TESTIMONY OF BERKELEY LAW DELEGATION TO TIJUANA, MEXICO, DECEMBER 2018–JANUARY 2019

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INTRODUCTION

In late December 2018 and early January 2019, two groups of Berkeley Law students traveled to Tijuana, Mexico, at the Mexico-United States border, to provide legal services migrants seeking asylum in the U.S. We spent much of our time providing legal services, legal observation, and logistical support to Al Otro Lado, a migrants’ rights organization based in Los Angeles, California and Tijuana, Mexico.1 This statement is a testimony of what we saw during our time supporting Al Otro Lado’s work at the border and the massive human rights atrocities we witnessed. We feel it is our duty to add our testimony to the chorus of migrants, activists, medics, lawyers, and other advocates sharing the painful stories of what the U.S. and Mexican DOI: https://doi.org/10.15779/Z38W37KW27

* Kiki Tapiero, University of California, Berkeley School of Law, Class of 2020. La Raza Law Journal, Student Submissions Supervising Editor. I would like to thank my family members for going through the immigration process so that I could be here to write this today and for always believing in me.

Monica Ramsy, University of California, Berkeley School of Law, Class of 2019. I would like to thank the matri-lineage of movers, shakers, and garden-makers from which I hail. I would also like to thank her family, chosen and birth-born, for their love and support. Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank my mentors and teachers for ever challenging, expanding, and sweetening my world.

Oscar Sarabia Roman, University of California, Berkeley School of Law, Class of 2021. La Raza Law Journal, Associate Editor.

Deb Choi, University of California, Berkeley School of Law, Class of 2020. With deepest love and eternal gratitude to my family and partner for their love, sacrifice and support, to the migrants who have so generously shared their stories and intimate moments with us all, and especially to the children and their divine gifts of joy and stickers.

Lee Ann Felder-Heim, University of California, Berkeley School of Law, Class of 2021. I would like to thank my co-authors for all of their hard work and on this article, and the people who went on my trip for being such a supportive crew.

Isaac Flegel-Mishlove, University of California, Berkeley School of Law, Class of 2021. With thanks to my ancestors and today's migrants and activists on the frontlines who have fought for a more just world.

Amanda Miller, University of California, Berkeley School of Law, Class of 2020. Thank you to Emily Leung, Esq. for bringing me into this work and supporting me in applying to law school so I can continue this work.

We all would like to thank Al Otro Lado for allowing us to volunteer and for the great work they are doing all year long, the people we worked with who allowed us into their lives, and the many other activists doing immigrant rights work around the world. Additionally, we would like to thank Pro Bono Director Deborah Schlosberg and Professor David Oppenheimer for supporting us --and countless others-- in social justice work at Berkeley Law.

1. See Who We Are, Al OTRO LADO, https://alotrolado.org/who-we-are/ (last visited Mar. 2, 2019) (“[Al Otro Lado is] a bi-national, direct legal services organization serving indigent deportees, migrants, and refugees in Tijuana, Mexico. The bulk of services are immigration-related.”).
governments are inflicting upon families and individuals forced to migrate from their homes.

Consuelo2 had just arrived in Tijuana from Central America. She was six months pregnant and had spent her first night in the Tijuana airport because she did not have anywhere to go and did not feel safe wandering around at night alone. As we spoke, the lines in her face held deep exhaustion, fear, and sadness.

On one fateful day, two weeks before Consuelo would arrive in Tijuana, Consuelo’s mom didn’t come home from work. For two weeks, Consuelo looked for her mom, and—for two weeks—there was no sign of her. Consuelo knew why. Her ex-boyfriend had told her that he would kill her mom, and he had delivered on this fatal promise. He also warned her that once she bore his baby, he would kill her and take the baby to raise by himself. Before he could deliver on that fateful promise, she fled.

Consuelo was quick to correct me when I called her abuser’s words “threats,” for she knew he could—and would—follow through with deadly action. He was a member of a powerful cartel, and she had seen him beat and kill other people before. On two different occasions during their relationship, he had tried to strangle her. This abuse started when she first told him she did not approve of his work. Soon after, she broke things off with him. Consuelo blamed herself for getting involved with him and for her mom’s disappearance. She told me that she didn’t come to Tijuana with hopes of getting asylum in the U.S. to protect herself; she came here to protect her unborn child.

Consuelo’s aunt lives in the U.S. and bought her a flight to Tijuana. She offered to support Consuelo in the U.S. if she is granted asylum. But Consuelo won’t be able to present herself at the port of entry and begin the daunting and often traumatizing process of asking for asylum from the safety of her aunt’s home. Due to an illegal waitlist, she will have to survive in an unknown city for over six weeks without any money or support, constantly at risk of being found by her persecutor and his accomplices.

Consuelo was just one of thousands of migrants whose safety and humanity have been compromised by the U.S. government’s dehumanizing actions at the border. Under both U.S. immigration law and international human rights law, the U.S. must allow all migrants fleeing persecution to present themselves at a port of entry and fight for their asylum case from inside the U.S.3 However, under the current Administration’s never-ending war on racialized bodies, migrants like Consuelo have become pawns in a nationalist agenda to Make America Great Again.

In an effort to make visible and memorialize the human rights atrocities committed by our own government, the following documents the particular ways in which U.S. policy—and the U.S. government’s cooperation with and coercion of Central American governments—is harming countless lives.

THE ILLEGAL LIST

Each morning in Tijuana, our delegation’s first act was to provide legal

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2. Names and identifying information have all been changed for privacy reasons.

orientations and act as legal observers near the city’s primary port of entry as people waited to hear their names called on the illegal list. These morning trips were often bleak. The air was filled with the kind of cold that numbed fingers and toes. It was hard to imagine what the fifty–to–one hundred migrants were feeling. Many had light jackets at most and often gave any extra clothing they had to their children, leaving their own bare skin exposed.

The port of entry was a big plaza with tall, brightly-colored, touristy letters spelling “Tijuana.” While the letters were probably set up for a good photo-op, they were mostly used as a temporary resting place for tired families. On the left side of the plaza, migrants awaited their turn to be called from the illegal list. None of them would be permitted to cross the border until their number was called. In contrast, on the other end of the plaza stood a pedestrian footbridge for people who had the privilege of paperwork. Those of us with freedom of movement would spend just ten minutes crossing over this pedestrian bridge, completing a journey for which many folks had left their lives behind and spent many dangerous months traveling. The painful contrast between the quick trip across the pedestrian footbridge and the migrants waiting for their names to be called was vivid.

Meanwhile, at the port of entry, the names on the illegal list were called out by four migrants who had been assigned the role of “list managers” by Mexican government officials on the scene. These government officials, employees of “Grupos Beta,” were readily identifiable by their orange jackets, sometimes appearing relaxed and joking around, other times acting stern, strict, and inflexible when it came to order and procedure. Grupos Beta employees would guard the list managers and the list, and later store it in a Mexican government toll booth in a nearby parking lot. This list, which is handwritten in a composition journal, includes personal information of thousands of migrants fleeing violence and persecution. It is constantly vulnerable to falling into nefarious hands or being ruined by the elements that a toll booth is not sufficient to protect against.

The migrants tasked with managing the list all stood under a canopy and behind a table, separated from everyone else by a flimsy rope. As they set up, new arrivals would get in line to get themselves a number. They would have to wait in line for hours until list managers would assign them their number by writing down their name and country of origin in the notebook. They were not told that they would probably have to wait at least six weeks before their number was called, since there were thousands of people ahead of them waiting for their own opportunity to access safety. As migrants waited for their turn according to the list, many remained in serious danger from their persecutors and had to live in inadequate shelters or on the street. The list managers bore most of the complaints from people who mistakenly thought that they controlled the list they were “managing.” The reality was that the list managers were very afraid of Grupos Beta and its employees, who kept a careful eye on them to ensure they were properly following the list’s protocol and not giving special privileges to anyone who faced immediate danger. Despite this harrowing surveillance, many list managers continued to demonstrate admirable moments of resilience; in moments of grave, immediate danger, list managers would challenge Customs and Border Protection’s (CBP) and Grupos Beta’s desire for complete control and would organize to allow certain migrants to cut the line in order for them to find relative safety.

Every morning, Grupos Beta informed the list managers how many numbers they could call. They received this number from CBP, who had already advised
Grupos Beta of their “capacity” to process migrants that day. There was no protocol that delineated how CBP determined their processing capacity each day. Far from material limitations, capacity determinations reflected just one more mechanism of power and control to remind migrants that they were unwelcome. Reported capacity would range, on average, from twenty to eighty families per day. However, on some days, such as Christmas and New Year’s Day, CBP reported to have zero capacity to process migrants fleeing violent persecution.

Among the many reasons the arbitrary allocation of capacity is so devastating is the fear that many migrants harbor: that they will be followed, found, and harmed while they wait for their number to be called. Indeed, in our short time in Tijuana we heard multiple stories of families who were desperate to cross because their persecutors knew their location. We learned of minors who were too scared to leave their tents for fear of being seen. The bottleneck of the illegal list, therefore, not only re-traumatizes migrants, but also literally intensifies the danger they are in. It puts migrants in the impossible position of needing to decide whether to wait, perilously, for their chance to cross in search of lasting safety, or to continue moving, perhaps eastward to attempt an informal border cross. Informal desert border crossings are extremely dangerous due to risks of dehydration, encounters with traffickers, and apprehension by U.S. armed forces or vigilantes.

Those who opted to wait in precarious living conditions in Tijuana would return to the port each morning in the few days leading up to their number being called. Because there was no uniform protocol for how many numbers were called each day, migrants had to estimate what day their number would be called, taking into account the vast numerical disparities. On the ground, this meant families would pack up all of their things and prepare for their crossing for multiple days in a row, hoping that the fluctuating daily capacities would just barely catch their number.

When it came time to announce the day’s numbers, one of the list managers would call out the list number, then the last names and countries of origin of all ten of the families who had been assigned to that number. Everyone huddled close to the manager to be sure they didn’t miss their one chance to approach the border. For many in our delegation, the assignment of and reference to people as numbers conjured violent images from our pasts, including the dehumanization of Japanese-Americans by the U.S. government and of Jews by Nazi Germany.

The mood was tense. Though our job was to quickly prepare people for their imminent “credible fear” screening when they crossed, many struggled to focus. Many families would talk lightly to each other, demonstrating their individual and communal resilience given what was behind them, and ahead. After waiting for weeks to have their name called from the illegal list, the time and conditions under which they would have to continue to wait remained a black box. Though they celebrated having their number called after so long, their restlessness indicated their knowledge of the long, perilous journey ahead.

Once their numbers were called, the migrants would be shuffled into a Greyhound bus that would ultimately take them to the border. After months of waiting, they would be allowed to present themselves to CBP officials for the first time. As advocates, we could provide general information about the processes to come, but were largely useless in terms of direct advocacy and support.

Upon presenting themselves at the border, if the migrants adequately made clear that they feared returning to their home country and were seeking asylum, the U.S. government would detain them in the *hieleras* (which translates to “ice boxes”),
detention cells that are intentionally kept very cold and bright. All of the migrants would be incarcerated in the hieleras anywhere between three to ten days, withstanding the cold temperature without adequate clothing or blankets and eating frozen or moldy food.⁴

After the hieleras, they would receive a “credible fear” interview to prove their eligibility for the opportunity to present an asylum claim. Here, an asylum officer would interview and interrogate migrants to determine if they “credibly” feared returning to their country and if they have a “significant possibility” of being granted asylum in the United States.⁵ Given just an hour on average, the migrant would be tasked with eloquently and clearly explicating the trauma they have experienced, often being cut off every 20 seconds by a telephonic interpreter. If successful, they would spend about a year in a “detention center”—the Department of Homeland Security’s term for prisons—awaiting their asylum adjudication in immigration court. Sharing what little, equivocal information we knew about the process, we tried to alleviate the fear that comes from not knowing what was to come.

However, we could not pretend to calm the fear emanating from the question that was on everyone’s mind: “upon crossing the border, will I be separated from my family?”

Many, if not all, of the migrants we worked with had heard of our country’s recent family separation efforts that led to the forcible and sometimes permanent separation of minor children from their parents.⁶ While these inhumane practices had largely ended by the time we arrived to the border, we could provide no assurance that CBP would not use the guise of “defending against child trafficking” to take children from their families. As protective measures, we would advise parents to keep and present their child’s birth certificate or adoption papers as proof of parentage. For those who did not have documentation of parentage, we provided forms that expressly denied consent to have their children separated from them.

But we had nothing to offer aunts traveling with nieces and nephews, or grandparents traveling with grandchildren, since the law does not recognize these familial relationships as warranting protection. Migrants traveling with anyone other than a biological or legally adopted child would likely be separated and incarcerated at separate detention centers. There are no words to describe the feeling of telling a mother than she will unquestionably be separated from her nine-year-old niece that she has raised since birth, or witnessing the effort it took a sixteen-year-old boy to hold in tears after he was advised that his first weeks in the U.S. will be spent alone, separated from his aunts and cousins, the only family he had left since his own immediate family members were murdered.

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Nevertheless, in the face of tremendous adversity, we still witnessed many examples of resilience. One of our authors reflected:

*While parents or guardians received their legal consultations, kids and babies were encouraged to wait and play in the children’s area. It was here that I met children who had joined their families on their exodus. In the presence of their incredible laughs and energy, it was difficult to comprehend that the kids and babies in front of me were the same children who had traveled thousands of miles from their home countries to Tijuana to claim asylum with their families. A couple hours after we met (and after sharing a countless number of his stickers), Darwin—an exceptionally hilarious young boy who was about six years old—gave me half of his orange. Darwin’s incredible generosity and capacity to love was something I experienced with so many of the children that I met while in Tijuana. Their very presence is an incredible manifestation of something more than resilience and something more radical: in resistance to the imagined construct and real oppression of borders, and in the face of such state violence, to give selflessly and laugh wholeheartedly.*

### THE SHORTCOMINGS OF AMERICAN ASYLUM LAW

Once their assigned number is called, migrants enter an asylum process designed to keep them out. Once in the custody of CBP, they are placed in expedited removal proceedings. Then, asylum officers conduct a “credible fear” screening interview to determine if the migrants’ fear is valid and falls within the limited protections of asylum law. Assuming the migrant passes the credible fear interview, the asylum officer refers the case to an immigration judge so that the migrant can formally petition for asylum and similar protections against deportation. If a migrant fails any of these steps, they are deported back to their home country and the persecution that forced them to flee.

However, if a migrant can successfully pass through these stages, they have the opportunity to present their full asylum claim in front of an immigration judge. This presentation requires migrants to persuade a judge that they have experienced or will likely experience persecution on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, and that their home country’s government is unable or unwilling to protect them. If the immigration judge approves the claim, the migrant is granted asylum and legal permission to remain in the U.S. as a Legal Permanent Resident (colloquially referred to as a “greencard” holder), and eventually, a citizen.

Many migrants are unable to meet the legal elements of asylum or are barred from eligibility. We witnessed many who tended to fall under the following general categories:

*Coercive and Inadequate Opportunities to Prepare for their Interview*

The situation purposefully created at the border by the U.S. and Mexican

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9. *Id.*

governments made it impossible for volunteers to meet with each migrant. The Mexican government constantly closed shelters and relocated migrants, thwarting coordination efforts to provide support. As such, not all migrants were aware of the efforts of Al Otro Lado and thus did not receive the information they needed to navigate the asylum process. Al Otro Lado attempted to mitigate this lack of information through quick consultations once migrants’ numbers were called. However, those consultations could only last five to ten minutes and included too much information for any person to retain, let alone someone going through such a traumatizing experience. As law students, the irony does not escape us that the migrants are essentially being asked to apply the law to facts, a skill we spend three years and over one hundred thousand dollars learning.

Not Meeting One or More of the Legal Elements for Asylum

Often, migrants have left their country before they have gathered enough evidence to present a sufficient case by the law’s formulistic standards. Yet they left because they were in terrible, immediate fear for their lives and the lives of their families. They cannot wait until they have evidence that clearly ties their experience to a legal claim; they may be killed if they do.

For example, one couple we worked with was fleeing gang threats from Chiapas, Mexico. They witnessed a massacre, then, on the scene, gang members chased and threatened to kill them and their four children. They recognized the gang members as their neighbors, who knew where they lived and where their children went to school. The gang members called out to each of them by name, and told them they would wait outside their children’s schools to kill them and then come to their house to kill them too. The family left the next day because they knew witnesses of crimes always get murdered. Furthermore, it is well-known to them that the gangs had an extensive network that would be able to find them, even if they fled to another part of Mexico. The wife continued to have nightmares about this up until her intake interview with a volunteer. One threat is often not enough by asylum law’s standards—but how much longer were they supposed to wait?

Falling Under One of the Mandatory Bars for Asylum

Even if the migrant is eligible for asylum because of a credible fear, there are grounds upon which DHS may deny asylum, including a previous criminal conviction, belief that the migrant is engaged or is likely to engage in terrorist activities, or any other “reasonable grounds” that lead DHS to believe the person is a danger to the security of the U.S. This “reasonable grounds” standard is unclear, subjective, and often unrelated to security. For example, the Mexican government offered humanitarian visas to some migrants so they could stay in Mexico. Consequently, this barred those individuals from being eligible for asylum in the U.S. because of a perception that they had “firmly resettled” in another country. The Mexican government failed to explain this result to the migrants.

Overall, the constraint of fitting stories into the U.S.’s legal requirements validates only certain types of experiences. As a consequence, this dehumanizes,
devalues, and discredits the experiences that do not neatly fit into the legal elements of asylum. Furthermore, these legal elements are anything but consistently applied.

The asylum process and laws are indicative of a callous and inhumane U.S. immigration system. Immigration policies have been, at best, indicators of a sociopolitical moment and, at worst, arbitrary proposals that politicians exploit to consolidate power through nationalist tendencies. Our current policies have increasingly criminalized and incarcerated immigrants while militarizing the U.S. border in an effort to deter immigration with very questionable success.

**DIRECT AND PERSONAL IMPACTS OF CHANGING U.S. IMMIGRATION POLICIES**

U.S. immigration policies are changing on a dizzying, day-to-day basis; this rapidly changing landscape leads to direct and indirect impacts that are both deep and wide-ranging. On the most direct level, these policy changes create huge instability for migrants seeking relief at the border. For many migrants, fleeing home is a journey replete with precarious and dangerous situations—situations in which their abusers have hunted them to the border, in which the Mexican government will deport them if they are found to be unaccompanied minors, or in which mounting resource and food insecurity create unsafe and unhealthy living conditions. By destabilizing the U.S. policies that affect this already dangerous journey, we further compound the imminent crisis that looms over each day of these migrants’ lives; with each policy we destabilize, we destabilize immigrants’ chances of surviving this journey.

Alongside the destabilizing effects these changes have on the daily lives of migrants in their journeys, system-wide instability and disruption are the name of this Administration’s game. By constantly changing the legal landscape in which advocates must operate, the Administration has been effective in disrupting advocates’ ability to provide meaningful support.

And what’s more, by constantly changing these conditions, this Administration works to obfuscate and distort the basic parameters that are set out by our immigration laws and the principles that undergird them. We have seen advocates in this work swallow and normalize so many of these distortions in the constant scramble to respond to the ever-changing policies. When we are constantly engaged in this reactive scramble, we fight in a defensive posture and no longer determine the terms and conditions of this struggle. For example, the campaign to “keep families together” normalizes the notion that, as long as families are kept together, they can be detained. Keeping immigrant families free, not detained, reflects the underlying humanitarian principles of asylum law, and should be the goal of our work. And yet, because we are constantly rushing to put out one fire after the next, we often lose sight of what our proactive vision for this work is—a world that treats immigrant communities justly and humanely.

**AUTHORS’ REFLECTIONS ON MIGRANT JUSTICE WORK**

Our trip to Tijuana served as a powerful reminder that it is critical to pause and consider not only our personal connections to this work, but also the politics and principles that bring us into and implicate us in migrant justice work. Beyond the personal connections many of us carry into this work, this trip served as a reminder that in order to dismantle the anti-migrant complex and its attendant systems of
domination, oppression, and marginalization, we need to come together as advocates and engage, wrestle, and ultimately articulate a proactive vision for a world that treats migrant communities with justice, equity, and compassion.

Two of our authors reflect:

Monica

I myself feel personally called to this work as a child of immigrants and member of a persecuted ethnoreligious Middle Eastern minority that has historically sought asylum across the world. While it was powerful seeing folks from all corners of the world and realms of work—from medical providers and immigration attorneys to teachers and clerics—it occurred to me, on more than one occasion, that the motivations that brought us to this place, this moment, this work, were vastly different. There were people I met who expressed anti-imperialist politics in naming their motivation for this work; others were operating on (and manifested) a kind of Orientalist, white savior complex.

Some folks seemed steeped in respectability politics—only interested in supporting migrants insofar as they typified an innocent victim narrative, and felt that lumping all migrants together as “criminals” was wrong, but that perhaps migrants with criminalized histories should not be allowed into the country; others rejected these politics altogether.

Some came to the space with the primary goal of supporting folks from a particular—and oftentimes, more vulnerable—community, like those who identify as LGBTQIA+, or black immigrants; others did not come with a community-specific goal in mind. Some felt that the violation of U.S. and international law was the source of crisis; others questioned the validity of these laws and thought their existence was the source of the crisis.

Meeting all of these individuals and navigating this environment, it occurred to me on multiple occasions that the folks we met in this space came from very different political frameworks and motivations; what’s more, the politics and principles that had inspired people to do this work might be in tension or conflict with each other. This wide variability of experience and motivation reminded that it’s not enough to be “anti-Trump.” Instead, we must activate our political imaginations to collaboratively create a blueprint for a world in which migrants are treated in accordance with the fullness of their humanity.

What’s more, this trip compelled and inspired me to interrogate and clarify my own politics and principles for this work. For me, my politics and principles can be distilled into two, interrelated beliefs: first, that we bear a responsibility as participants and beneficiaries of Global North polities, and second, that the right to movement is a fundamental right that is inextricable from human expression.

On the first point, I believe that we bear a responsibility to do this work as participants in—and beneficiaries of—a nation whose interventionist policies have created much of the instability and conditions that have compelled migrants to leave their homes and set out in the face of countless obstacles like anti-immigrant xenophobia, physical danger, and separation from family and loved ones, all in the hope of finding refuge.

On the second point, I am tired of immigrants being reduced to political chips, whose vulnerability makes them easy targets for fear-mongering politicians hoping to consolidate their own power. I believe that our struggles are interconnected, and
because our struggles are interconnected, our liberation is as well. I believe that when we fight for justice for immigrant communities from a framework that asserts a fundamental right to movement, we fight for justice for us all.

Amanda

Witnessing this massive human rights violation encouraged me to think critically about what brings me to this work. As does Monica, I feel a deep responsibility to engage in this work as a form of reparations for my inherent participation in and benefit from U.S. imperialism and white supremacy. As a white woman committed to using my legal skills to do anti-racist work, my experience at the border forced me to grapple with my own implication in imperialism and the harm that was being committed at the border in my name. Unlike many of my classmates who had personal connections to immigration, I instead was overcome by my own power as a seventh generation white American whose citizenship is vastly dependent on the violence towards and exclusion of “others.”

I had many conversations and interactions during my time at the border that reminded me of the importance of understanding one’s power and privilege in relation to those you seek to advocate alongside. One theme that consistently came up specifically with white Americans was their guilt related to whiteness and the related privilege of crossing borders in relation to the trauma-filled months most migrants had to endure to get that same opportunity. In describing her departure, one volunteer shared, “I left, U.S. passport in my backpack, knowing the border was merely a bridge for me to step across at any hour I wished, all because of the luck of where I’d been born.”

While I admire her vulnerability in sharing her interrogation of privilege with the world, I felt uncomfortable with her framing this privilege as “luck.” To me, this over-simplifies the powerful institutions that have ensured white Americans like myself the freedom of movement while simultaneously excluding others from this same freedom.

While my family history is not generalizable to all white people, I think it provides a good example about how freedom of movement is not happenstance, but rather a result of generations of unfettered white immigration for economic opportunity and safety. My matrilineal lineage is largely made up of the early colonizers of Native Agawam land in what is now recognized as Ipswich, Massachusetts. I intentionally refrain from recognizing these ancestors as immigrants because the intentions, entitlement, and power of colonizers are qualitatively different than those of immigrants, especially the immigrants whom I worked with at the border. In contrast, my patrilineal heritage migrated from Ireland during the potato famine. I can only assume that these family members left their homes in search of the economic security that would allow them to care for their families—the very same reason that countless migrants I met were coerced into leaving their own home countries.

However, due to my family’s whiteness and European ethnicity, the U.S.’s legal system facilitated our immigration into and within the U.S. Whether early colonizers or white Europeans in search of economic stability, there has been vast freedom of movement, largely unaffected by immigration restrictions, racial quotas,

or illegal waitlists. This movement is not “luck,” but rather a product of generations of immigration laws that function to maintain white supremacy.

In a response to Monica’s nuanced critique of orientalist frameworks underlying people’s engagement in this work—particularly white people—I share this to contextualize freedom of movement in histories of colonization, white supremacy, and xenophobia so that white people like myself can implicate ourselves in our country’s violent history to begin to interrogate how we are benefitting from such a system and eventually begin to understand how we can authentically resist and dismantle the same.