomienda* (parcel) business along with two of his siblings (my uncles) while picking up *encomiendas* (material goods) and collecting payments throughout cities and towns in South Jersey. Parcel managers/transporters or couriers are colloquially known as *encomenderos* or *viajeros*. On monthly

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[25] Humphreys and Watson . Eds. Sierk Ybema, Dvora Yanow, Harry Wels, and Frans Kamsteeg. 2009. "Ethnographic Practices: From 'Writing-Up Ethnographic Research' to 'Writing Ethnography.'".
[26] Humphreys and Watson 2009; De León 2015; Clifford 1986; Fassin 2014.
[27] De León 2015, *The Land of Open Graves*, pg. 44.
[28] The individuals who share their story, and other pressures (deadlines, school, publisher, inanimate objects, etc.)
[29] James Clifford, "Anthropology and/as Travel," Etnofoor 9, 2 (1996): 5–15.

average my dad ships around 120 *cajas* (boxes), including home appliances to be distributed to different families throughout Honduras.

When I told my dad I was writing a thesis about Hondurans, he did not really understand what that meant (he vacillates between being proud of my accomplishments and his worry that my school training is never-ending), yet he was happy to have me join him along and eventually, I was able to interview 18 of his friends and clients. I also engaged in participant observation at the interlocutors' homes and places of work, spending many hours interviewing them, chatting with them (*pláticas*) and recording their *testimonios* (a situational narrative of personal and communal experience) in the comforts of their homes.

Testimonio

When I began this project, I had recently been introduced to ethnographic methods and it became clear to me that this approach required that I spend time with people talking to them.[30] Through these conversations I was able to elicit aspects of people's life experiences. In-depth interviews have been observed to help the speaker remember/highlight certain (almost forgotten) aspects of their life journeys due to the specificity of the questions articulated by the researcher.[31] I sometimes think of this approach as the "get to the point" moment, fully knowing that the "point" is more often than not, the point of interest of the anthropologist. Thankfully, out of those interviews I conducted, many *testimonios* emerged. *Testimonio* has deep roots connected to oral cultures and to Latin American human rights struggles, and more recently, it has been taken up by Chicanas and Latinas, to demonstrate the genre's ability to expose the often-brutal communal experiences and to build solidarity among women of color.[32] As a method, it holds a situational analysis of the way that larger power structures are experienced and it disrupts epistemological differences between the interviewer and interviewee[33] since it gives the speaker the power to choose where to take the interviewer. In this way, testimonio situates the interlocutor's existence with a collective (*co-existence*), "marked by marginalization, oppression, or resistance,"[34] helping us better understand how communities build *solidarity*, understand *co-existence* and *resist* the things that disrupt their lives.[35] Testimonio helps the anthropologist practice deep listening to unstructured/uninterrupted presentation of narrative, only interjecting questions at the end of a story.

Plática

[30] The lessons of "listening" as a practice or "revelation practice" came after the collection. During the collection, I was only "hearing."
[31] Anastario, 2019, *Parcels*: *Memories of Salvadoran Migration*.
[32] Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Flores Carmona, 2019, "Chicana/Latina Testimonios."; Anzaldúa, 1990, *Making Face, Making Soul = Haciendo Caras*.; Moraga, Anzaldúa, and Bambara, 1983, *This Bridge Called My Back*.
[33] Pérez Huber, 2009, "Disrupting Apartheid of Knowledge."
[34] Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Flores Carmona, "Chicana/Latina Testimonios," p. 363.
[35] Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Flores Carmona, "Chicana/Latina Testimonios," p. 363.

Pláticas are informal conversations which occur in comfortable environments for both the researcher and the research participants. Like *testimonio*, they have been taken up by Chicana and Latina academics to be considered as a method, arguing that pláticas are "theoretically and epistemologically congruent with how one sees the world and how one comes to know and understand it."[36] They also tend to be more 'natural' and the preferred way of speech expression for my interlocutors and so comprise a good majority of the data I collected. During *pláticas,* the participants engage in sharing their thoughts and stories in a more or less random manner. *Pláticas* are like a creative funk that leads to clarity, or more obscurity, depending on the speakers-listeners relation and ability to follow each other's train of thought.

My family's letters

These letters are from the years 1998-2003 that my parents sent to each other when they were separated due to migration. My mom was living in Catacamas, Olancho and my dad in Atlantic City, New Jersey. I use the letters as "cultural material" to be examined in the intersections of Honduran migration, intimacy and violence. It's used as "supporting evidence."

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Before I get into the stories, I provide my *discipline* a theoretical discussion.

I engage with anthropological theory and ethnography to create more than an alternative perspective to what we understand about the human experience, a *merge* of the "anthropology of the good" and "dark anthropology" (as masterfully divided by anthropologist Sherry Ortner)[37] –in this, positing a *reconciliation* of the material and the cultural and of the harsh and good dimensions of experience as if they are both telling the same story.[38] I honor the truth of the harsh realities in/of

[36] Dolores Delgado Bernal et al., "Critical Race Feminista Methodologies, p. 159.
[37] Sherry Ortner, "Dark anthropology and its others: Theory since the eighties," *Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6, 1 (2016): 47-73.
[38] Sherry Ortner, "Dark anthropology and its others." Ortner considers the turn she calls "dark anthropology," that is, anthropology that focuses on power, domination, inequality, and oppression (the harsh dimensions of social life), as well

Honduran migrants' lives and contexts , while also show how they forge and maintain *meaningful* relationships.

To speak of Honduran violence, I could tell you about my encounters with individuals who committed or/and were victims of crimes while I have lived there. To speak of Honduran violence, I could tell you stories from my childhood living there, migrating from town to town.[39] I could tell you all my experiences with white American/Christianity when I first arrived at the US (and more current ones too). I could tell you of current daily occurrences of homicides (from the past and still occurring today) in Honduras and in the United States that involve a member of our community. I can tell you about US' role in Honduras in the past century. I could tell you about *La Conquista* (conquest). I can tell you about how I have hurt others. *La lista no termina* (the list is never-ending). However, I must admit that as a child, I spent most of my time focused on the love poems and songs I was writing or learning for my parents' approval (who were in the U.S). The *walls* and *borders* were only in the background of my existence, much like the walls in my grandma's (caretaker) yard that would periodically grow higher and higher as to deter the *ladrones* (thieves) or *detenidos* (detainees) fleeing the "police station" next door. I would sit in the securitized backyard to journal *mís poesías de amor* (love poetry) and the occasional expression of pain caused by my parents' absence. I mentioned in the previous section that the methods employed are tools social science and humanities use to help us center our narrative/analyses in the experiences of people. In that way, I am going to tell you about what I learned about migration and violence from the *Catrachos* that were open to sharing their stories with us. Moreover, I seek to complicate how we understand Honduran violence and migration by

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as on the subjective experience of these dimensions in the form of depression and hopelessness; and she also considers "anthropologies of the good," which include studies of "the good life" and "happiness," as well as studies of morality and ethics.

[39] I was born in Catacamas, Olancho, migrated at five-years-old to Olanchito, Yoro when my mom took off to the United States to meet my dad who had left 3 years prior. Two years later, I moved to San Pedro Sula because my caretaker (my maternal grandma) was diagnosed with cancer and only given a few months to live. Finally, on my 11th birthday, I was reunited with my parents in the U.S.

looking at the deeper structural and historical conditions that systematically produce and sustain violence in people's lives—in Honduras and once in the United States.

In national security discourse, when we move to acknowledging that "something" is going wrong, we are always looking to point fingers, to find *who* is at fault for the thousands of globally displaced individuals; worse, we criminalize migrants and the actors who facilitate their clandestine movement. Many times, it is easier to place these violent realities in our background, as simply another "predictable" or "normal" tragedy in the lives of people fleeing their war-torn countries (due to drugs or borders); it is easier to blame migrants themselves for their "misfortunes" and "bad decision"; it is easier to blame the "ruthless migrant smugglers preying on migrants' vulnerabilities."[40] A political economy approach allows us to see migration as a *response* to violence and poverty, as a *survival strategy* employed by migrants with a lot of agency, yet, with not many options but to move and strategize ways to cross borders for a new socio-economic reality. I employ the concepts of "structural violence" and "poststructural violence"[41] to better understand how contemporary migration and violence is propelled[42] and how migrants respond to structural conditions of violence.[43] I also work with Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois' "*continuum of violence*", the understanding that visible and invisible forms of violence –whether structural, political, symbolic, every day, gendered, direct, or *normalized*– are part of a continuum,[44] and that they mutually constitute and reinforce each other.[45] Through this approach, it is not my intention to remove or replace blame, but to capture a more complex (and perhaps more accurate) understanding of circumstances, actions, and intentions.

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[40] Lately, it is the work of "ruthless smugglers preying on vulnerable migrants" (as stated by Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas on White House briefing on May 11, 2023, when addressing the end of Title 42).
[41] Izacara Palacios, 2016, "Violencia postestructural: Migrantes centroamericanos y cárteles de la droga en México"
[42] Farmer, 2004, "An Anthropology of Structural Violence."
[43] Slack and Whiteford, 2011, "Violence and Migration on the Arizona-Sonora Border."; Izacara Palacios, 2016, "Violencia postestructural."
[44] Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, *Violence in War and Peace,* 2004.; Bourgois, "The Power of Violence in War and Peace," 2001.
[45] Vogt, *Lives in Trasit*, 2018, p. 4.

Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois tell us that the everyday violence, which tends to be directed towards the least powerful (for instance, the migrant), "is so deeply inscribed in our ordinary, unexamined ways of life that *no one** is exempt," posing the difficult question: "How can the continuum of violence be interrupted?"[46] That is another way to ask the question I posed earlier in my "living in tension practice," where I ask: "I do wonder, how can I strive to become a different kind of subject, one that steps outside of a form of blindness?" My question admits that which Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois remind us, that *no one* is exempt from our participation of violence, that in order to interrupt this continuum of violence we are to *at least* to reflect on the words of Immanuel Levinas, "Morality does not belong to culture: it enables one to judge it" or in the philosophical and theological position that "the ethical" exists *prior* to culture.[47] This ethic would challenge our belief that the lives of others/ other beings' continual health and living do not matter and help us *see* that [we] are the subjects at the end of our acknowledgement that we *exist with* (co-exist) others, ready to act and affect their lives. This ethic would challenge us to see that "our existence as uniquely social being presupposes the presence of the other."[48] I wonder then, are we ready to surrender our [attachments]? (Nationalism, Christo-fascism, racism, classism, supposed entitlements, *el sentirse superior a otros*, etc.). All of this means that I understand people experience different types of violence, that these take place within specific structural and historical contexts and that people can also respond with/ perpetuate violence as a survival strategy. I also employ Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of "intersectionality"[49] to help me understand the experience of Honduran migrants within their multiple subject positions as racialized-, gendered-, unauthorized- *others.* This form of analysis allows me to see how migrants can be both visible and invisible in the eyes of the state; and refocuses

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[46] Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, *Violence in War and Peace,* p. 225.
[47] Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, *Violence in War and Peace,* p. 225.
[48] Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, *Violence in War and Peace,* p. 225.
[49] Crenshaw, 1991 "Mapping the Margins."

our gaze from the spectacle of direct violence to the less visible dimensions of migrant's experiences—including the everyday intimacies, like the letters I sent to my parents and they to me when we were separated due to migration and like the social relations that are forge along life journeys.

¿Quiénes Somos? (who are we?): Community and Solidarity

Pine in her work "Working Hard, Drinking Hard: on Violence and Survival in Honduras", uses terms like 'identity' and 'identification' to talk about "self-consciously articulated acts of naming and recognition: how people view themselves and how they view (and are viewed by) others."[50] Almost predictively, Pines explains that when she engaged Hondurans in the matter of 'identity', they mainly described themselves negatively—"we are not as advanced as the United States" "we don't have any money" "we haven't yet learned how to control our violence" or simply "we are behind." [51] In some ways, this is consistent with what many others assume of Hondurans. It is as if 'identity' forms through a double consciousness (in Du Bois's sense), "this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of the world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness […]"[52] Pine uses the concept Bordieuan framework of "symbolic violence" to better comprehend Honduran subjectivities and their own "complicity in violence perpetrated against him or her"[53] and as to avoid the error to blame victims of violence. The theory of "symbolic violence" relies on the Bordieuan concept of '*habitus*,' or "the structural and cultural environment internalized in the form of dispositions to act, think, and feel in certain ways […] habitus is acquired through enculturation into a social class, a gender, a family, a peer group, or even a nationality."[54] Pine explains that habitus is also related to Bourdieu's "symbolic

[50] Adrianne Pine, 2008, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras*.
[51] Pine, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard*, 26-27.
[52] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk,* 10-11. *Ed 1999*.
[53] Pine, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard*, 27.
[54] Pine, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard*, 27.

capital:[55] "symbolic capital is the intrinsic knowledge of how and when to employ manners in order to achieve social distinction by demonstrating superior taste, and those manners and taste themselves are embodied in habitus."[56] Bourdieu argued that the knowledges of the upper and middle classes are considered capital valuable to a hierarchical society,[57] and Pine argued that "the symbolic violence resulting from the Honduran embodied obsession with certain forms of their own "real" (vs. structural) violence is a necessary condition for the acceptance of a violent form of modernity and a violent form of capitalism."[58] According to Bourdieu, "cultural capital" refers to an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society,[59] and he asserts that cultural capital (i.e., education, language), social capital (i.e., social networks, connections) and economic capital (i.e., money and other material possessions) can be acquired in two ways, from one's family and/or through formal schooling. Often, this explanation of reproduction of a hierarchical society has been used to explain why the academic and social outcomes of People of Color (POC) are lower than outcomes of Whites,[60] and the assumption there is that POC 'lack' the social and cultural capital required for social mobility.[61] In the same way Hondurans seem to have come to internalize this over their very beings; and this assumes that Hondurans are to become/and want to reach white, middle class culture as the standard form. In my analysis, I challenge this assumption and begin with the concept of '*community wealth capital*' which relies heavily on a "*critical race theory*" (CRT) framework. CRT as a framework can be used "to theorize, examine, and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact on social structures, practices and discourses."[62]

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[55] Pierre Bourdie, The forms of Capital," 1986, *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education,* ed. John G. Richardson, p. 256.
[56] Pine, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard*, 27.
[57] Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, J. (1977) Reproduction in education, society and culture (London, Sage).; Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth, 70.
[58] Pine, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard*, 27-8.
[59] Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth, 2005, 76.
[60] Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?", 70.
[61] Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?", 70.
[62] Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?", 70.

CRT allows me to shift the center of focus from accumulated notions of White, middle-class culture to that of Honduras, a community of POC. If we historically contextualize the experiences of Hondurans, what is revealed is accumulated assets and resources in their histories and lives. "*Community cultural wealth* is an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression."[63] CRT lens can 'see' that Communities of Color nurture cultural wealth through at least 6 forms of capital such as aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital.[64] These are not static but dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth. This thesis sees the networking, the resilience, the hope, the navigational skills, the linguistic skills, all as strengths of the Honduran people. While Bourdieu's work sought to provide a structural critique of social and cultural reproduction, his theory of cultural capital has been used to assert that some communities are culturally wealthy while others are culturally poor. I challenge this by simply focusing on the community cultural wealth of 18 Hondurans in New Jersey, a community of which I am a part. In line with the fact that a communal understanding of existence helps us move closer to "accountability", where we are hypersensitive to permitted acts of violence against [us] (people, migrants, *Catrachos*). Hondurans are a racialized-, criminalized-, lesser- other in the national discourses and imaginations of

[63] Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?", 77.

[64] see additional similar discussions in Delgado Bernal, 1997, 2001; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Faulstich Orellana, 2003. The following definitions come from Yosso's "Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth" ps. 7-81: "Aspirational Capital – maintain hopes, dreams, resilience . Linguistic Capital- intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language/ style. Familial capital- cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* that carry a sense of community, history, memory and cultural intuition. Social capital- networks of people and community resources – provide instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions. Navigational Capital- skills of maneuvering through social institutions. Ex. strategies to navigate through racially-hostile university campuses draw on the concept of academic invulnerability, or students' ability to 'sustain high levels of achievement, despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly at school and, ultimately, dropping out of school' (Alva, 1991, p. 19; seealso Allen & Solórzano, 2000; Solórzano et al., 2000; Auerbach, 2001). Resistance Capital- Knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality (Freire, 1970, 1973; Giroux, 1983; McLaren, 1994; Delgado Bernal, 1997; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). This form of cultural wealth is grounded in the legacy of resistance to subordination exhibited by Communities of Color (Deloria, 1969). Ex. even through internment camps, Japanese communities resisted racism by maintaining and nurturing various forms of cultural wealth or black mothers teaching their daughters to assert themselves as intelligent, beautiful, strong and worthy of respect."

many. Our circumstances – when we *see* the other—lead us to realize that we are for each other's lives and wellbeing. Not everyone feels this way, however, there is a lot of hate that we experience from others and (unfortunately) towards one-another.

Intimacies and Remote Sensing

In the social science research realm, the intimacies of everyday lives and global, state and structural processes have often been viewed as separate realms.[65] However, a history of feminist perspectives has helped us *see* the intersection between these worlds – perspectives which explore the relationship between the "local" and the "global" and come to *see* the intimate and the global as constating each other.[66] I use "intimacy" to signify *closeness*, not only physical, but also emotional and spiritual; I use "intimacy" to signify a deep level of *knowing* another (their needs, their status, etc.). And like anthropologist Wendy Vogt, I use it as –a flexible analytical concept, more than a term for private, personal, or sexual relations[67], referring to the encounters which arise from interactions between and among migrants and resident populations.[68] Through that understanding, I can focus on the everyday lives of migrants as spaces to study intimate relations and the intersections between the intimate and economic life. This form of analysis allows us to further understand the reproduction of power and inequalities which deter people's being and it allows us to see how people bear and resist. In the context of migration research, for instance, scholars have demonstrated how immigration policies impact relations of "gender, kinship, care, and identity within transnational and mixed status families."[69] We have also seen examples of the harsh effects of border enforcement and in the lives of

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[65] Ara Wilson, "Intimacy: A Useful Category of Transnational Analysis," 2012, p. 43; Wendy Vogt, *Lives in Transit*, 2018, p.15; Mountz and Hyndman," Feminist Approaches to the Global Intimate," 2006, p. 446.
[66] Mountz and Hyndman, "Feminist Approaches to the Global Intimate" 2006, p446.
[67] Vogt, *Lives in Transit*, 2018, 16. Vogt's concept is influenced by Ara Wilson's "relational life," and Lieba Faier's *Intimate Encounters*, arising from everyday interactions between and among migrant and resident populations found in Wilson 2012: 48; Faier 2009.
[68] Vogt, *Lives in Transit*, 2018; Wilson 2012; Faier 2009.
[69] Vogt, *Lives in Transit*, 2018; Dreby, *Everyday Illegal*, 2015; Cecilia Menjívar, *Immigrant Families*; Abrego, *Sacrificing Families: Navigating Laws, Labot and Love Across Borders*, 2014; Boehm, *Intimate Migrations*, 2012.

individuals and families.[70] In line with other works which have sought to construct a framework of intimacy through the experiences of migrants, showing how they forge meaningful affective ties that go beyond state recognized family relations.[71] This way of understanding intimacy helps us see that migrants develop strategies in social relations with one another to cope with the precarity of their situations.[72] In short, "intimacy" allows us to understand how historically- and politically contextualized migration impacts family structures. Such a layered approach to violence and intimacy illuminates the historical and transnational threats and state policies that create the conditions for migration and violence and their ripple effects on communities, individuals, and bodies."[73] Through this approach this thesis moves the focus from the widely circulated spectacle of violence at the US-Mexico border to showcase the less visible infrastructures and economies of intimacy in South Jersey.

"Why do Hondurans Migrate?"

In order to address the often-asked question "why do Hondurans migrate?", I must make a few clarifications. Even though in this thesis, I situate Honduran migration, violence and poverty within a deeper historical context, a complete history is beyond its scope. I do not claim there is one root cause to Honduran (and Central American)[74] migration, instead, I urge us to look at the layered factors that produce everyday insecurities. Lastly, I *listen* to the reasons/stories that my interlocutors shared and situate them as stated previously.

While there was significant individual variation in the participants' accounts, the common ever-present elements in the narratives were: governance corruption, the effects of climate change in

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[70] Boehm, *Returned*, 2016; De Leon, *Land of Open Graves* 2015; Abrego, *Sacrificing Families, 2014.*
[71] Vogt, *Lives in Transit*, 2018; Shah, *Stranger Intimacy*, 2011; Luibheid et al., "Intimate Attachments and Migrant Deportability," 2018.
[72] Vogt, *Lives in Transit*, 2018, p.7.
[73] Vogt, *Lives in Transit*, 2018, p. 5-6.
[74] Scholars have often framed Honduran migration to the United States within the broader category of Central American migration, especially from the Northern Triangle countries of Guatemala and El Salvador. Yet, Honduras shows, each nation presents its own unique set of push-pull factors and historical experience.

individuals' livelihoods, *falta de dinero y comida* (need of money and food) [75] and violence. These narratives tell us of the webs of power, capital and violence that has shaped Honduran migration.

***Corrupción y Bananas* (Corruption & Bananas)**

Honduras has been consistently considered to be in the *honduras* (depths) of corruption, among the world's most corrupt states. Joy and Eric Olson suggest that this well-known, widespread corruption has led the Honduran people to a state of hopelessness and is a driving force of Central American migration to the United States.[76] Abuse of entrusted power for personal gain is a narrative the Honduran people have too often seen repeated. Carling et al (2015) in their research explore the connections between corruption and migration and argue that corruption facilitates migration and that a desire to move abroad is often driven by lack of faith in local opportunities. So "how did Honduras get there?"

It would not take much time researching the case of Honduras for you to realize that United States has been a major source of political power in Honduras. In fact, according to US library of Congress source, the United States has had more influence on Honduras than any other nation in the twentieth century.[77] The intimate relationship that Honduran migrants have with the US can be traced back to the expansion of the US-owned banana companies at the turn of the century when the US government periodically dispatched warships to quell any attempts by the poor to politically organize with potential to affect US business. The case of Honduras was the source of inspiration/setting for O' Henry's *Cabbages and Kings,* where he famously coined the term "Banana Republic"[78] (a term from political science to describe a politically and economically unstable country with an economy

[75] Or "poverty."

[76] "Intersecting Crises: Pandemic and Hurricanes Add to Political Instability Driving Migration from Honduras," *Migration Policy Institute*, 2021; Joy Olson and Eric Olson, "Hopelessness and Corruption" *FIU: Steven J Green School of International and Public Affairs, 2021.*

[77] Merrill, *Honduras: A Country Study.*

[78] As pointed out in De León's forthcoming book *Soldiers and Kings*.

dependent upon the export of natural resources). The driving force of this relationship were *the benefits* of US political interventions and economic exploitation, neoliberal policies, and government corruption to a/the few.[79] Every decade there after only further deepened the *intimacy* between American business and Honduras, shaping the nation's history for over a century. [80] Well, not only of Honduras, but the rest of Central America; where the large prosperity gap between the few elites and the rest of the population only widened and spread throughout the region[81] and neoliberal policies have increased structural vulnerability experienced by the Honduran people.[82]

In summary, neoliberal reforms and U.S backed war against organizing poor workers has greatly influenced the conditions that place Honduras second for poorest country in Latin America. World Bank latest estimates find that in 2019 almost 4.8 million people (half of the population) lived on *less than* $6.85 per day; 12.7 percent in extreme poverty lived on $2.15 per day and inequality, measured by the Gini Index, reached 48.2 that same year.[83]

> **Wanda:** Why did you migrate to the United States?
>
> **Victor:** *Bueno, la gente de Honduras empezó a inmigrar desde cuando estaba en mi juventud… estábamos bien… Honduras estaba bien, estábamos al dos por uno de dólares, ¿Te acuerdas de los lempiras morados de Honduras? Dos de esos morados eran un dólar, estábamos bien… ya como en el 90 para allá cuando entró el presidente ese corrupto, Callejas, ese desgraciado empezó a desvaluar el lempira y ya el dólar empezó a joderse y ahí empezó en el 90…*
>
> People from Honduras began to immigrate when I was in my youth. Honduras wasn't doing so bad. Do you recall the purple Honduran bills? Well, the currency exchange used to be 2 purple *lempiras* (4 l*empiras*) per 1 USD. We were doing okay. However, around 1990-on, when that corrupt, damned President Callejas came into power, he began to devalue the *lempira* and things went to shit since.

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[79] see Alvarado 1987; Hornbeck, J.F. 2012 The Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR): Developments in Trade and Investment. Washington, DC; Congressional Research Service.; Both, J.A., C.J. Wade, and T.W. Walker 2014. Understanding Central America: Global Forces, Rebellion, and Change, Boulder, CO, Westview.

[80] After the US entered World War II, they signed a lend lease agreement with Honduras and operated a small naval base on the Honduran coast, Caribbean Sea. In the 1950s Honduras received significant US assistance to support the development and training of the Honduran military (1954) and about US$27 million for projects in the agriculture, education, and health sectors (Merrill, *Honduras: A Country Study.)* The US$ assistance continued significantly increasing until the 70s, in development assistance, rural development, in development and food assistance, and military assistance.

[81] Leisy Abrego, 2018, "Central American Refugees Reveal the Crisis of the State," p. 213-228; Upcoming publication De Leon, *Soldiers and Kings*.

[82] Coleman, *A Camera in the Garden of Eden*; Pine, "The Fight to End Neoliberal Madness in Honduras."

[83] https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/honduras/overview

Victor, loves to reminiscence and is a great storyteller, unknowingly radiating a charisma and humor through his fast, mumbled, honest and animated speech. He first met me when I was a little girl, we lived in the same neighborhood in the second most populated municipality and in the department of Olancho called Catacamas[84] (the same municipality from where my interlocutors migrated). Olancho has mainly relied on agricultural and cattle economy, leading with its milk, meat, and basic grains production.[85] Since Victor and I coincided in the 1990s, the municipality of Catacamas has seen a growth rate of 60% increase, with an estimated 2018 population of around 130,000 people. At that time and since, many *Olanchanos* migrated to the U.S and many others migrated internally from rural regions to the urban centers seeking alternative work opportunities (since life in agriculture/cattle industry was/is no longer sustainable for the poor farmers/cattle care takers). In the urban center of Catacamas, you can now observe the newly paved streets and boulevards, and a few *bodegas* (storehouses) dedicated to the work of US- Honduras *encomendero* (courier/ parcel) business.

[84] https://www.citypopulation.de/en/honduras/admin/
https://www.ine.gob.hn/V3/imag-doc/2019/08/catacamas-olancho.pdf
[85] José I. Lara, 2022, "Blackness in Late Colonial Parish Records: A Demographical Study of Honduras."
https://eduhonduras.info/Departamentos/15%20Olancho/Departamento%20de%20Olancho.html#gsc.tab=0;

"*Se reciben enconmiendas*"[86]

While Victor remembers me, I only have memories climbing mango trees with the two children he left behind, who like me, had parents who had migrated to the U.S. He was married with two kids and his wife had already migrated a year before him and had found work in the United States through a group of networks of Hondurans in South Jersey. She and a couple of her siblings (also in the U.S.) saved enough money to pay a [migration facilitator] (also known as "migrant smuggler") to lead him to Atlantic City.

[86] Blurred numbers and storehouse name. Location: Catacamas, Olancho. Summer 2022.

In the 1980s, the US shifted their interest and fixated on Honduras as key support for US policy toward Central America. The US became concerned with Nicaragua Sandinistas and received support from the conservative Honduran government and military, who provided its southern coast as a staging area for Contra excursions into Nicaragua.[87] This move would allow the US to intervene in Nicaragua and it would introduce the presence of US military in Honduras. In the 80s, the US had also established the "Caribbean Basin Initiative" (CBI) economic strategy, aimed to provide several tariff and trade benefits to, with exception countries that it judged to be contrary to its interests or that had expropriated American property. The CBI famously crippled the livelihood of Haitian rice farmers who were once self-sufficient until they could no longer compete with American rice producers dumping their product into Haiti, taking advantage of the 35%- 3% decrease in import tariffs[88] (only 10 years later, the US "North America Free Trade Agreement" (NAFTA) furthered crippled more Central American and Caribbean countries). In the 80s decade, Honduras saw the highest total US$ assistance divided in economic support, military assistance, development assistance, food aid and one of the largest Peace Corps programs worldwide.[89] Regardless of all the "aid," the country's economic conditions did not improve; if anything, these only worsened. The culprit, according to the United States General Accounting Office in a 1989 report, was the Honduran government for becoming dependent upon external assistance from the United instead of undertaking economic reform.[90] Many others, however, blame the United States and its fixation on Honduras' support for the Contras and how this worked to undermine the authority of the elected civilian government. Victor's account of why Hondurans migrated in greater masses from 1990s-on speaks directly to the effects of US change of attitude and support towards Honduras in that decade, -the US

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[87] Merrill, *Honduras: A Country Study*.
[88] https://haitisolidarity.net/in-the-news/how-the-united-states-crippled-haitis-domestic-rice-industry/
[89] Merrill, *Honduras: A Country Study*.
[90] Frank Conohan, "CENTRAL AMERICA: Impact of U.S. Assistance in the 1980s," (Washington: United States General Accounting Office, 1989).

assistance support drastically declined from US$213 million in 1990FY to an estimated US$2.6 million to be provided in FY 1993.[91] This decrease in aid (when the US no longer needed Honduran for their excursions in the 80s) could have been perceived as ungrateful because President Callejas' (whom Victor blames) open market economic reforms greatly favored US exports and investments; yet, many others (like Victor) were not so grateful about this toxic relationship and its effects to the everyday lives of the majority of Honduras.

Climate Change and *Tormentos/as* (Torments and Storms)

Climate change has mainly manifested in the form of hurricanes and droughts. Hurricane Mitch hit Honduras in 1998, the deadliest Central America has experienced; it took the life of around 7,000 Hondurans (over half of the total deaths).[92] More recently, Hurricanes Eta and Iota hit the nation in November 2020 which left tens of thousands of people destitute. As Hurricane Mitch in 1998, the story repeats itself, one of the deadliest hurricanes in recorded history, which drove tens of thousands of Hondurans to migrate to the United States in 1998."[93] These hurricanes hit the Honduran lands within two weeks of each other, inflicting immense and far-reaching damage (on top of the effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic). Destroyed homes, roads, bridges, dams affected nearly half of Honduras's 9 million residents. It is estimated that 368,000 individuals were displaced from their homes and more than 200,000 were forced into improvised shelters, where COVID-19 and dengue posed major threats. "Early estimates put the losses at around $2 billion, or approximately 8 percent of the country's GDP, with estimated losses of up to 80 percent in the agricultural sector."[94] This data forms part of growing evidence that climate extremes are having a devastating impact on agriculture in Central America, affecting the livelihoods of millions of farmers ultimately adding to the drivers of

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[91] Merrill, *Honduras: A Country Study.*

[92] Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical/ International Center for Tropical Agriculture. Selected Press Articles about CIAT activities related to Hurricane Mitch.

[93] "Intersecting Crises: Pandemic and Hurricanes Add to Political Instability Driving Migration from Honduras," 2021.

[94] "Intersecting Crises: Pandemic and Hurricanes Add to Political Instability Driving Migration from Honduras," 2021.

migration from the region. In 2014 alone there were estimations of agricultural losses at U.S. $465 million, all associated to droughts linked to El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) phenomenon; and over the last 30 years, losses associated with drought in the Central American Dry Corridor (from Panama to southern Mexico), approached U.S. $10 billion, half of which were in the agricultural sector."[95]

The relationship between climate extremes, agricultural production, and migration is complex and non-linear in nature. Corruption, hurricanes, droughts, global pandemics all pose major threats and risks for Honduras and the wellbeing of its inhabitants. When all considered, they only intensify the more concerning issues: *falta de dinero y comida* (starvation and poverty) of the Honduran people. In the bulk of the stories I share in the following chapters, you will learn and hear directly about all of these "reasons"/ "factors" and how they intersect in the lives of the Hondurans that spoke to me.

[95] "Climate Extremes, Food Insecurity, and Migration in Central America: A Complicated Nexus," *Migration Policy Institute*, February 18, 2021.

Chapter 1: Intimacy, Violence and Migration

Now that you *know* me more as you have read glimpses of my own story and how those very experiences have led me to the communities with which I work and to the topics of which I speak, I must share I feel a new sense of pride when now, at age 27, I re-evoke the nickname "*catracha*." This new sense comes from a deeper understanding of *intimacy** and *solidarity**- of knowing that these constitute one another. To be in solidarity requires an acknowledgement that our experience of existence presupposes the presence of others. To be in solidarity requires intimacy, a closeness, a knowing of the other and their needs, dreams, pains, desires... To be in solidarity also requires an acknowledgement of our limitations: a knowing that through my own words (and their affects/effects), I could hurt my interlocutors who have entrusted me with their *pain** stories and with their *love** stories and that there is limitation in empathy, where I am always experiencing exchanging through my own being only (and its filters).

In this chapter, I explore the intersection of violence, intimacy and migration. I share stories of family separation due to migration, showing how intimacy and family structures are impacted by this process. Yet, I also claim that migration is a liberation and survival strategy from various forms of violence, pointing out how in every story intimate, social, family relations were what propelled and motivated individuals.

Transnational Families: ***Muerte, hambre, trabajo, matrimonios e hijos*** **(Death, Hunger, Work Marriages and Children)**

"*Ay mi vida era sufrida*" ("Ay my life was one of suffering") Doña Maria (age 58) begins to tell me as we sat in the living room of her youngest son's rental apartment. As her daughter in law makes sure I feel welcomed by serving me an evening *cafecito* (coffee), she unspools a story of a life of suffering. It would only take a glimpse of her face, a paying attention to the details, that you would also see that each *marking* (the markings of *experience* in the skin) is telling a story.

> **Doña Maria:** A *los 17 me casé, tuve 7 hijos y en mi matrimonio sufrí mucho mal, pero nunca abandoné a mis hijos. Pues luego me quedé sola en Honduras. Allá siempre habían muchos problemas, ladronismo, asaltos, asesinatos; pero cuando mi esposo muere, se complicaron más las cosas*.
>
> I got married at age 17 and had 7 sons and in my marriage, I suffered a lot but never abandoned my children. I eventually was left to be by myself in Honduras. In Honduras, I always experienced many issues with theft, armed robbery, and murders, but it was once my husband died that things worsen for me.

Doña Maria was born and raised in Catacamas, Olancho. By the time Doña Maria turned five-years-old, she had lost [both of her mothers] (her biological mom and her maternal grandma) to sickness, leaving her to be raised by an aunt. She told me she does not know the love of a mother. But, as it would happen to many Honduran mothers around 1990s- on, eventually all her seven sons migrated to the United States.

A geographical comparison study within Honduras is much needed in order to move away from the homogenous representation of how violence is experienced there. Doña Maria explained

that she was used to the *violencia cotidiana* (everyday forms of violence) in Honduras. In the list of these forms of "bearable" violence Doña Maria included encounters with criminal activities like armed robbery and constant murders around her community. In Olancho, people more or less function under the local knowledge that we could encounter "homicide" mainly *if* we find ourselves amid a *pleito* or take part in one. If you look up the term *pleito*, you will find it is often translated as "lawsuit" or "dispute" with legal connotations, but a more accurate translation to how I am using it is "an issue," "trouble," "an argument", "a fight" between two or more people. It is also the common lexicon and meanings that my interlocutors use. When Doña Maria tells us that things worsen for her after her husband Don Juan's death is because she found herself amid a family *pleito*. In Honduras, Don Juan had built a relatively wealthy life—he was a *patrón*, he owned *terrenos* (land) and *ganado* (cattle). While he had his wife, he also had *otras mujeres* (romantic affairs). He had seven sons with Doña Maria and others with mistresses. The complex web of relations resulted *en un pleito entre medio hermanos* (trouble between half-brothers).[96] The *pleitos* began when they were all little boys, fighting for their father's attention and evolved into adult men fighting to death for their father's belongings (land, properties, and cattle), in a context where they are all in need of the money. One of Don Juan's out of wedlock sons, Roberto,[97] was shot to death after he refused to leave *terrenos* at the hands of others who claimed ownership legitimacy. The assumption was that a brother or multiple brothers took matters in their own hands—or more accurately, they put the *pleito* (issue) and *pisto* (money) in the hands of a person (*sicario*) to take another's life. While all of Doña Maria's seven sons were in the United States, geographically far from *pleito* (trouble), they feared retaliation against their mother who lived in Don

[97] There were multiple attempts against Roberto's life. Once, he took seven shots to his body (mainly torso) and survived. Rumors are he began to live all by himself in one of the controversial *propiedades*, became evangelical Christian and last time he was seen alive, he had been just been picked up by *un hermano de la iglesia*. This time, while he was on his way to church service, they would make sure that he took more than seven shots from the year prior.

Juan's properties and/or her death by loneliness now that her husband was also gone. Doña Maria's sons decided to hire a migrant guide to lead her to the United States.

Doña Maria had recently arrived in south Jersey after a three-month journey crossing Guatemala and Mexico, embarking just after her husband (Don Juan) passed away. My gaze, at the time of the interview, was pulled towards the horrors of deterrence that often characterize the process of clandestine migration. I wondered and wandered around the details of this three-month journey. "How does a fifty-eight-year-old woman fare and bear all aspects of the journey?" I asked myself. While those details were shared to my selfish satisfaction, what Doña Maria was eager to tell me about was about her two mothers and her seven sons. Her narrative centered the loneliness she experienced as a child, without her mothers, and as a married woman without her children and in dealing with Don Juan's intimacy addiction; and even though her sons in the US would send her gifts and money, she often felt alone. Whenever thoughts of giving up surfaced, the thought of her sons kept her alive. She desired to feel close to her sons again (now adults with children). I learned Doña Maria's suffering and loneliness did not end once she was reunited with her sons, but that she sees her life as the very testament of resistance. She said to me that regardless of everything she suffered, "*nunca abandoné a mis hijos*" ("I never abandoned my sons). She now wants to live many more years to help her sons (and now grandchildren) live *una vida más relajada* (a more peaceful and restful life) by offering wisdom and caretaker support to her children and grandchildren. She said she has a new opportunity to make up the connection loss in years she spent without her children and grandchildren.

Doña Maria's story in centering intimacy and her love for her children and grandchildren as that which propelled/ propels her through a life of suffering is not an isolated experience. Most of the women that shared their stories with me had in common their *choice* of marrying young and the role of their children (Honduras and US-born) in propelling them forward. Karla, for instance, is another *Catracha* who declared herself a "lioness" when it comes to protecting her children.

When Karla was a one-year-old, she was rescued by her grandmother from her abusive, biological father. Sadly, her grandmother passed away when she was only 8, forcing Karla to move back with her mom. While her mom was no longer living with Karla's biological dad, Karla returned to a family of three younger brothers and a stepdad; and in her own words:

> *El marido de mi mama era medio aranganzito y a quién le gusta aguantar hambre? Yo vendía leña o hacía mandados, o vendía las verduras que sembravamos en la casa.*
>
> My mom's husband was a bit lazy and who likes to experience hunger? I used to sell firewood, run errands, and sell vegetables from our garden.

The stepdad was lazy or did not work for income, and so due to hunger, she began to work as early as age of twelve, selling firewood, running errands, and selling fruits and vegetables from their garden. She eagerly waited to turn 18 and marry, so she could escape the situation at home, having her first daughter at age 19.

> **Karla:** *El papá de ella me daba todo y me dedicaba a [[ello]/s].* [98]*Lo único es que él tomaba mucho y a raíz de ese pleito nos venimos para acá; nuestra vida corria peligro, nos amenazaron y nos salvamos por obra y gracias de Dios*.
>
> My daughter's dad gave us everything we needed, so I dedicated myself to caring for them. The only thing is he had a drinking problem which caused some issues. At some point our lives were in danger and we were only saved by God's grace and doing.

While marrying allowed Karla to focus solely on her daughter and husband while he worked, his drinking problems eventually got him in the middle of a *pleito.* His stepfather was killed, and some people blamed him for the death. While the details of this *pleito* was not the focus of our exchange, I could conclude that this was another story about siblings fighting over inheritance. This led to a series of threats and attempts against their lives; only surviving "by God's grace and doing" in Karla's own words. While in the U.S Karla eventually divorced her husband as his drinking problems followed him there.

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[98] Karla articulates sounds in Spanish and English which sound like a beautiful mixture of "accents": Santa Bárbara, Honduras; Olancho, Honduras; Puerto Rican.

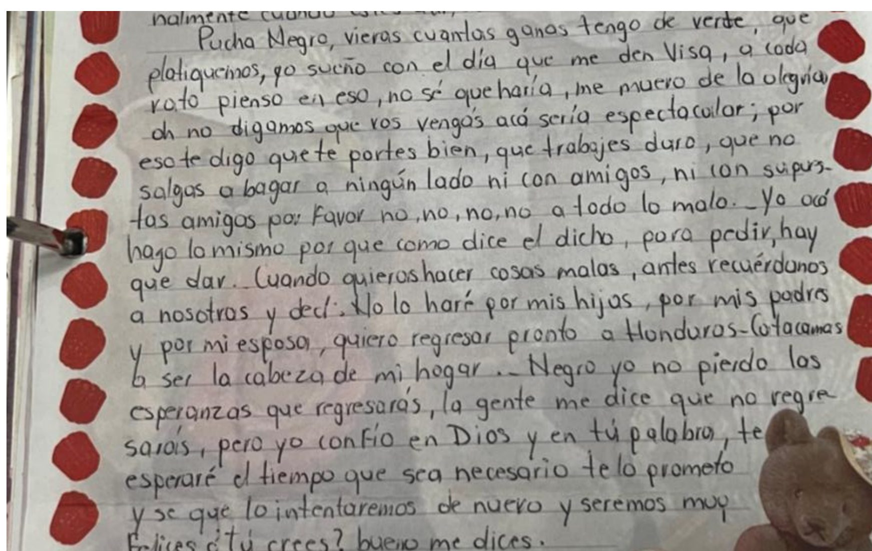
Karla's now ex-husband migrated to the U.S first and quickly after, sent for Karla and their daughter. Their lives were more in danger in Honduras (where impunity thrives) than in the U.S where they would/could/did experience the weight of deportability[99] Karla was convinced that migrating to the US was more than an opportunity to live longer, she could take further responsibility for her, and her daughter's lives by accessing "*una fuente de trabajos"* (source of work) in her own words. I could also tell you of Karla's odyssey crossing through Guatemala and Mexico with her daughter, but it would lead to other passionate tangents in my part of the horrors of determent efforts and the difficult decisions that women are forced to make in the process. I only restrain as it is not the focus of this thesis but of future research projects. However, I can tell you that I cried with Karla when she told me about an instance in Mexico when she had to separate from her daughter to avoid being detained in Mexico. When the migrant facilitators (also known as migrant smugglers) told her she would have to temporarily travel (~1hr drive) in a truck followed by a taxi with her daughter accompanied by a smuggler, Karla refused to continue the trip. She told them she would rather return to Honduras than arrive to the US without her daughter (as she feared trafficking criminal networks preying on children traveling without parents or simply losing each other's whereabouts in a vast country). Karla was only convinced after a woman migrant smuggler (a mother herself) held her hands and looking into her eyes promised her that she would be the one traveling with the daughter and she would take care of her as if she was her own. It was that intimate exchange between the two mothers that *moved* Karla. It was her desire to survive, access work and provide for her daughter and her mother (who was/is back in Honduras) that *propelled* her forward. Not too long after their safe arrival to South Jersey, Karla divorced her daughter's father. He was eventually deported and since it was dangerous for him to live in Honduras, he has lived and worked in Mexico since. While Karla remarried and eventually had US-born children, her oldest daughter has spent most of her life unable to see her dad. Karla cried when

[99] See De Genova and Peutz, *The Deportation Regime*.

telling me that she can tell her undocumented daughter's life (15yo at the time of interviews) has been affected by the missing intimacy of her dad. She hopes that one day her daughter can become a US-citizen and travel to see her dad.

***

Unlike Karla, who had no option but to migrate with her daughter, other mothers I spoke to had the option to leave their children under the temporary care of a family member in Honduras while they migrated to the United States. In the words of three of women who shared their stories with me, after their husbands migrated, the women felt called to joining their husbands in order to "[*salvar nuestros matrimonios*]" ('save our marriages'.) [100] The following letter is a letter my mom sent my dad from Catacamas, Olancho in August of the year 2000.


Pucha Negro, vieras cuantas ganas tengo de verte, que platiquemos, yo sueño con el día que me den Visa, a cada rato pienso en eso, no sé que haría, me muero de la alegría, oh no digamos que vos vengás acá sería espectacular; por eso te digo que te portes bien, que trabajes duro, que no salgas a bagar a ningún lado ni con amigos, ni con supuestas amigas por favor no, no, no, no a todo lo malo. Yo acá hago lo mismo porque como dice el dicho, para pedir, hay que dar. Cuando quieras hacer cosas malas, antes recuérdanos a nosotros y decí: No lo haré por mis hijos, por mis padres y por mi esposa, quiero regresar pronto a Honduras-Catacamas a ser la cabeza de mi hogar. Negro yo no pierdo las esperanzas que regresarás, la gente me dice que no regresarás, pero yo confío en Dios y en tú palabra, te esperaré el tiempo que sea necesario te lo prometo y se que lo intentaremos de nuevo y seremos muy felices ¿tú crees? bueno me dices.

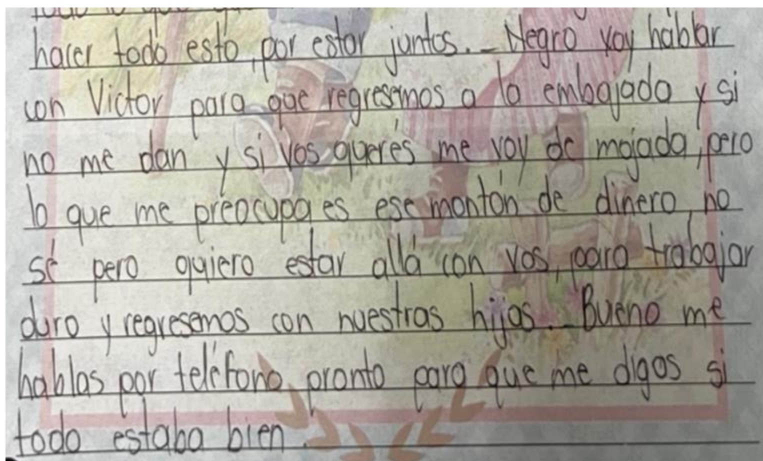
In the letter she tells my dad just how much she misses him and wants to see him, that she dreams of the day she gets her visa or that he returns, she continues:

> "For this reason I tell you to behave, to work hard, stop going out with male friends or with your female friends please, say no no no to all bad things. I do the same here because one needs to model

[100] A common phenomenon in family relations in the context of migration is the practice of starting "new families", more specifically the case of father-away/ migrant father who "forgets" about family and begins a new marriage/family. Based on this common knowledge, non-migrant wives make an attempt to "save their marriages." For similar discourses and practices among Salvadoran families, see Abrego 2014; and for Mexican and Guatemalan transnational families, see Dreby 2010; Nicholson 2006; and Stephen 2007.

what we ask of our partners. Whenever you are tempted to do bad things, remember us and say, 'I will not engage, I will do it for my daughters, for my parents and my wife, I want to return soon to Honduras-Catacamas to lead my home.' *Negro*, I don't lose the hope that you will return, even though people here tell me that you won't. I, however, trust in God and in your word, so I will wait as long as it's needed, I promise you that. I know we will try again and be very happy. Do you believe that? Well, you tell me."

If I had to practice the introspection that I spoke about in the introduction, I would need to start by admitting that hearing that narrative/perspective/ of those types of statements in 2016 sent me into a spiral of confusion, and sometimes anger. Why would women fight so hard to save these seemingly failed marriages? Why would they sacrifice their connection with their children over a connection with (many times) hurtful men? Of course, those previously stated projections stem from my own experience with migration, family, and intimacy. My mom eventually obtained a visa when I was five years old and migrated to reunite with my dad, I saw her six years later—an experience which marked me deeper than when my dad left (as I was barely three years old). In my dad's treasure box (where he keeps binders with letters, past receipts, and photo albums), I found my mom made multiple attempts to get a visa and she also inquired about the services of *coyotes* or migrant guides (also known as smugglers).



hacer todo esto, por estar juntos. _ Negro voy hablar
con Victor para que regresemos a la embajada y si
no me dan y si vos querés me voy de mojada, pero
lo que me preocupa es ese montón de dinero, no
sé pero quiero estar allá con vos, para trabajar
duro y regresemos con nuestras hijos. _ Bueno me
hablas por teléfono pronto para que me digas si
todo estaba bien.

Negro, I will speak with [Victor] (a friend) so that he can take me again to the embassy and if I don't get a visa and if you are okay with it, I will leave via land. Only thing that worries me is the huge cost, I don't know but I know that I want to be there with you so we can work hard and return to our daughters. Well, Call me on the telephone so you can tell me if things are okay.

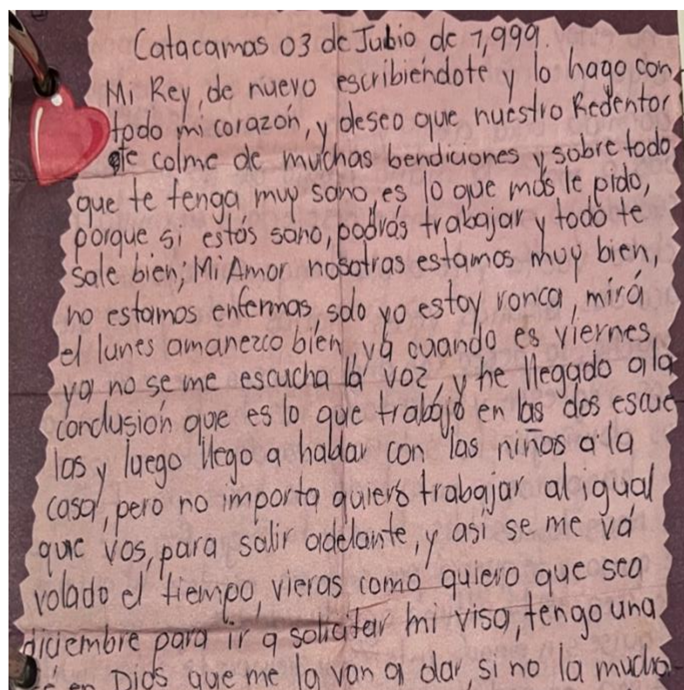
Fijote que averigüe de un buen coyote, May Lobo
me dió el teléfono pero no le he hablado, hasta
que hablara con vos. Dice May que solo lleva dos
o tres personas, solo se tarda 3 días, ya llevo
una muchacha del encino, cobra bien caro parece
que L85,00000 yo lo veo caro, pero así si
me voy no es arriesgado; pero quisiera hablarle
para averiguar bien todo, para ver como es.

Look, I found out about a *coyote*. [May Lobo] (a friend) gave me his phone number but I haven't called him yet, I was waiting to speak with you about it first. May says that he only takes two or three people at once and that it takes three days. He took a girl from Encino. He charges a lot, it looks like around L85,000.00. I think it's too expensive but maybe this way the trip is not so risky. I would like to call him and find out how things really work.

In these letters she speaks of the multiple attempts she made going to the US embassy to petition a visa, again, with the desire that she would be reunited with my dad (her husband) and "work hard together so that we can return to our daughters." In these letters, she says to my dad that if she continues to fail to get a visa, she is willing to hire the services of a "*coyote*" (a migrant guide). Later (in a second letter, also pictured above) she tells my dad about a *coyote* who takes only 2-3 people at once and completes the trip across Guatemala and Mexico within three days of journey. She says she knows that he has been successful with a woman she knows locally. However, that she is concerned about the cost, L85,000.00 (US$4,722- 3,500). When I was younger, I was unsure why my mom migrated to be with my dad. Perhaps, that is why when I spoke to Ingrid, I felt as if I would have a deeper insight into my own parents' minds and decisions, more importantly, into my mom's, who like Ingrid, also migrated first without her children. Allow me to introduce you to Ingrid:

Ingrid was a primary school teacher in Honduras (like my mom was). Ingrid has a soft presence to her, it is partially due to [her low and slow way of speaking] (unlike my mom), but more likely due to her listening practice – I can tell she both listens to her thoughts and to the feelings/presences of those around her. She is intelligent. She wishes to have obtained a higher education. She intellectually engages with me and my work (and her role in it), helping me feel *seen* and *cared* for. She holds opinions

and theories as to why she and other Hondurans migrated to the United States and she mainly wishes to tell me about her deepest love and pains as a wife, a mother, a *Catracha*, and a migrant. Ingrid migrated when the money she and her husband made was not enough to keep up with the economy. Many schoolteachers in Honduras work double shifts- they teach two different grades, one at a public school and a second at a private school. Even then, the income (even combined with their husbands) is simply not enough, especially when children come into the picture.


Catacamas 03 de Julio de 1,999.
Mi Rey, de nuevo escribiéndote y lo hago con
todo mi corazón, y deseo que nuestro Redentor
te colme de muchas bendiciones y sobre todo
que te tenga muy sano, es lo que más le pido,
porque si estás sano, podrás trabajar y todo te
sale bien; Mi Amor nosotras estamos muy bien,
no estamos enfermas, solo yo estoy ronca, mirá
el lunes amanezco bien, ya cuando es viernes,
ya no se me escucha la voz, y he llegado a la
conclusión que es lo que trabajo en las dos escue-
las y luego llego a hablar con las niños a la
casa, pero no importa quiero trabajar al igual
que vos, para salir adelante, y así se me vá
volado el tiempo, vieras como quiero que sea
diciembre para ir a solicitar mi visa, tengo una
fé en Dios que me la van a dar, si no la mucho

Catacamas July 3rd, 1999.
My king, once again writing to you and I do it with my whole heart, and I hope that our Redeemer gives you many blessings and over all things that you are very healthy so that you are able to work and that everything turns out okay. My love we are very well, we are not sick, only my voice is a bit hoarse. Normally on Mondays I wake up okay but comes Friday and my voice is gone. I concluded that it's due to my work at both schools. I then come home to talk to the girls. None of this matters though because I want to work as hard as you do, to keep going and that way time flies by. You should see how I'm anticipating that December comes when I go petition my visa. I have such faith in God that I will get it.

In the letter above, my mom tells my dad that her health is being affected by the long days working as a schoolteacher, since 7am- 5pm. Ingrid and her husband had dreams for their son; she, especially, dreamt her son would be able to attend a university and obtain a higher education. At the time (and not much has changed recently), if *Olanchanos* wanted to go to college, they would have to move to a university city—the closest public and private institutions were in the capital Tegucigalpa. Regardless of geographical closeness (a commute of about 4-5hrs), sending children to a university was/is only a dream for the majority of *Olanchanos*, since family incomes were/are not enough to

afford their children's transportation, living cost and/or tuitions. At the time that they had to reimagine their futures with their newly born child, many others in similar circumstances around them were migrating to the United States and so they also decided to test that option. Her husband moved to the United States, then was able to send for his wife, promising her that their son was next in line. While it is possibly to conclude that "family separation" in the context of migration is ultimately a strategy that families employ, even when individual agency is present in the decision-making process,[101] parents are always initially hesitant to separate, and it is only through a series of convincing local evidence and heartbreak that they embark in the pursue of alternative survival possibilities elsewhere. Instead of considering family separation as a "strategy" employed, I prefer to see it as "the consequence" of the conditions from which people are seeking "liberation," as "an outcome" of having to migrate to get out of poverty and/or violence(s). I claim though that one of the strategies that this group of *Catracahos* do employ is "*remote sensing*,"[102] in order to "connect" or maintain the connection with their non-migrant spouse or with their children.

As a child of migrant parents, of parents who migrated before they were able to bring [us] (me and my sisters) over to [their] (my parents) [destination/location] (Atlantic City), I am very aware of the assumptions people made about parents in those circumstances, I heard/was told things about my parents: "you have bad parents!," "your parents abandoned/forgot you," "your parents don't care about you" "poor child, you don't know a mother's love," etc. etc. Yet, it is not often we take the time

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[101] See Yarris, *Care across Generations* and Abrego *Sacrificing Families*.

[102] In the 2019 article titled, "Documenting Latinx lives: Visual anthropology and Latinx studies" Ulla Berg shares about a short documentary film I put together in her class, saying*:* "Some students experiment with 'found footage' or 'home movie' footage to construct auto-ethnographies or tell their often-complex family histories. Wanda Quintanilla-Durán's film "Remote Sensing" (2017) chronicles the past and present lives of the filmmaker and her two sisters, who grew up with her grandmother in Honduras when their parents migrated to the United States. The film uses 'video letters' and 'home movies' to recount this transnational history of family separation in the struggle to overcome the physical and emotional distance. Wanda powerfully mixes home movie footage from her family's archive and present-day ethnographic interviews and observations from the family's current life in South Jersey and ponders the enduring and painful effects of family separation as a result of migration. The film communicates better than any written piece of scholarship the difficulties and dilemmas of transnational families and the social and emotional experiences of children of migrants." (Berg, p.4)

to *listen* to these mothers and the basic love they have/acquire for a child. When Ingrid arrived at South Jersey and was reunited with her husband, she would burst into tears and beg her husband to send for their son in Honduras.

> **Ingrid:** *Wanda, yo le lloraba a mi esposo todos los días y le rogaba que trajeramos a nuestro hijo. Yo quería bañarlo, conectarme con él; no quería perder la conexión. Yo sabia que esos años son años muy importantes en su vida y necesitaba estar con él. Yo he visto como hay madres e hijos que pierden esa conexión.*
>
> Wanda, I used to cry to my husband every day and I would beg him to send for our son. I wanted to bathe him and connect with him. I didn't want us to lose our connection. I was aware that those year of his life were important, and I needed to be with him. I have seen how mothers and children lose that connection.

Ingrid wanted to engage in the everyday aspects of motherhood (like giving her son a bath) in order to keep their mother-son connection intact. It reminded me of my mom's *testimonio*, who also shared of her desires for intimacy with me and my sisters while we were separated in speaking about the everyday intimacies like our bodies growing centimeter by centimeter, or the outfits which we might be wearing. She shared she would burst into tears whenever she would see other little girls around her and say to her husband "look, I bet that's how big Maria/Wanda/Celeste would be about now." The power of imagination, of holding on to a wellbeing possibility for their children, and simultaneously taking actions of urgency (like urging their husbands to work with them by saving money or taking further legal steps available (if any)) helped both Ingrid and my mom bear the multiple years of intimacy loss.

"Remote Sensing" is a technical term from geography and archaeology that refers to the "acquisition of information about an object or phenomenon without making physical contact with the object."[103] I encountered the term in Ulla Berg's work to refer to *structures of feeling* in long-distance migrant communication. Through this concept, Berg highlights the attempts migrant parents make to "*know*" and "*feel*" their children's lives (and their non-migrant spouse) from afar. Berg, however, does

[103] Ulla Berg, 2015, *Mobile Selves*: *Race, Migration, and Belonging in Peru and the U.S.,* p. 228.

not ignore that *remote sensing* (and structures and infrastructures involved), "as a form of social, cultural, and affective practice", "is fraught with tension, uncertainty, and power inequalities."[104] This brings to focus the communication infrastructure systems that are involved in this practice of *remote sensing* are part of the *habitus* and very easily enable or hinder family intimacy, since they are often prone to functional failure—ex. telephones, phone towers, transportation systems, etc. Ingrid told me about the fear that she felt when in 1998, Hurricane Mitch hit Honduras and she could not leave her home to reach a telephone to communicate with her husband because of the further road destruction/manage caused by the storm. Communicating with a family member was not only about knowing of each other's wellbeing, it was also a way to communicate "love" to each other and to emotionally support one another. Scholars has shown that mothers and fathers practice parenting from afar through remittances, gifts, and weekly phone calls.[105] Celilia Menjívar and Sean Mckenzie in their work about the lives of Honduran non-migrant women in rural Honduras tell us that gifts and remittances "cover assurances that the men have not forgotten about them, and they become expressions of love."[106] Sociologist Leisy Abrego reminds us that "Like most families, transnational families are expected to provide emotional support but the geographical distance between parents and children can make it very difficult to demonstrate love."[107] In agreement, Ara Wilson, in "Infrastructure of Intimacy" explores recent strands of critical analysis on both concepts of "intimacy" and "infrastructure", arguing that not only are infrastructures involved in social relations, but that these often shape the conditions for relational life.[108] Every mother (and most fathers) that shared their stories with me engaged in "remote sensing" as an emotional strategy to deal with the effects of

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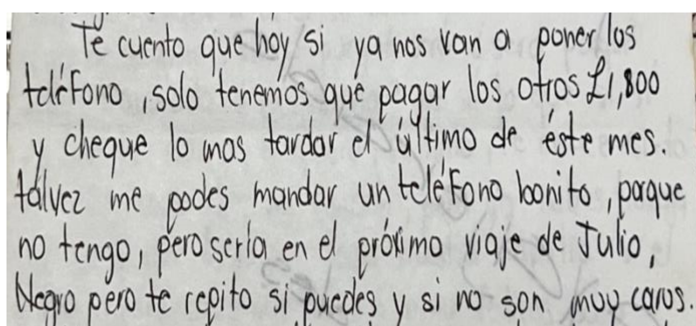
[104] Berg, 2015, *Mobile Selves*, p. 105
[105] Dreby 2009, "Honor and Virtue: Mexican Parenting in the Transnational Context;" Menjívar and Abrego 2009, "Parents and Children across Borders"; and Parreñas 2005, "Long distance intimacy."
[106] Mckenzie and Menjívar, "The Meanings of Migration, Remittances and Gifts," p. 63.
[107] Abrego, *Sacrificing Families*, p. 6.
[108] Wilson, 2015, "The Infrastructure of Intimacy," p. 1.

family separation and as an attempt to build intimacy between them, their non-migrant spouse and their children. It was the case that in the years that the parents I spoke to were communicating long-distance with their children or spouses, they mainly had to rely on telephone lines and more rarely/later, cellphone towers. Most of them had a weekly planned day where their children and caretakers would go to a location with a telephone line to receive a call from their parents' phoneline or cellphones (with pre-paid cards); others, with the aid of remittances from migrant parents, had a landline in their Honduras home and would await the call/s without the travel journey (and the challenges that come with that additional dimension to the reaching of communication).


Te cuento que hoy si ya nos van a poner los
teléfono, solo tenemos que pagar los otros L1,800
y cheque lo mas tardar el último de éste mes.
tálvez me podes mandar un teléfono bonito, porque
no tengo, pero sería en el próximo viaje de Julio,
Negro pero te repito si puedes y si no son muy caros.

"I wanna tell you that our telephone line will finally be installed, we only have a payment of L1,800 (~$75-100), after that everything should be ready to go by the end of the month. Maybe you can send me a pretty telephone because I don't have one, it would be in the next trip with [Julio] (*enconmendero/viajero*). *Negro* I repeat only if you can and if they are affordable."

Parents (mainly migrant mothers) speak about looking forward to these moments where they got to hear their children's voices, hear about their day/s. Some of the other ways in which parents attempt to demonstrate love to their children in Honduras is by relying on *viajeros* o *encomenderos* to transport material goods for/to their children (including the forms of letters provided in this thesis), a process also embedded with infrastructures. Yet, as Berg pointed out, their access to consistency really depends on their socio-economic circumstances, which are often determined by *inequalities* present. While it was easy for the parents in the US (with more road infrastructure) to get their *encomiendas* (packages with material gifts) to the *encomendero,* in Honduras, it was not as easy to access certain towns, neighborhoods, or homes; while parents send gifts to family, the arrivals are not always guaranteed. *Encomiendas* often contain cash remittances along with letters, photos, clothing, food

(snacks), home appliances, and toys (to mention a few). What this really means is not every transnational family fare in the same way and that not every parent is able to demonstrate "love."

This question of transnational families' *inequality*—why some fare better than others is explored in *Sacrificing Families* by Leisy Abrego, where she tells us that most commonly cited explanations for inequalities in socioeconomic integration of migrant families depend on human capital or "the skills that immigrants bring, social networks, and length of residence in the receiving country" (since it determines the speed and success at economic mobility in the US) (p.5). One thing that is clear too is that "not all migrants remit evenly, and not all recipients benefit equally."[109] And Sociologist Leah Schmalzbauer reminds us in her observations about the class formation of migrant Honduran parents and their non-migrant children, that while parents in the US live in poverty in the US (and are remitting), their children (sometimes) are able to attain more comfortable lifestyles.[110] This, as I will point out in the following section, becomes a problem when the children are finally exposed to the realities of this seeming "prosperity."

Because migrant parents' abilities to send remittances and gifts was already dependent on their work stability in the U.S, not everyone could guarantee this form of intimacy, love assurance, at least not as often as they wanted. The parent migrants, therefore, often engaged in "*intimate reliance**" with communities in the US and in Honduras. Through "intimate reliance" we become vulnerable to others through the disclosing of our needs and risk relying on others (their) support and resources. It must be pointed out though that for the most part, "care work" (both in the US and in Honduras) falls on women[111] and that the living situations and the caregivers of the children vary, and their level of resources depend on the migrant parents' situation in the US. Some parents are able to "care" for their

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[109] Abrego, 2016, Sacrificing Families. For a similar conclusion in the Mexican and Georgian cases, see Castañeda 2013.
[110] Schmalzbauer 2008;"Family Divided: The Class Formation of Honduran Transnational Families."
[111] See the following for similar conclusions: Boehm, 2012 *Intimate Migrations*; Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003, *Global Woman*; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997, "I'm Here, but I'm There.

children in Honduras with material goods, while others might struggle accessing income to allow for this kind of "care."[112] In the *intimate reliance* strategy parents engage in local economies of exchange and payment plans. For instance, migrants and non-migrants would both engage *fiado* (borrowing) economy for accessing telephones (in Honduras) and for sending gifts and remmitances (in Honduras and in the US). In fact, a large part of my work with my dad was collecting payments from people who were taking part of the *fiado* system in order to ship *encomiendas* to their non-migrant partner or children in Honduras.

Hijos sin padres. Padres sin hijos.
Children without fathers. Fathers without children.

My research in Atlantic City was (perhaps selfishly) a healing experience for me. I recall being slightly nervous and excited to speak to Alfonso. He seemed to me like a man who had something to get off his chest and at the time of our interview in 2016, had a heavy reliance on alcohol.

I walked into his trailer home, a new home of which he and his partner were proud to have gotten their hands on just a couple weeks before our interview. They had moved from Atlantic City to Egg Harbor Township in order to ensure that their two children "would attend better public schooling" and "stay out of trouble."[113] His partner offered me *cafecito* and after a few minutes of greetings, Alfonso began to answer my interview questions, at some point slightly deviating or adding:

> **Alfonso:** *estoy un poco tomado y se me hace dificil contar*.
> I used to meet with your dad at a bar in Atlantic City. I didn't know how to read or write so your dad used to write letters for me to send to my wife and kids back in Honduras. (Laughing) we used to cry, me and your dad. He used to cry because he missed you, his daughters.

[112] It must also be noted that the circulation of calls, photos, videos, material goods and money depended/depends on the infrastructures to which migrants had/have access to. See Ara Wilson's "The Infrastructure of Intimacy" and later "remote sensing" discussion in this chapter for a critical theoretical summery/ discussion on intimacy and infrastructure.

[113] In the local South Jersey context, Egg Harbor Township is predominantly white (that is where I attended school). It is common knowledge that Atlantic City's education resources do not necessarily prepare a student to thrive in higher education contexts (ie. lack of college prep, honor's and AP courses, which tend to meet certain educational standards/ways of engaging information).

Alfonso migrated to the United States in 1999, a few months after Hurricane Mitch's immense and far-reaching damage to Honduran soil. Alfonso explained that agriculture in Honduras was no longer sustainable, "the money was no longer enough to keep my family alive, at least in an honest manner."

Alfonso's journey to the United States was one of the more difficult ones I had heard. He and many others almost died in the back of a tractor- trailer truck carrying dozens of migrants after the driver left his job unfinished, turning off and abandoning the truck on the side of the road. [114] Alfonso's *machete*[115] pierced the insulated truck's panels and roof coil so that people in desperation (many already fainted) could escape death by asphyxiation. Months later, Alfonso made it to New Jersey, with only his brother's phone number, who had arrived months before him. In New Jersey, he made friends with my father as they were co-workers. A decade later, unable to bring his wife and children to the United States, he sought a new romantic relationship and started a second family. Stories like Alfonso's are the ones that many non-migrant spouses hear about or migrant women like my mom and Ingrid- non-migrant spouses fear that they would be abandoned or forgotten and migrant mothers far from their children fear that if they don't fight hard enough for reunification, they will lose their children's love. Even though Alfonso initially used my dad's help to write letters to his family, the love and connection they all once felt had faded into the abstract.[116] Alfonso then sought to fill intimacy needs with a new family, which is not its own fairytale either as his struggle with alcohol dependency is a barrier for deeper intimacy with his family in the US. Aware of the stereotypes which

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[114] This is unfortunately a common occurrence. Some examples: In December 2021, fifty-five migrants (mainly Central Americans) died and 105 more were injured when a trailer truck carrying them crashed in Chiapas. Most recently at the end of June 2022, a trailer truck was found in San Antonio Texas totaling fifty-three dead migrants from Central America and Mexico; and at the end of May 2023, 175 migrants were found in a trailer truck in the southern state of Chiapas.

[115] Alfonso shared that the migrant guides had taken all of the migrants' weapons but since he had been *un agricultor* his whole life, he knew how to hide his *machete* so it would go undetected. He said that if he didn't have the machete, they all would have died. The machete, with a lot of struggles, was able to partially peel layers of the roof, after which he and others took turns to pull back further (as their hands blistered).

[116] His children in Honduras (even when he no longer speaks to them as a father) have been able to go to school because of Alfonso's efforts in the US.

come with migrant men who start new families in the U.S (not only does the intimacy end, but so does the remittance practice), and while holding back tears, Alfonso assured me that remittances are still sent back home.

As stated earlier in this chapter, remittances and gifts are not only ways to demonstrate love at the expanse of remitting most of one's income, but this often creates a discrepancy of experiences, where the children (for the most part) in Honduras live a superficial ("seemingly") economic mobility. Let me tell you part of Wilmer's story:

I was given the opportunity to interview Wilmer after I interviewed his mom (Alicia), who spent a huge chunk of our interview crying about her current family painful situation. Alicia migrated to the US from Catacamas in 1995 when her son was only two years of age, and her husband followed only a year later. The reasons were that Alicia could not find work as a teacher, all spots in both public and private schools were filled. She was trying to make a living along with her husband by doing small jobs: selling flour tortillas, running errands, etc. While in the US, Alicia and her husband, unable to bring Wilmer over to the US (due to their legal status), they started a new family, they had two US-born children. In Honduras, Wilmer lived with his maternal grandma, who was also caring for multiple other grandchildren because most of her children had migrated to the United States. In fact, Alicia obtained a visa with the help of her siblings in the US- who all participated in pulling together of resources into a bank account (her husband, however, had to migrate via land). Wilmer was able to attend the local private school growing up and always had new clothing, *tacos* (soccer cleats and shoes), bookbags, etc. He was in my oldest sister's first and second grade class when we also lived in Catacamas. My mom jokes about how my oldest sister got in trouble a couple times for telling him the answers to his math tests as she felt bad that he would have to skip recess in order to finish. Unlike Wilmer, my sisters and I were reunited with our parents at an earlier age. He waited 20 years until he could see his parents again.

In order to bring her son to the US, Alicia took the decision to divorce Wilmer's dad to enter a marriage arrangement with a US-citizen and this way, both she and her son would obtain a residency. This was a multi-year process that reunified Wilmer with his parents and siblings in the US once he turned twenty-two. Alicia's tears during our interview were not due to a reminiscence of the painful past when they were separated, she was crying because her son Wilmer, who had recently arrived at the US, had fled the home to go live with his uncle (locally) instead. Alicia explained to me that there was a *pleito* between Wilmer and his biological dad, who turned out to disagree on many things: space, food, attention, money, work, etc. I then decided to also get an interview with Wilmer. I asked him about his process coming to the US and he said: "it was easy. I went to some interview at the embassy in Tegucigalpa and then a few months later I was in a plane on my way to New Jersey." Wilmer was very sweet in addressing my answers, he was actually worried that he would give me the wrong answers for my project that he kept checking in with me: "Is my answer okay?" In which case, I would reassure him and thank him for his time.

> **Wanda:** *Por qué estás viviendo con tus tíos y no con tus papás?* (Why are you living with your uncle instead of your parents?
> **Wilmer:** *esa gente a mi no me quiere. Sus únicos hijos son los que tuvieron* [*acá*] (in the US). […]
> *Pues que aquí en el extranjero uno tiene que sobresalir solo sin ayuda.* (Those people don't love me. Their only children are the ones that the had [here] (in the US) […] Here in the US one needs to excel on their own, without anyone's help.

Wilmer ran away from his parents' home after he could no longer bear feeling abandoned and alone even when he was finally in his parents and siblings' presence. He claimed his parents only loved his US-born siblings and that in the US, one needs to fend for themselves. His parents, however, expressed a different experience of the situation. In my interview with his dad, he did not mention the effects of family separation even though it had marked them deeply. In fact, he did not mention Wilmer, or their familial situation and I did not probe. He did, however, speak to me about his children in the US. The mom, on the other hand, burst into tears at the thought of their situation. Saying she

will always beg her son to return home.[117] Wilmer told me about his experience in seeing "*la realidad de las cosas*" (in his words), to refer to the fact that his encounter with his family in the US after 20 years of separation were not as he expected they would be—both the intimacy between all of them and the family's economic situation. As I listened to Wilmer's words about the sense of abandonment he felt after 23 years of his parents' physical absence (regardless of their efforts in keeping a connection), I was reminded of my very few (in comparison) years of attending school events which celebrated parents and always expected that parents would be those physically present. In Honduras, family separation due to migration is a common phenomenon, yet institutions (like schools) do not acknowledge the experience of transnational families and their needs. In sociologist Leisy Abrego's work, *Sacrificing Families*, we learn that many of the Salvadoran youth who confided in her about family separation shared they missed their parents and felt a deep sense of isolation not being able to have a space to share and speak of this experience.[118] Scholars have explored these kinds of painful separations and challenging reunifications with their biological parents. [119] Dreby in her work says that time flies for parents who work long hours but goes slowly for children awaiting reunification.[120]

I can only assume that Wilmer felt very similarly growing up in Honduras, under the care of his maternal grandmother. I can only imagine Wilmer felt as I used to when I lived in Honduras without my parents, regardless of the seemingly expensive life we were perceived to be living.

In this chapter I explored the reasons why some of the *Catrachos* I spoke to migrated and showed that they were seeking to liberate themselves from poverty and violence that they had experienced throughout their lives but that had only continued to worsen in 1990-on. These *Catrachos*

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[117] Update from 2023: Wilmer returned to live with his parents after a few years. He has been working full time with Viking Yacht Company (of which I speak about in chapter 2) for around 6 years now.
[118] Abrego, 2016, *Sacrificing Families*, p. 19
[119] For more detailed information about the kinds of challenges children face during reunifications, see Menjívar and Abrego 2009; Abrego 2016; and Pratt 2012.
[120] Dreby 2010. For similar findings, see also Castañeda 2013.

taught me that while they have suffered a great deal in life, their love for their spouses and children *propelled* them forward, that regardless of the forces affecting their intimacy and connection to others, they took the risk to engage in *affective practices** to conserve a connection (*intimacy*) with their children when geographically apart.

Chapter 2
Rincón Catracho

This chapter focuses on the labor seeking strategies that this group of *Catracho* migrants employed when they arrived at South Jersey. By looking into the "*intimate economies of migration**" (as

Anthropologist Wendy Vogt does *in-transit*- a different point in place/time than what's presented here), taking place in South Jersey once this network of Honduran's migrated, I pay attention to the social relations forge in the process and how *communal reliance* is key and at times, fraught with tensions. In this section, I center intimacy as to explore how it is created, utilized, and maintained by Honduran migrants in the context of labor networks in Atlantic City. This framework does not see global forces as penetrating intimate life, but (as Vogt's "intimate economies of mobility"), it focuses on "the dialectics between the global intimate relations and individual strategies at the local level."[121] I explore the intersection between illegality, gender and labor, where I argue that Honduran migrants employ a concept introduced in the previous chapter that I call "*intimate reliance*" as their main survival and navigational strategy. Through "intimate reliance" we understand our existence in relation to/*with* others, we acknowledge that we need intimacy, and we need social relations and their benefits in order to thrive.–I t is employed as a navigational strategy where a relational life *propels* us and widens possibility of success (in accessing a job, keeping a job, accessing resources, knowledge, and opportunities, etc.). The livelihoods of Honduran migrants in this project (and in general) are deeply affected according to one's mode of entry and/or legal status. Some scholars have studied how the unstable and unprotected aspects of 'illegality' affect the everyday lives of people, or in more phenomenological terms, how the notion of illegality shapes people's way of "being-in-the- world."[122] Many of the Honduran migrants in this project speak of the constant fear and anxiety of possible deportation as it holds the potential to rupture (many time, further rupture) family structures and new intimacies built to survive.

[121] Vogt, 2016, *Lives in Transit*, p.16; also see Wilson 2012.
[122] See Sarah Willen, "Toward a Critical Phenomenology of 'Illegality,'" 2007; De Genova, "Migrant 'Illegality' and Deportability in everyday life," 2002.

Southern New Jersey became un *Rincón Catracho* (Honduran corner) during the 1980s- when both push factors in Honduras and pull factors in NJ allowed for the arrival of pioneer migrants and subsequent cohorts of network-driven migration, in search for a more secure future.

In 2016-2017, if I wanted a piece of Honduras, I would find it in Atlantic City –in the streets, I could *hear* Honduran voices when I felt deprived and I could pick up *mantequilla* (cream) and *queso* (cheese) from the *viajeros/ encomederos* when I craved Honduran flavors. In 2021, I returned to the area and recaptured a set of newly emerged *rincones catrachos* (Honduran corners). In the two hours I spent at the restaurant, I witnessed multiple *saludos* (greetings) between workers, customers (regulars and irregulars); and conversations that inquired about *la familia* (family) and *la chamba* (work). My presence in the space disrupted something, as if there was a glitch of some sort- "an awkward stranger", I heard in my head. Although I am Honduran myself, I am always navigating *borderlands*.[123] It probably doesn't help that I was just photographing the outside of their store, or worse that I proudly wore my camera as an accessory, a necklace around my neck.

> **Waitress:** *?Habla español?* (Do you speak Spanish?) (In a suspicious, hesitant, unsure tone).
> **Wanda:** (*overexplaining* myself) *sí, ando tomando fotos para un proyecto que cuenta historias de nosotros los hondureños en* New Jersey. (yes, I am taking photos for a project which tells the story of us, Hondurans in New Jersey).
> **Waitress:** *ahh ya, ocupa un menú?* (ah okay, do you need a menu?)
> **Wanda:** *Sí claro, tengo hambre.* (yes of course, I am hungry).

I assumed I ruined my chance at making her feel safe with my presence but then I told her that my dad eats there all the time and proceeded to mention his name. Suddenly, there was something quite familiar about me. She automatically started laughing and said she couldn't believe it, that she

[123] It is as if the way I embody my experiences and interests are always in a tension which is simultaneously held and expressed through my interactions with others. This is based on Anzaldua's Borderlands theory which expands on W.E.B Dubois' ideas on double consciousness to the experiences of Chicanas in South Texas. Anzaldua speaks of the US-Mexico border in a metaphorical sense, encompassing multiple crossings/boundaries- geopolitical, sexual, social and the crossings necessary in multiple linguistic and cultural contexts. As Azaldua, I assert my navigation of borderlands not as a deficiency, but as a space/ state which allows me to produce knowledge. I exist to challenge monocultural and monolingual conceptions of social reality. Oppressions through this perspective are not static nor hierarchical, they are fluid systems that shift forms according to the specific context.

has only seen my little sister with him (who is currently 10yo). She asked me if I knew when the next shipment to Honduras would happen since she has two boxes she is preparing to send to her daughters for Christmas. As stated in the introduction my dad is well-known by the local Honduran community because he is an *encomendero*, not one which travels back and forth to Honduras but one that picks up *encomiendas* from people in Atlantic County and ships them to be distributed in Honduras by other people involved. In fact, the current project was possible because of my parent's support and their connection to the local community, which allowed friends to entrust me with their stories. While almost all have rooted their lives in the area for decades now, they all have transnational ties to Honduras. It only took a couple hours in this *Rincón Catracho* for me to notice some of the things that tie us all together: family and work; and all of the risks and efforts we make to keep those things alive in the midst of difficult circumstances.

In my *pláticas* with the participants, a few of them, when processing possibilities, spoke of opening a Honduran restaurant specially as they also awaited on arrival of a family member. Julio, whose only siblings left in Honduras at the time of the interview were two sisters (4 others were all in the United States) said:

> "*mi hermana quiere cruzar, ella tiene un puesto allá en Catacamas, yo le digo que acá nos la hacemos con un restaurante; tanto Hondureño aquí y nadie se dice a abrir. La otra dice que solo con visa se viene pero cuando se va a poder. Al marido lo han regresado tres veces, no ha podido cruzar, ya están decepcionados*"
>
> ("my sister wants to cross; she has a small at-home restaurant. I keep telling her that we can make it out here with a restaurant business. There are so many Hondurans here and no one thinks to open one up. My other sister refuses to come unless it is with a visa but who knows when that'll be possible. Her husband failed to cross the US-Mexico border three times; they are discouraged")

Recently, I followed up with Julio and both sisters were preparing for a clandestine journey via Guatemala and Mexico, with US-NJ-AC as destination. It did not surprise me, however, to see that during my 'absence', multiple, new visible *rincones Catrachos* (Honduran corners) had emerged.[124] It did

[124] As an extension of this project, I plan to return to re-capture aspects of Honduran lives in the same area via photography.

not surprise me that many others had plans to establish a *Rincón Catracho* (a Honduran corner) for the local community. It did not surprise me that years after this data was collected, the lives of the participants continue to be affected by migration as many friends and family members are seeking to join them. The word *rincón* in a sense gives a feeling of 'comfort', a feeling of not taking much space but can hold a lot. It is impossible to capture *every* aspect of Honduran life in South Jersey, but this thesis could give you a 'glimpse', in the same way that the '*rincón*' provides for us a piece of Honduras. To tell you this story, I would have to admit: I often reach my linguistic and creative capacity when I attempt to fully comprehend it, or worse *describe* it to you all. I do my best to document the agentive processes to which our lives were/are subjected as Honduran migrants living in southern New Jersey, more specifically those in Atlantic city and surrounding cities and towns. We are people who carry historical/ generational trauma yet thrive and bring a lot to the table and our community.

Hombres y sus sueños americanos
Men and their American Dreams

> **Victor:** Sergio (brother-in-law) got me a job there. I remember he told me '*primo,* I got you a job' and since one is illegal, shit, you had to get *papeles chuecos* (fake documentation). He told me 'we have to get you *papeles chuecos* and we have to get you a social (ssn). We went to a place where they make you one that looks exactly like a real social security card. I paid $100 for it and $50 for an ID. It was easy to get a job at *las fruteras* as long as we had those documents.

Victor migrated in 1998, following the steps of his wife who had established herself in Atlantic City just a year before. They left their first two children under the care of his wife's mother in Honduras—whose grandchildren under her care only kept accumulating as four of her six children migrated to the United States, entrusting her with their children. Victor explained risking his life in the process of clandestine migration still held more possibilities than what Honduras offered him and his family locally. In the United States, he could at least work and provide for his children.

Fruteras were often referred by the participants in the study as a starting place/occupation for many recent migrants and employs mainly men, mostly undocumented Mexican and Honduran migrants. Four of the male participants stated that they began by working at *la frutera* when they first

arrived at the Atlantic City area from Honduras. These stores were an option because although they did not necessarily "officially" employ undocumented laborers (one needs to show proof of identification/ legal status), unlike other options in the formal local economy, they can easily solve the issue by obtaining a fake identification card. All of the four participants who shared they worked at *las fruteras* employed the same identity borrowing strategies. While they feared there was a lot of risk, in their processing, they felt it was worth it even though it paid minimum wage, it was a better start than any other option at the time in the informal economy. The access to this kind of knowledge was possible only through personal relationships. It is knowledge that is constantly shifting, yet as it is experienced by a person, it is altered for success and passed along to another. Even though most can trust that the information given to them is accurate and safe, not everyone is willing to gamble their life outcomes with every opportunity that is presented to them.

At the time of our interview, Victor was a Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holder. When Hurricane Mitch hit Honduras and Nicaragua in 1998 and a series of earthquakes affected El Salvador in 2001, the United States designated Hondurans, Nicaraguans, and Salvadorans who fled their country as a result of these events as eligible for TPS. TPS is what it sounds like: a provisional relief from deportation for international individuals who already reside in the United States; this protection status allows them to be authorized to work in the formal economy.[125] In 2017 and early 2018, the Trump administration announced that it would not renew TPS designations for Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. This announcement was glooming the futures of 4 participant TPS holders, they expressed great anxiety and described their lives in a 'limbo' state. This meant that the jobs which they have held in the formal economy for almost two decades (stable income and higher wage security when compared to their undocumented counterparts) could be lost at a moment's notice; this meant they were under the radar for deportation. Currently, there are a total of sixteen countries designated

[125] "Central American Immigrants in the United States," *Migration Policy Institute*, August 15, 2019.

for TPS. Three of those countries are the Central American nations mentioned previously (Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua; Guatemala is no longer on the designation list).[126] They are to understand themselves as not fully citizens but as people who have built their lives in NJ for decades now, and who might be forced to return to Hondurans to the same conditions they fled. Four of the participants in my study followed the legal status trajectory from undocumented to TPS, all four 'benefiting' from the protection which allowed them to come out of the shadows. At a time when the 2017 presidential elections were around the corner, they all feared (in the words of Victor):

> Who knows now what will happen to us with that crazy Trump who might win the elections. I don't know what they are teaching my daughter at school, but my daughter came home crying the other day asking me if it is true that I might be deported if Trump gets elected.

The actions of the Trump administration were challenged in federal court. As of June 13, 2023, Secretary Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas announced his decision to rescind the 2017 and 2018 terminations of the TPS designations of El Salvador, Honduras, Nepal and Nicaragua effective June 9, 2023, and extended the TPS designations of these nations through July 2025 (and March 2025 for El Salvador).[127] Based on the Homeland Security 2021 annual report, TPS protections covered 241, 699 Salvadorans, 76,737 Hondurans, and 4,250 Nicaraguans[128], making up about 75 percent of all beneficiaries. While all the participants in this research rejoiced at the chance of life in a more 'secure' nation, they continue to live in a constant state of uncertainty and unknowability. Even when the US also represented a sense of safety, the also reflected on their temporary status, a status which was threatened during Trump's presidency and spread fear of those who are undocumented in the US. When Victor obtained a TPS, he was glad he no longer had to rely on the identity borrowing strategy, but he could use his own name and access a higher paying job at a casino.

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[126] US Citizen and Immigration Services, "Temporary Protected Status," Last Reviewed: June 13, 2023.
[127] US Citizen and Immigration Services, "Temporary Protected Status," Last Reviewed: June 13, 2023.
[128] Homeland Security, 2021, "Temporary Protected Status: Calendar Year 2021 Annual Report."

Before I share about labor in casinos, I want to share about *La Baiquin, "el trabajo de hombres*" (a place of work for men), the place that allowed for the legal documentation processing of their large labor force. . *La Baiquin* (Viking Yatch Company) is an ideal job goal for many Honduran men in the area. Also, after changes in enforcement of federal immigration policies, obtaining a job at these more desirable places required proof of legality and/or permit to work. The Viking Yacht Company is a world leading manufacturer of luxury performance sportsfishing and cruising yachts, located in New Gretna, about 30 minutes from the area where most immigrants are from. I attend an annual celebration that the company has for its employees, and I am not exaggerating when I say that at least 80% of its workforce are Latino immigrants, most of them Central American. Most of the migrant participants who work here, rely on a *raitero* (ride) system, where one migrant who has a legal status (provisionary or permanent) gets paid by other workers who are undocumented (therefore, do not have a legal NJ driver's license)[129] to drive them to work. Most of the male migrants who work here believe that a job at Viking gives a decent pay "*y bien ganado*" (well-deserved); that is because the job is high-skilled, and very physically demanding; many of them are put in the fiberglass area because their yachts are produced with fiberglass, a material to which the exposure, can cause long-term health effects. Four of the male participants of this research are employees at the Viking Yacht Company, and one worked there before his new job.

Alfredo migrated to the United States at age of 17 when he was able to obtain a student visa. Alfredo was the only case out of the 18 Hondurans I spoke to that was able to obtain a visa in this way. As a teenager, he volunteered at the local Catholic church in Catacamas and through the sponsorship of his priest, he was able to obtain a visa to attend a Theological Seminary. However,

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[129] At the time of research, undocumented individuals in New Jersey could not obtain a legal driver's license; however, this has since changed.

once Alfredo arrive to Atlantic City, that was not the path pursued. Alfredo instead worked in a *frutera* and as a dishwasher at a local restaurant, yet quickly moved to *la baiquin*.

> **Alfredo:** It's been 17 years and I am still undocumented. I had a chance actually, when in 2001 they had the 245i though *la baiquin,* but that had a fleeing opportunity window. Plus, I was a young kid, I had no one to advise me although I had the chance. I was thinking of my girlfriend I left back in Honduras. Returning to see her was my priority. 17 years later and all I can hope for is that my US citizen stepdaughter turns 21 so she can petition me. That is my only train ticket."

La Baiquin was an important part of the baiquineros' self-narratives because employment sponsorship was key for those Hondurans working at Viking Yacht Company. In 2001, the Viking Yacht Company decided to allow its workers to apply for an adjustment of their status through the 245i section of the Immigration and Nationality Act. *La i245* is a section of the Immigration and Nationality act (INA), amended by the Legal Immigration Family Equity (LIFE) Act and LIFE Act Amendments of 2000 (Pub. L. 106-553 and -554) which opened a tiny gap in the constitutional immigration law. The adjustment of status would allow immigrants to apply to a lawful permanent residence without leaving the US. In order to qualify under the 245i section, the migrant must have a relative or an employer file a visa petition or a labor certification on the behalf of the worker –in this case the undocumented Honduran migrants.[130] This is how many Honduran migrants, employees at the Viking Yacht Company were able to adjust their legal statuses. This very opportunity widened my dad's peripheral vision to see a reality in which my mom, me and my sisters would not have to cross the US-Mexico border via land to see him once again or worse, we would never see each other again (parents and children perpetual separation). My dad is grateful to *La i245 de Bill Clinton* (Bill Clinton's

[130] Section 245(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), , enables certain individuals who are present in the United States who would not normally qualify to apply for adjustment of status in the United States to obtain lawful permanent residence (get a Green Card) regardless of: The manner they entered the United States; Working in the United States without authorization; or Failing to continuously maintain lawful status since entry. To qualify for this provision, you must be the beneficiary of a labor certification application (Form ETA 750) or immigrant visa petition (Forms I-130, Petition for Alien Relative, or I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker) filed on or before April 30, 2001. You must complete Supplement A to Form I-485, Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status, to apply under Section 245(i) provisions and submit it with your Form I-485. In most cases, you must also pay an additional $1,000 fee.

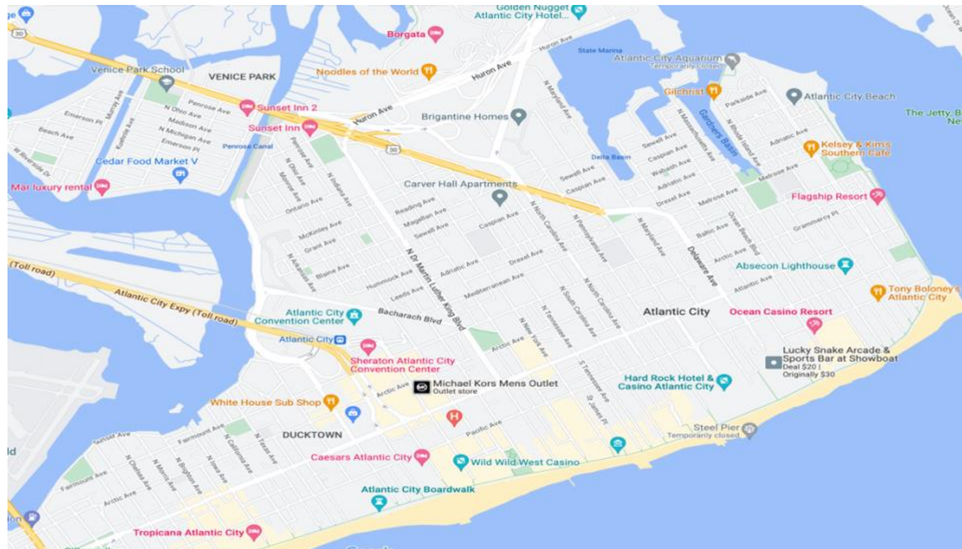
i245) and to his employer for this opportunity. Alfredo (a many other *baiquineros*) thought that this opportunity was "too good to be true" (in their own words) and avoided speaking to the lawyers that the company provided to begin their laborers' legal screening and processing. Another *baiquinero* who took the risk and trusted the lawyers who showed up at their company one day said:

> I graduated high school in Honduras and soon after, I got married. I was very young but I had to work a lot harder because I now had kids to care for; but the money wasn't meeting ends. That feeling of the money need only increased, I needed to work more and eventually find alternatives. The *sueño americano* (American dream) was in my mind, I had it in my head, I gathered resources and decided to try my luck and I was given a tourist VISA at the US Embassy. I wanted to send money home for my wife and kids and to finish paying off my house. I overstayed my VISA, got a job in a good company that changed my life. The company opened up an opportunity for me to bring my family to the US. La *fuente de trabajo* (labor source) is the best thing about this country.

Unlike Alfredo, many *baiquineros* decided to risk seeing if this was a real opportunity to legalize their status. Alfredo told me that he doubted because there were a group of workers that could not believe that the reform was true and maybe it was a way get them to disclose the details of their real legal statuses.

The Catrachos that worked at *La Baiquin* (whether they took the opportunity to get a sponsorship or not) spoke about this place as one with better pay, although "*es un trabajo bien matado*" (a very physically demanding job), however most of the labor force there is male based. Other men (and most women) that I spoke to that chose to find work elsewhere after obtaining a status opted for a riskier kind of gamble in the Atlantic City casino industry.

Atlantic City has a very interesting economic history –many ups and downs– as it is the ultimate example of a failed capitalist system. The casino economy has attracted many immigrant workers to the area including Hondurans.



Monopoly Street Names[131]

The casino economy has been important for Honduran migrants to insert themselves into local service sector jobs. The Atlantic City casino industry faced its major down when many casinos closed in the 2000s, affecting thousands of employees (most who were migrants). As of September 2014, the greater Atlantic City area has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country at 13.8%, out of labor force of around 141,000.[132] The following casinos all closed in the time period of 1999-2016: Trump Taj Mahal (2016), Trump Plaza (2014), The Revel (2014), Showboat (2014), Atlantic Club (2014), Sands (2006), Claridge (2002) and Trump's World's Fair (1999). Now, there are only nine functioning casinos (2 which opened in the last 5yrs in the hope for economic renewal): Hardrock Casino AC (new one), Golden Nugget AC, Resorts AC, Bally's AC, Tropicana Casino Resorts, Borgata Hotel Casino and Spa, Ocean at AC (new one), Caesar's at AC and Harrah's Resort AC. Most of the subjects of this research work at the Atlantic City Casinos, many at the Borgata Casino (most thriving one). In the local area, Casino employment is one of the most desirable ones, but undocumented migrants have a tougher time accessing these. The issue of legality begins to play a main role in the lives of

[131] Fun fact: As I walked around the city, my attention was captured by the street names. After some research, I learned that the city street names inspired the American version of the board game, *Monopoly*.
[132] "The Cities with the Best and Worst Unemployment Rates" *Forbes Magazine* report, January 23, 2013.

undocumented immigrants in the area because almost like gambling: they must decide whether they should take risks when hitting the next job! They wonder: "do I apply to a functioning casino with *papeles chuecos*?" A risk that would cause them immediate arrest, which would lead to deportation, or to obtain the job.

Identity borrowing strategies, while risky, became 'necessary' to obtain a job at the local casino industry after 9/11 [133]when casinos enrolled in e-verify, a web-based system that allows participating employers to confirm the eligibility of their employees to work in the United States by matching provided required documentation against records available to the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and enforce regulation of their labor force.[134] While the men could access casino industry jobs with the same risk as the women, they also had access to more stable income jobs than the women as in the case of *baiquineros*, where there is a stigma for women who work there:

"*Este es trabajo de hombre*" ("That's a man's job").

Mujeres y sus amores y dolores.

I spoke to Jessica in the comfort of her large, beautiful house she and her husband were able to obtain after its value dropped by half when the previous owner overwent a foreclosure due to the 2008 economic crash. Jessica takes lots of pride in her home, being grateful that she is now documented and has been lucky enough to have obtained a job at one of the more successful casinos in Atlantic City.

Jessica is a very funny person without realizing it. She speaks so fast, and every other sentence utters words and expressions that if translated to English, many might deem it "inappropriate" or "impolite" speech. To me, it is that characteristic that makes her a funny person. On top of that, she

[133] One iteration of a post 9/11 effect on the lives of criminalized others.
[134] Homeland Security, "About E-verify," last accessed: March 17, 2022.

is very hyperactive in the way she moves, coming off as clumsy or careless. I loved talking to Jessica. Regardless of what you might be thinking, she is honest and reserved. She has learned to move around the world in a way that keeps many thoughts and experiences private. Yet, whatever she does share is often enough to make many around her feel connected to her, and want to offer support.

When we met for the purpose of the interview, we were in her kitchen. She was making a delicious *tapado* (a Honduran/ *Olanchano* specialty), insisting I stayed to see the process through. I was nervous that she would cut herself as she multi-tasked between chopping vegetables and speaking to me. Jessica began working with *papeles chuecos* in Bally's Casino, in a restaurant's kitchen. While I had my own assumptions about the difficulty of having to work under a borrowed identity, for Jessica the most difficult part was a language barrier which kept her unable to speak up for herself. She explained she relied on her good friend and coworker, who also worked in the kitchen with her, to help her navigate the system. Jessica would not realize whenever she was called on; her friend would give her a nudge:

!*Es a vos que te llaman pendeja*! ("it's you they're calling, dummy!")

Intimate reliance at the workplace was essential in order to keep their jobs and avoid arrest/deportation. Jessica spoke of the mental exhaustion, since one always has to remember that your birth name is no longer your real name. In this context, one must get to know ones coworkers and know on who is worth knowing and relying on. While there was a communal understanding and support among the migrant community, not everyone was as supportive. For Jessica, the more difficult situations happened when a Puerto Rican coworker threatened to discloser her "situation" to the bosses. Apparently, the coworker figured that Jessica was not Puerto Rican (as she claimed to be) because of her accent. The threats would often come in the form of mocking or jokes in English in front of the managers:

Hey you! What is your real name again?

Workplaces under such surveillances (and vulnerabilities) become places full of risk, skepticism and necessary *vulnerability, compassion, and solidarity*. Today, it is almost impossible to access a casino job with a false identity, even when there are some undocumented migrants in the area who can 'benefit' from a casino job, their being in the world is still under hypervigilance. They live as if their borrowed identity has taken over their very beings. The protocol when one is *caught* (i.e., when a boss finds out and reports) is to stop showing up to work right away so they are not arrested and later deported. Jessica could not lose her casino job because she was dreaming of the day, she could bring her daughters to the US and was paying thousands of dollars in legal procedures. Eventually one of her managers called her aside and told her he caught on the situation and expressed his desire to support her, he even offered that he and his wife adopt her children so that they could come to the US. Apparently, Jessica (like my mom and Ingrid) would not only burst into tears to her husband but also at work, she often teared up thinking about her children who were far away from her. When Jessica first migrated, she was able to obtain a visa with the advice, support (of resources), and services of a person in Catacamas who specialized in helping others build "profiles" for a visa appointment. They cost of the services were around $10,000 because most cases were pretty much guaranteed. This, Jessica tells me, was easier before 9/11, when visa restrictions got tighter for Hondurans as well. In the end, Jessica obtained a residency through a marriage arrangement with a US citizen, at which point she had to quit her job since she couldn't work under her old identity. She could not experience the freedom to be herself- Jessica. When Jessica tried to quit, the same manager who had offered to support her asked her to please feel safe to share why she would quit when he knows she needs the money. After which she risked sharing that she was quitting because she no longer needs to borrow the identity to work. At that point, he laughed, rejoicing that she could bring her daughters after many years of separation and that he had a key contact at the newest casino in Atlantic City (and still most

successful one) and could get her a job! Jessica has now been working the same job for almost two decades now.

Cases like Jessica's are examples of how the practice of *intimate reliance* can help [us] (more privileged individuals) find ways to participate and act in ways that benefit and facilitate the lives and wellbeing of others. Hearing the story of Jessica's manager helps me dream that one day we will all live under the reality that "there is enough for all." It is clear that there is risk in the forging of these intimate relations and that all forms of tensions also arise, especially in a context where migrants face new forms of violence in the form of structural vulnerabilities produced at the nexus of state, that could very well "benefit" or "protect" others. Jessica's coworker who often threatened to call *la migra* or Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or get her fired for the federal *crime* of "stealing identities", can be said to be in tension with the "gaze of [power]" (capitalism and the transnational prison complex). While Jessica was fortunate enough to have a manager who supported her, not everyone in the casino industry using similar strategies shared in this same "fortune" (if it can be called that instead of a given). Carmen (another participant), for instance, who also obtained a casino job with a borrowed identity after four months of having arrived at Atlantic City from Honduras was in the process of moving to Miami after a coworker warned Carmen that ICE had shown up during Carmen's Day off looking for her after her "secret" had been exposed. This forced Carmen to immediately stop showing up to work (which meant loss of secure income) and to move her mixed-status family to Miami. Carmen had two US-born citizen children, while her oldest had crossed the US-Mexico border with her to reunite with her husband (also undocumented). Even in the case of Carmen, it was her coworkers' warnings about ICE presence at work that kept her from arrest. In order to succeed in a casino job, *intimate reliance* was a necessary strategy for women.

As I shared earlier, while the casino industry provided better paid jobs, many of the AC Casinos saw bankruptcy in the 2000s. Many Honduran women who were laid off or found themselves

forced to leave the casinos, relied on domestic labor, cleaning residential homes in nearby towns (ie. Egg Harbor Township, Somers Point, Linwood, Northfield, Margate (mostly summer homes), and Galloway). Most of them begin working under someone else and transition towards independent work after they build their own personal network, skills and knowledge. The following information will focus on my specific interaction with Karla. In this reflection, I take a part of our interview where she talks about the "cleaning business" in South Jersey, a job which many resort to especially when undocumented.

Karla began cleaning houses and working in small hotels shortly after her arrival in 2009. She also gave casinos a try with *papeles chuecos* (false identification documentation) motivated by the wish to access to what Karla called "*a decent job."* Unfortunately, the casino industry has also been uncertain, especially through the closings of multiple casinos in the last decade. In June 2016 Karla lost her job at the Trump Tahj Mahal when it closed to the public after bankruptcy. Ever since, Karla has been cleaning houses "to survive" (in her own words). After the implementation of E-verify and the closing of some casinos, many Honduran migrants lost their jobs. Even though Karla no longer feared getting arrested for using *papeles chuecos*, she explained the risk that comes with a lack of status even within the domestic work business:

> Since the casino shut down, I spent months unable to find work so I decided to start cleaning. I would leave my house at 7am and return around 11pm. I had no real schedule and no respect. People like me, who have kids, we want a fixed schedule. The worst part is that even if we work 'overtime', we were not compensated for it. This is all because of the simple fact that we don't have *papeles* (are undocumented). Sometimes my boss would tell me that she didn't have enough money to pay me for the week and that I needed to wait until the following. Maybe she assumed that because I have a husband, I didn't need the income. I work to help provide. While I am grateful to God that I have all the basic things, my dream is to provide for my children and my mom who is living under difficult circumstances in Honduras. She is very important to me; I want to make sure she has food and her medicines on her table. As long as I am alive, she should have everything she needs.

The local working conditions for domestic workers are precarious, as it is linked to the legal status of the worker. Without legal protection, it is easy for them not to get compensation for their labor. Besides the unstable work schedule, there were various instances when she was not paid with

the explanation that "there was not enough to pay all of the workers this week." Karla shared a sense of frustration because although –thanks to her husband's income—she could still provide to her family; she does not enjoy the sense of dependency on the husband's income, especially because she has the responsibility to take care of her mom living in Honduras.

As shared in chapter 1, in the United States, Karla lives in a mixed-status household. After reuniting with her husband, his drinking issues followed him, and related problems led to htheir divorce and his deportation to Honduras. Eventually, Karla remarried a Puerto Rican man and had her second US-born child. Karla shared that the constant fear she already experienced by living in Honduras, *un lugar en donde no se puede vivir* (a place where one cannot be alive; a place in which one can no longer live; an inhabitable place), in some ways has followed her now to the US. For Karla and her family, the vigilance has not stopped now that they are in the United States even if it is of a different nature. She spoke of the constant anxious state in which she and her oldest daughter (14yo at the time of the interview) now live due to the potential deportation. Karla told me how she had just recently revealed to her daughter that she is undocumented because her daughter could not understand why she could not just apply for a job as a lifeguard. She felt it timely because she feared that her daughter's 'teenage' actions could lead her to unnecessary encounters with law enforcement.[135] Karla's daughter now not only fears losing her mom to deportation (as she lost her biological dad), but she also had a new sense of vigilance imposed on her everyday life. This process of hyper-vigilance both constrains how people exist in the world and is the source of psychological and physical stress.[136] Karla's story also illustrates how the past lives of Hondurans, the physical processes of clandestine movement and

[135] In 2021, I followed up with Karla. I, fortunately, found out that her daughter had recently obtained her high school degree, DACA, had multiple jobs and a driver's license. Unfortunately, she shared that eventually her daughter got a DIU and spends most of her income paying lawyer fees.

[136] Boehm, *Intimate Migrations*, 2012; Boehm, *Returned*, 2016; ; De Genova, "MIGRANT 'ILLEGALITY' AND DEPORTABILITY IN EVERYDAY LIFE," 2002.

relocation in the US are to be examined together if we want to shed light on the way in which the violence of people's migration journeys are experienced as ongoing once settled in new countries.

> **Karla:** *No soy rica pero a mi esposo y a mis hijos no les faya su comidita. Y mi mama me dice (laughing) que la tengo como una vieja rica.*

Although domestic work income does not allow Karla to access upward mobility in the US, she is content that she is able to feed her family and that at least her mother lives like "a rich old lady" in Honduras.

While domestic work and casino were the major jobs that Honduran women relied on, there were some exceptions. I need to tell you about *la bisnera* (the business woman) who has transformed and renewed my way of understanding how "businesses" function.

La bisnera has multiple jobs. In Honduras, she used to sell clothing and jewelry. She followed her mom's steps. They would set up a *puesto*[137] (spot for sales) every day and sell. When she arrived at the United States, she quickly grew a trust-worthy reputation as a jewelry seller. She would travel to the streets of NYC on a biweekly basis to purchase and resell in South Jersey. The gold necklace with my name engraved I received from my parents as a little girl was a gift my parents purchased from *la bisnera. "Siempre da fiado"* (selling on credit), is how she was/is known. She did not only sell jewelry on credit, she, also purchased items for people on her credit lines. For example, she helped Jessica purchase furniture for her children's arrival/reunification in the US. While she was careful to only borrow credit line to those who she trusted would pay in full, she did not charge an interest rate.

La bisnera shared that because people would often not pay her in full, so she had to invest in other businesses to have a more stable income. For this reason, she quickly focused on marrying a US-citizen, obtaining a legal status, accessing a casino job, and saving money to purchase *apartamentos para rentar* (apartments to rent). Her business practice of generosity only continues, I was fortunate

[137] Participio irregular de 'poner'. For Hondurans, a meaning of *puesto (as a noun)* refers to a small set up area for sales of material goods or food.

enough to also interview her most recent tenants; and to make a long story short, I would say her business motto is to find other Hondurans who are in need and miracles will happen for all. *La bisnera*'s way of business was the riskiest I have ever seen: a communal type, one which was concerned with other's wellbeing over profit.

Honduran women and men engaged in *intimate reliance* in order to access necessary knowledge to navigate and maneuver uncertain labor environments. The main culprit in determining how families fared was the production of illegality and criminalization. There were clear distinctions in how families fared based on their legal status and gender. Even when the majority of the men I spoke to did not necessarily earn high wages, they tended to make several more dollars per hour than the migrant women, --a consistent with patterns nationwide since the labor market often also follows the logic of gender ideologies.[138] Despite the unequal labor-market opportunities for men and women in the United States, the women emphasized their effort to consistently remittance and/or continue to work for their loved ones.

In all, I *saw* a people that even when embodying the effects of illegality (as a virus infecting and weakening the body), they *resist*.

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[138] As seen in Abrego 2014; Gammage and Schmitt, 2004, "Los inmigrantes mexicanos, salvadoreños y dominicanos en el mercado laboral estadounidense:" ; Menjívar 2009 and Wright et al., 2000, "Legal status, gender and employment among Salvadorans in the US".

CONCLUSION

I wanted to conclude the thesis by sharing *los sueños* (hopes and dreams) and a giving you a brief update about some of the interlocutors (even whose stories I was not able to share). My hope is that we can sit with the realities of their everyday here in the United States, the place where we reside, and reflect on the fact that they are all play key roles in our community. My hope is that we can also reflect on our roles (and privileges) in their lives, moving away from inflicting further violence and acting to ensure that [we] (as a nation) can reflect the social ethic that we *co-exist*. This often leads to a painful self-reflection where we often see our own ugliness—not just as the anthropologist but even as a member of this community of *Catrachos*. I hope we can see how we might also be participants and/or accomplices of violence/s, to see how we might be failing to acknowledge our power/or desire to please power and its effect on others, hopefully understanding that we can all be both victims and perpetrators.

<u>Karla</u>

Right after President Biden's 2021 election, my mom and Karla were in the kitchen making one of my favorite Honduran plates *sopa de res* (beef soup). I shared with them that I am working on sharing part of the story she shared with me in 2016, to which Karla responded:

> "But Wanda you would have to write now that I have hope to finally get my papers, with the new Biden administration and my daughter's (oldest) DACA status having a new possibility, that means I will finally get my chance! It will take some time, but it is coming!"

<u>La Bisnera</u>

Somehow, *la bisnera's* money multiplies and her generosity increases. In the last couple years, she started to attend a Christian church and said:

"*Cuando Dios decide que serás feliz, él lo considera a sus hijos.*"
When God decides that you will be happy, He considers His children.

She hopes to keep finding ways to help people in need.

Ingrid

Ingrid now owns a home because the owner of the apartment they were renting (a wealthy Christian family) simply decided to bless them with a gift – give them full ownership of the apartment. She is now reunited with her son who gets along and helps care for his little siter (US-born). She dreams for the day that her son can attend college (he is currently a DACA recipient).

Doña Maria

She is happy that some of her sons have decided to also find forgives in Jesus Christ (as her). She prays for the rest of her sons and families to come to the same conclusion.

Jessica

As of January 2023, Jessica and her husband have been able to purchase additional homes to rent it to other Honduran migrant families.

Alicia

She is happy that her son, Wilmer, has moved back with her. Over the last couple years, there have been deeply painful and intimacy damaging situations that've happened in her life. However, she continues to fight for her children, especially for her oldest daughter to be reunited with her (who wasn't able to come with Wilmer since she was over eighteen years old when Alicia obtained a residency). As of March 2023, her daughter plans on going to the US embassy to petition a visa.

Marcela

She is still working under a borrowed identity at one of the A.C Casinos. She recently planed and relied on members of the Honduran community to help her celebrate her oldest US-born daughter's 15th birthday. Marcela had two daughters in Honduras, who migrated via land to the U.S in

the last five years with their husbands. Marcela is happy to see that her Honduras-born daughters are now grown women with their own families and wants to focus on continual care for her US-born children. Her dream is that she can legalize her status one day.

Mariela

She is now getting to see her oldest two sons (US born) attend college. She recently legalized her legal status through a marriage arrangement which allowed her to work in a casino. As she is making more money now, she has spent the last few months remodeling her first home (which was recently purchased). The father of her children is still undocumented, and she hopes that one day he can also find a way to obtain a legal status.

My mom

My mom is the best mother one could have. I know it might seem like a bias statement, but I am not exaggerating. She loves it most when we are all in New Jersey, spending time as a family. She reminds me every day when we speak on the phone that life near her will be better:

> "*Acá yo te cuido a mis nietos. Allá sola, cómo vas a hacer?"*
>
> "[Here] (in South Jersey) I would take care of my grandchildren. [Over there] (SoCal) what will you do?

That is her dream: that we can all live near each other for the rest of our lives.

Alfonso

He had a period of two years of sobriety after he had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ (as he said). However, he once went to a party with friends who convinced him to drink again. His hope is that his kids and wife in the U.S can appreciate the efforts that he makes.

Victor:

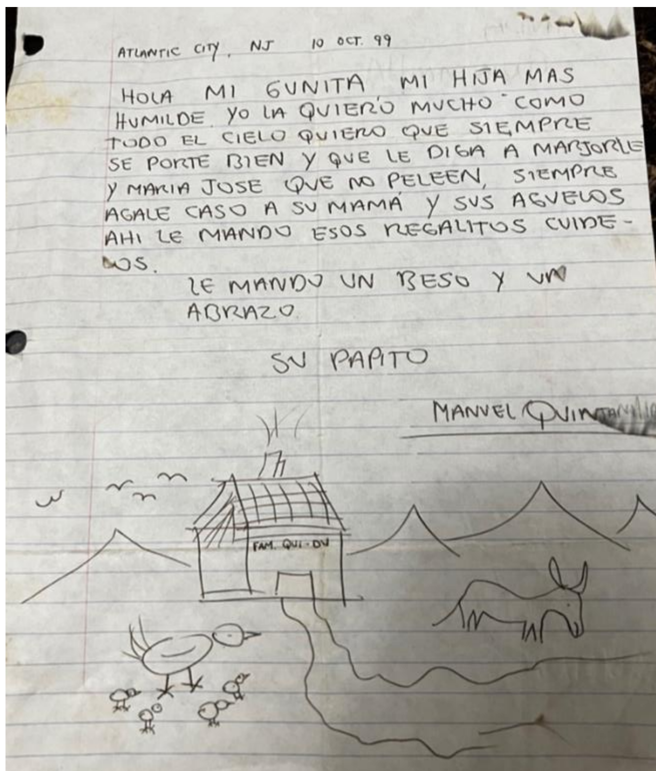
In the U.S, Victor enjoys training his US-born son in soccer while they listen to songs like "Eye of the Tiger" by Survivor and teaching his nieces how to drive. He hopes that his son can get a scholarship and play soccer at the college level.

<u>Wilmer</u>

Wilmer wants to his oldest sister (with whom she was raised) to move to the United States to live with him.

<u>My dad</u>

My dad still dreams of the day we can live in a farm surrounded by animals and nature. He works a lot so that one day he can retire. He told me that he is healing in some ways through seeing my youngest sister (who is ten) grow up, as he did not get to see me and my sisters during our early years of life.


ATLANTIC CITY, NJ 10 OCT. 99

HOLA MI GUNITA MI HIJA MAS HUMILDE. YO LA QUIERO MUCHO COMO TODO EL CIELO QUIERO QUE SIEMPRE SE PORTE BIEN Y QUE LE DIGA A MARJORIE Y MARIA JOSE QUE NO PELEEN, SIEMPRE AGALE CASO A SU MAMÁ Y SUS AGUELOS AHI LE MANDO ESOS REGALITOS CUIDE-LOS.

LE MANDO UN BESO Y UN ABRAZO

SU PAPITO

MANUEL QUIN

Atlantic City, NJ 10 Oct. 99

Hello my *Gunita* (the way I used to say my name 'Wandita') my most humble daughter. I love you very much, all the way to the sky. I want you to always behave and that you tell your sisters not to fight. Always obey your mom and grandparents. I sent you some small gifts, take care of them.

I send you a kiss and a hug.

Your *papito*

Every single person that shared their stories with me wanted to help me move my project forward. They wanted to give me all that they could in order to help me complete it. I see their participation as their way to help my life advance, living out a form of *intimate reliance*. So how can we be a different kind of subject? I could answer so quickly, perhaps, I didn't think much about this. I… spent years trying to write… one of my phenomenology professors once told me that words will come out and I will be proud at the simple fact that I will get to say: "it is finished."

Appendices

Transcription System

[X]= object to which the most immediate (X) refers
(X)= additional context to the sentence prior or object indicated by "[X]", whether it is an explanation, clarification, or [translation] (in which case the word in the original language is in *italics)*.

Italics= words which are in a language other than the main language in which the work in written. In this particular essay, anything other than English.
Italics= words, phrases that author (I) wish to emphasize.
Italics, -1 font size from rest of work= quotes from creative works such as songs, poems, books, articles,etc.
Italics + *= concept introduced for the first time.

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