

©2018

Deniz Daser

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

LEVERAGING LABOR IN NEW ORLEANS:
WORKLIFE AND INSECURITY AMONG HONDURAN MIGRANTS

By

DENIZ DASER

A dissertation submitted to the

School of Graduate Studies

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Anthropology

Written under the direction of

Angelique Haugerud

And approved by

New Brunswick, New Jersey

January, 2018

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Leveraging Labor in New Orleans:

Worklife and Insecurity among Honduran Migrants

by DENIZ DASER

Dissertation Director:

Angelique Haugerud

As one of the largest migrant communities in New Orleans, Hondurans played a significant role in post-Hurricane Katrina rebuilding. Many of these migrants, still working today in construction, carefully weigh risk and opportunity in pursuing livelihoods characterized by wage theft, work injury, and potential detainment and deportation. This dissertation examines how Hondurans draw upon their post-Katrina labor in rebuilding to assert grassroots political and affective claims to a city – albeit one with deep socioeconomic and racial inequalities – that many of them have come to call home after arduous migratory journeys. The transnational commodity trade from the early twentieth century on encouraged waves of emigration from the banana plantations to the port of New Orleans. These historical relations belie popular accounts of a so-called new Latinx footprint in the city attributed to a growing and often undocumented population filling the ranks of a post-Katrina labor market that had lost its displaced,

largely African-American working class. Drawing on eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork and archival research conducted between 2011 and 2016 in the greater New Orleans area, this dissertation contributes to historically-informed, anthropological understandings of how low-wage workers embody inequalities of local labor markets such as work injury, wage theft, and potential detainment and deportation; how migrants frame labor as an ethical contribution through which they assert civic belonging; and finally, how insecurities such as crime, aggressive law enforcement, and precarious worksites are transnationally linked from migrant departure to settlement.

Acknowledgements

While solitude frequently characterizes long-term ethnographic fieldwork and subsequent dissertation writing, I came to see how the entire process also constituted a collective effort in which a galaxy of support of family, friends, peers, academic advisors and administrators, and research interlocutors faithfully rotated around me, sustaining my work and buoying my energy. I could not have written this dissertation without these emotional, intellectual, financial, and physical forms of support that accompanied me in 2010 as a first-year PhD student interested in further exploring the workforce that rebuilt New Orleans, to a pregnant anthropologist conducting long-term fieldwork from 2013 to 2014, to finally writing and defending my dissertation.

First and foremost, I want to thank my advisor, Angelique Haugerud. Throughout this process, Angelique has been an incredible mentor and advocate. Her unwavering faith in my project and my capacity to realize that project helped me through even the most challenging of times. Not only an encouraging voice on my research, Angelique also provided a critical though always positive editor's eye to my writing, challenging my unstated assumptions and pushing my thinking and writing towards greater clarity, accessibility, and professionalism. By setting such high expectations for research and writing, she has treated me like a peer and instilled an understanding of academic professionalism that I have benefitted from immensely.

I am grateful to my dissertation committee members, Daniel Goldstein, Steve Striffler, and Ulla Berg for providing key mentorship and helpful feedback on the early and final drafts of the dissertation. I owe a special thanks to Steve for his kindness in

serving as one of my earliest contacts in New Orleans and his role in unhesitatingly introducing me to numerous interlocutors in the field. In addition, I appreciate Dorothy Hodgson's support and early advising from Rocío Magaña, and Fran Mascia-Lees..

Since 2010, my Rutgers family has remained a pillar of emotional support. I am grateful for the friendship, camaraderie, and humor of Donna Auston, Tristan Jones, Siad Darwish, Marlaina Martin, Marian Thorpe, Allison Bloom, and Mike Allen. A deep appreciation goes also to my fellow cohort members, Senem Kaptan, Christopher Bauer, Juan Pablo Vera Lugo, and especially Randall Winston, whose pop culture riffs kept me going between intense study sessions. As earlier graduates from the program, Omotayo Jolaosho, Dillon Mahoney, and Nell Quest were incredibly kind in lending advice and support in navigating academia. Thank you to the feedback and support of faculty such as Dorothy Hodgson, Fran Mascia-Lees, Rocío Magaña and all the administrative staff who have been exceedingly patient with me.

I am grateful for the Rutgers Graduate School Excellence Fellowship, which provided me with financial support throughout my years as a student. Additional funds through the Society for Economic Anthropology, Rutgers Center for Latin American Studies, the Labor Research and Action Network, Tulane University's New Orleans Center for the Gulf South, and the University of Konstanz have made travel, research, and writing possible.

Outside of the academic world, I have been lucky to be surrounded by a strong network of support. My mother, Şayeste Daşer, has always led by example. Her strong work ethic has lit a path for me throughout my scholarly training. My father, Kutay Daşer, has provided the sense of humor and pathos that has allowed me to face challenges

in the field and, in particular, writing a dissertation. I am grateful to both of them for their unwavering support. I thank my brother, Kerem Daşer, for providing a safe space in which to unwind. My deepest appreciation goes to Georg Fehling and Christine Fehling-Joss, both of whom always supported my academic goals in more ways than one. Additional thanks goes to Ezher, Lale, Nazife, Ülker, and Tuay for their supportive prayers and Sabine Joss for childcare help while I was writing. My anthropological “twin” Duygu Parmaksızoğlu has been a good friend for more than twenty years- I thank her for her friendship.

Finally, this research would have been impossible without the generous spirit of people in New Orleans, in particular the Honduran migrants and their advocates who so kindly made time for me and shared their experiences – ranging from the joyous to the painful. While they remain nameless here in order to protect their identities, their words and stories inform this entire written work.

And thank you, Kaya. You made it all worth it.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
List of Graphs	ix
List of Maps	x
List of Photos	xi
Chapter 1: Mapping Honduran New Orleans	1
Histories of Migration and Trade	11
Katrina and Rebuilding	22
Methods	27
Chapter Outline	30
Chapter 2: Trading Bananas: Histories of the Honduran-New Orleans Commodity Trade	41
United Fruit in Honduras and New Orleans	46
Standard Fruit: Ledgers, Accounts, and Omissions	53
“Money and Muscle”: The Politics of Migration	62
Conclusion	69
Chapter 3: Embodying Labor and the Work Ethic on the Raced and Gendered Worksite	74
Embodied Worker Vulnerabilities	77
The Work Ethic and the Politics of Race	87
Contracting and Gender in the Labor Process	97
Conclusion	110
Chapter 4: “There is no Labor Landscape Here”: Labor Market Stratification, Subcontracting, and Enforcement in New Orleans	113
Race, Unions, and Worker Organizing	116

(Sub)contracting in a Stratified Construction Labor Market	123
Underfunded Advocacy and Bureaucratic Enforcement	133
Conclusion: Showing Up and Showing Up Again	143
Chapter 5: Facing Insecurity from Honduras to New Orleans	146
<i>“Es Duro Venirse Uno”</i> (“It’s Hard for One to Arrive”)	150
Urban Mobility and Fear	159
Leaving: Voluntary and Involuntary Return	170
Conclusion: Bearing Witness to Crisis	181
Chapter 6: Forging Belonging through Language Learning and Political Protest	185
Maintaining Sociality from Afar: Remittances and Loneliness in the City	187
Conviviality and Friendship	197
Learning English, Finding Belonging	205
Non-Citizen Citizens: Asserting the Right to Stay through Protest	212
Conclusion	225
Conclusion	229
References Cited	238

List of Graphs

Graph	Page
Graph 1.1: Year 2000 Hispanic Origin of Greater New Orleans	10
Graph 1.2: Year 2015 Hispanic Origin of Greater New Orleans	10

List of Maps

Map	Page
Map 1.1: Greater New Orleans	5
Map 1.2: Orleans Parish Neighborhoods	6
Map 1.3: The Gulf of Mexico	9
Map 1.4: Neighborhood Elevation Levels	25
Map 1.5: Post-Katrina Flooding	25

List of Photos

Photo	Page
Photo 1.1: Present-day Façade of United Fruit Company	2
Photo 2.1: <i>El Ceibeño</i> Tire Shop	54
Photo 2.2: List of Standard Fruit Stockholders	56
Photo 2.3: List of Standard Fruit American Employees	57
Photo 2.4: Hotel Panamericano Pamphlet	68
Photo 2.5: Port Record Cover	70
Photo 2.6: Front of Unloading Bananas Postcard	71
Photo 2.7: Back of Unloading Bananas Postcard	72
Photo 3.1: Larissa's House Under Construction	102
Photo 3.2: Larissa's Completed House	103
Photo 3.3: Home Depot in the Early Morning	106
Photo 3.4: Luiz' Work Van	107
Photo 3.5: Luiz and His Worker	108
Photo 4.1: Workers on an Oak Street Scaffold	113
Photo 4.2: STAND Celebration in NOWCRJ Backyard	116
Photo 4.3: Post-Katrina Signage	123
Photo 4.4: Abandoned House Across from Construction Site	123
Photo 4.5: (Sub)contractors and Workers in the French Quarter	128
Photo 5.1: <i>Lonchera</i> Workers in Mid-City	157
Photo 5.2: Candle for Protection from the Police	163
Photo 5.3 Candle to Bring <i>Trabajo</i> (Work) in Mid-City Botanica	164
Photo 6.1: Kenner Latinx Food Market	190
Photo 6.2: Money Transfer Services in Kenner	190

Photo 6.3: CAE Group Discussion	199
Photo 6.4: <i>Congreso</i> Meeting	215
Photo 6.5: “Too Million Too Many” Protest	221
Photo 6.6: “Too Million Too Many” Protest	221
Photo 6.7: Day of the Dead Altar	226

***Chapter 1:
Mapping Honduran New Orleans***

The Mississippi River winds its way through the city of New Orleans, creating the illusion on a map of a land mass fractured by a serpentine waterway. The West Bank – land lying not to the west but to the south of the river – and New Orleans proper – situated north of the river – are a territorial hybrid of sediment, loamy topsoil, and ever-sinking land that over centuries colonizing forces and the US government have attempted to control through systems of levees, bridges, banks, and canals. The highest land and the oldest section of the city, the *Vieux Carré*, known more commonly as the French Quarter, lies along gridded streets in which bars, tourist shops, museums, and residential homes dwell side-by-side within structures built largely under Spanish governance (1769-1803). Leaving the west side of the French Quarter involves crossing Canal Street, the main artery of the city's commercial and touristic center. In the mid-nineteenth century Canal Street divided the Francophone French Quarter and the newer immigrant Anglo and German-speaking side of what is today the Central Business District, a complex of municipal offices, conference hotels reliant on a migrant workforce, and construction that provides homes for newly arrived venture capital. At 321 St. Charles Avenue, the ornate façade to United Fruit Company has been preserved, even as the company, long dominant in Honduras and based in New Orleans from 1933 to 1985, never returned.



Photo 1.1: Present-day Facade of United Fruit Company at 321 St. Charles Avenue in New Orleans. Photo credit: Andrew Sluyter.

Traveling on St. Charles Avenue further westward and roughly parallel to the Mississippi River leads to the Lower Garden District. Today a gentrified neighborhood dominated by Magazine Street and its myriad dive bars, trendy boutiques, fusion restaurants, and coffee shops with free Wi-Fi, in the 1950s the heavily Honduran area was known as *El Barrio Lempira* (Euraque 2004; Sluyter et al. 2015).¹ Less than seven blocks south of Magazine Street lies the Port of New Orleans on the rounded edge of the

¹ “*Lempira*” refers to an indigenous leader of Honduras who resisted Spanish occupation of the sixteenth century. It is also the name of the Honduran currency (Pine 2008, 10).

river's crescent in the Irish Channel neighborhood. In the late nineteenth century, longshoremen began unloading bananas and other commodities and goods on the shores of the river to what was one of the largest ports in the country. Like the United Fruit façade and *Barrio Lempira*, the urban neighborhoods and suburban districts of greater New Orleans feature imprints and histories of relations forged between the city and Honduras.

The Honduran presence is rooted in more than a century of transnational commodity exchange in which New Orleans-based firms intervened in the banana plantations and governance structures of Honduras. During the mid-twentieth century, New Orleans became known as the largest Honduran population outside of Honduras, largely due to relations forged through the fruit trade (Sluyter 2015). Yet, rather than an identity based on actual^o numbers, Sluyter et al. (2015, 1183) argue that a sense of attachment emerged for Honduran New Orleanians through the stories the community told, the landscapes they produced through their residency, and the myriad ways that “people form an attachment to their city of residence” and “personal identity, ethnic identity, and place identity become intricately interwoven.” As the largest Latinx² population in the city today (Sluyter et al. 2015, 430), a newer wave of Honduran migrants have played a key role in post-Hurricane Katrina clean-up and reconstruction

² Throughout the text I use the term “Latinx” and “Latinxs” except for when context necessitates usage of either “Latino” or “Latina.” The term “Latinx” has emerged in recent years as a more elegant replacement for “Latino” (too masculine-focused) and “Latina/o” or “Latino/a” and “Latin@” (less masculinized but too gender binary), terms that refer to people of Latin American descent living in the US (Milian 2017). As Milian (2017, 127) states, the letter “X” (in her usage an uppercase “x”) has “been a significant precursor to the exploration of self-naming and of going from being an ‘un-identified’ group to new political subject.”

and are forming new connections with the city, this time as (mostly) undocumented migrants.³

How have Honduran construction workers in New Orleans leveraged risk in pursuit of livelihoods characterized by widespread wage theft, work injury, and threats of detainment and deportation? That is the focus of this dissertation, which demonstrates how Honduran workers in New Orleans have drawn upon their labor to assert civic belonging to the city they helped to rebuild under protracted insecurity. As post-Katrina rebuilding has segued into new and robust forms of construction, Latinx migrants and their advocates have built a political organization upon the literal reconstruction of a city in which the vernacular architecture – housing in particular – has been key to sustaining the tourism and hospitality industries that bring in revenue and attract public interest.

Such tourism magnets include the Uptown district, where the houses grow larger, more estate-like. This district, along with the French Quarter, was the least affected by the flooding after Katrina due to higher ground and greater government and private sector care while districts that were most negatively affected by the flooding tended to range from the poor and working class to more socioeconomically diverse (Adams 2013; Gotham and Greenberg 2014; Harvey, Kato, and Passidomo 2016; Johnson 2011; Lipsitz 2006). Such diverse neighborhoods include Mid-City, reached by turning northward away from Uptown. While the infamous potholes of the city retain their ubiquity regardless of neighborhood wealth, the houses here grow smaller and more modest.

Frayed wires and decaying electric infrastructure pepper the landscape and skirt the

³ Throughout I utilize the term “migrant” instead of “immigrant,” as “migrant” preserves the ongoing movement of migrants and not the unidirectional movement implied in the term “immigrant” (De Genova 2005). Its usage also keeps in mind the ongoing vulnerability of informally authorized peoples whose mobility is simultaneously fluid and restricted, as “the term ‘migrant’ is intended to do a certain epistemological work, to serve as a category of analysis that disrupts the implicit teleology of the more conventional term immigrant” (De Genova 2005, 2-3).

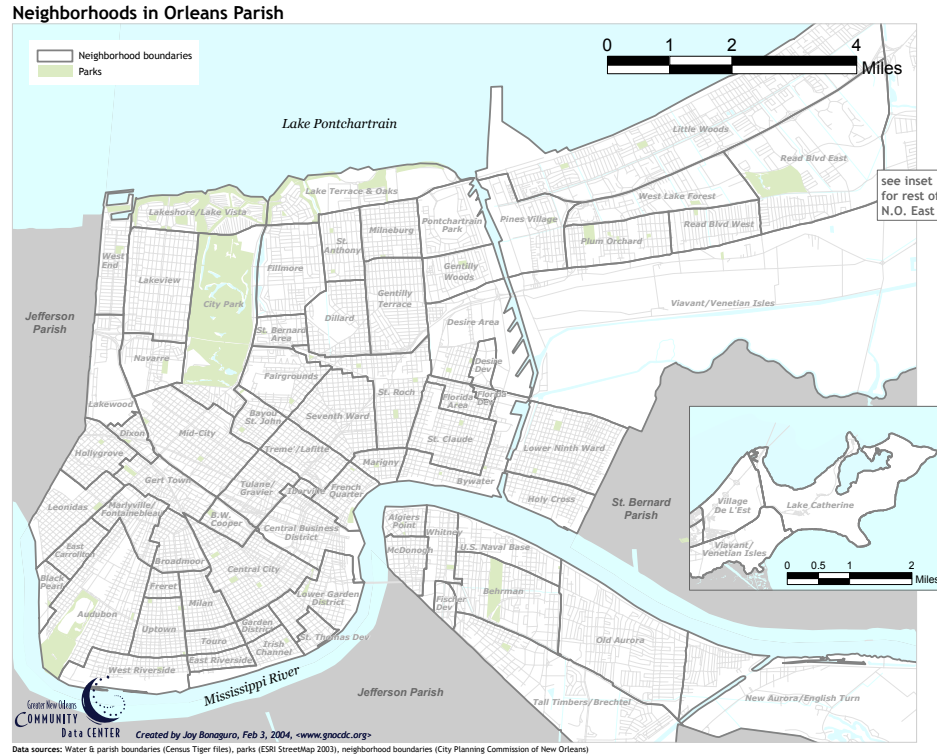
colorful mosaic of Creole cottages and shotgun houses.⁴ Located close to streetcars that run up and down Canal Street, Mid-City and its diverse housing stock is a growing home to many undocumented⁵ post-Katrina Latinx migrants who, fearing detainment by police while driving or lacking funds to buy a car, rely on public transportation to access downtown, where jobs in hospitality dominate.



Map 1.1: Greater New Orleans. Map courtesy of The Data Center.

⁴ A shotgun house is a one-story, one room-wide dwelling featuring a front porch characterized by the construction of one room after the other without a hallway, and reminiscent of architectural structures in Haiti and the French Caribbean (Vlach 1976, 57). People in New Orleans colloquially refer to the ability to shoot a gun and have the bullet make its way from the front to the back of the house without going through any walls as the reason for the name.

⁵ According to Plascencia (2012), using the terms “undocumented” and “documented” perpetuates what (Chávez 2007) calls the legally fictitious binary of “illegal” and “legal.” Instead, “informally authorized” (Plascencia 2012) better captures the grey zone migrants navigate in terms of rights, eligibilities, and ability to work. As I found in my own research also, migrant workers’ legal status often remained ambiguous though insecure due to the complicated nature of US immigration law and the differing approaches of federal bureaucracies such as Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the IRS. At the same time, “undocumented” captures the vulnerability of Latinx migrants targeted by an increasingly aggressive federal law enforcement regime. Therefore, I refer to migrants lacking the papers to work legally as “undocumented” except when the status of their right to stay in the country is more ambiguous, such as in the case of buying a house, starting a business, or remaining in the country between immigration court dates, in which case I use “informally authorized.”



Map 1.2: Orleans Parish Neighborhoods. Map courtesy of The Data Center.

Passing by just north of the French Quarter, Interstate 10 strikes a curving line over Mid-City as it moves through New Orleans proper. It glides towards the 1300-acre City Park, and into the outer limits towards suburbs such as Metairie and Kenner, leading commuters out of Orleans Parish and into Jefferson Parish. Taking any one of several exits off the highway, the low-lying brick residences that immediately greet drivers upon leaving New Orleans proper contrast sharply to the shotgun structures of the city just left behind. Alongside the “white flight” of the post-Civil Rights movement era in the 1960s and 1970s into the suburbs surrounding New Orleans (Fussell 2011), migrant groups like Hondurans from the *Barrio Lempira* joined others seeking cheaper housing, in what they viewed as safer neighborhoods and with easy access to the city (Euraque 2004; Sluyter et al. 2015). By providing the city with the labor force needed to sustain the city

government, building trades, and the tourism and hospitality industries, Metairie and Kenner are in many ways as “New Orleans” as the French Quarter or Uptown. In the years since Katrina, businesses catering to Latin American residents in both Metairie and Kenner have continued to expand, made clear within the visual landscape of Latinx markets, Honduran and Brazilian restaurants, Spanish-language workers compensation signs, and churches serving Spanish speakers.

Katrina was an enormous pull factor in encouraging Latinx migrants to the area, many of whom were undocumented (Fletcher et al. 2006; Fussell 2009b). In the past decade, New Orleans has emerged as a “hub of Central American migration” (The Data Center 2017), largely due to the changed demographics of post-Katrina labor markets that saw a loss of working class white and African-American residents (Fletcher et al. 2006; Fussell 2009b).⁶ As of 2015, migrants from Central America constituted fifty percent of the New Orleans metro area’s Latinx community in contrast to nine percent of the broader US Latinx population (The Data Center 2017).⁷

Honduran migrants in particular have drawn upon contacts of family and friends already living in New Orleans in a process of chain, or “network-mediated” migration (Brettell and Hollifield 2008, 107) to settle in the area.⁸ Rather than the “hurricane chasers” (Fussell 2009a) from Central American and Mexico who are highly mobile and move from one post-disaster site to another, I have found that many Honduran migrants have remained in the greater New Orleans area and have sought to bring family from

⁶ Along with the in-migration of Latinx migrant workers, the numbers of upper middle-class whites moving to the area and heightened levels of income inequality have also characterized the post-Katrina demographics of New Orleans (Sastry 2009).

⁷ The Data Center is an independent, non-profit organization that analyzes data and produces reports on housing, demographic, economic, environmental, and disaster recovery issues in Southeast Louisiana.

⁸ For more on “chain migration,” see Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002.

Honduras to New Orleans in order to settle in the area.⁹ Thus, while both Hondurans and the broader public in New Orleans identify post-Katrina rebuilding as a catalyst for immigration, this study and other future research into the history of Honduran migration to New Orleans will shed light on how the community came to be a large percentage of the Latinx population in the city.

The 1990 census reported 9,700 individuals who were born in Honduras as living in the greater New Orleans area while the 2000 census described 7,503 residents, with several thousands more of Honduran origin in both the respective census years (Sluyter et al. 2015, 4448). After the height of the post-Katrina clean-up and more than a decade after temporary legal status was granted to Hurricane Mitch refugees in 1998, 2010 census findings reported that Hondurans number at 22,335, still nearly triple the number in 2000 (Sluyter et al. 2015, 1538). Hondurans also went from comprising fourteen percent of the Latinx population in greater New Orleans to more than 27 percent in 2010 and 34 percent in 2015 (Sluyter et al. 2015, 1538). While these numbers give us an approximate figure, Census Bureau figures may not capture the total number of Hondurans because of a number of reasons, such as hesitation on the part of undocumented people to speak with census officials, potential confusion caused by the need to write in the country of origin (Honduras) instead of checking it off a list (Sluyter et al. 2015, 1326-1327), and finally, individuals of Honduran origin but born in the US not identifying as “Latino” or “Hispanic,” instead opting for “white” or “Black.”¹⁰

⁹ Having arrived in New Orleans in 2011, I may have missed many of the hurricane chasers who had moved on to other areas.

¹⁰ I witnessed this practice upon meeting a construction worker who identified as Black rather than Latinx, though as a person of Garifuna origin hailing from the island of Roatán he held Honduran citizenship. As a multi-racial ethnic group of African and Caribbean indigenous origin, Garifuna individuals are spread out throughout Central America and throughout the U.S. (England 2010; Sluyter et al. 2015, 2266).

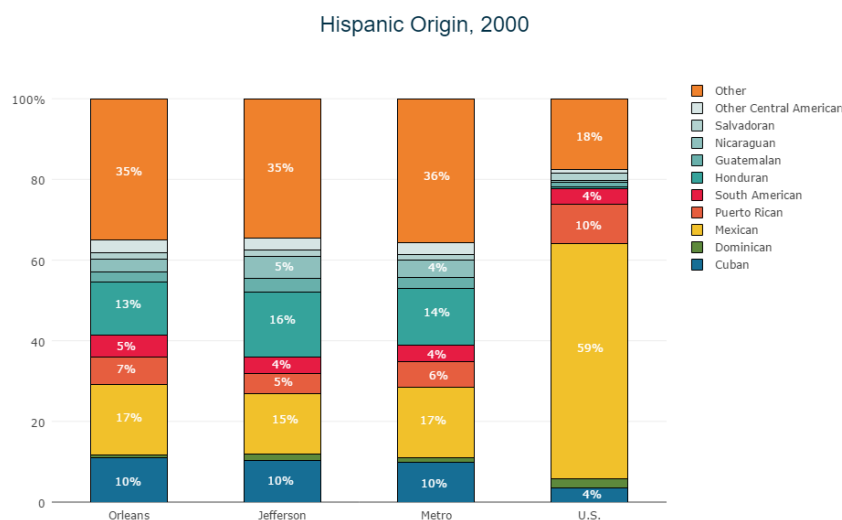
While Hondurans constitute the largest Latinx population in New Orleans, smaller numbers of Latin Americans have arrived for centuries. The sugar trade between Cuba and New Orleans encouraged Cuban migration to New Orleans since the eighteenth century and coffee from Brazil and Central America continues to arrive in large quantities to the port of New Orleans, thus encouraging human in-migration also. For many decades Honduran, Cuban, and Mexican populations constituted the largest percentage of the Latinx population in New Orleans, the latter largely because of the legacy of the Bracero Program, shared border, and comparatively large population (Sluyter et al. 2015, 448).



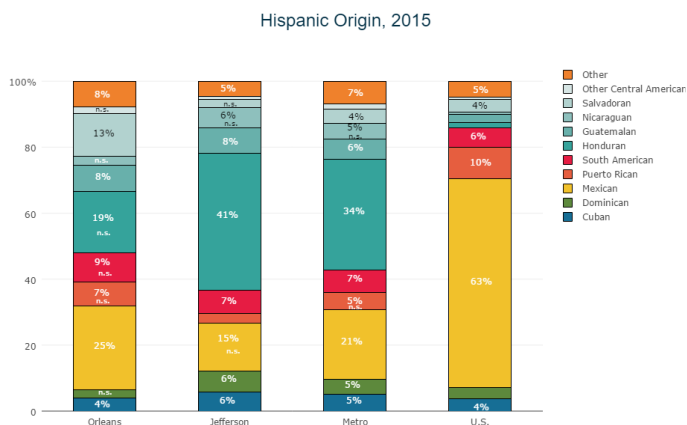
See Map 1.3: The Gulf of Mexico.

Though migrant communities from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua have historically been much smaller in size than the Honduran population, similar trade routes and transport have encouraged some settlement in New Orleans, with “periodic disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions; extreme economic and social inequity; and political violence, sometimes related to US foreign policy” playing a role in

encouraging Central American migration (Sluyter et al. 2015, 2220).¹¹ Graphs 1.1 and 1.2 highlight the shifting demographics within the Latin American population in New Orleans’ urban Orleans Parish and Metairie and Kenner of suburban Jefferson Parish.



Graph 1.1: Year 2000 Hispanic Origin of Greater New Orleans. Source: The Data Center, analysis of 2000 Census data and 2015 American Community Survey.



Graph 1.2: Year 2015 Hispanic Origin of Greater New Orleans. Source: The Data Center, analysis of 2000 Census data and 2015 American Community Survey.

¹¹ Many of the Nicaraguans I met came in the 1980s as refugees from the war in which the US supported the right-wing Contras against leftist Sandinistas. Significantly, Honduras served as a launching pad for the US military to combat left-wing movements throughout Central America (Phillips 2015; Vine 2015).

These graphs show a substantial increase in the Honduran population between 2000 and 2015 both in total numbers and in proportion to other Latinx groups. Yet, unlike the established and institutionalized presence of particular immigrant groups in urban centers such as immigrants from Turkey in Berlin (Çağlar 1995; Soysal 2003), Pakistani immigrants in London (Werbner 1990), or the historical migrations of Italians and Jews to New York City (Foner 2000), both press and scholarly accounts of Latinx New Orleans in the post-Katrina era have included Hondurans in New Orleans as part of a larger Latinx community that arrived in the wake of Katrina (Sluyter et al. 2015).¹² Understanding the significant though often-unrecognized presence of this community today begins with examining the key historical relations Honduras has maintained with this urban center.

Histories of Migration and Trade

It was in one of the aforementioned low-lying, one-story brick houses in the suburb of Kenner that I sat with Julio, a fifty-year-old Honduran-American chef at a local major grocery chain. It was late afternoon in August of 2014 and I had already interviewed his wife María, formerly a post-Katrina reconstruction worker also from Honduras. She had turned her attention to the kitchen, preparing a meal she usually makes for the migrant workers who frequent her now-popular *lonchera*, or food truck (Fouts 2017a). Under the din of a television in the adjoining living room where their three sons sat watching cartoons, Julio recounted to me how he came in the 1980s to New Orleans from Honduras after finishing high school to attend college in a setting more

¹² For scholarly exceptions, see Euraque (2004), Fouts (2017a), Jelly-Schapiro (2013), Murga (2014), and Sluyter et al. (2015).

stable and prosperous than his home country. I asked, “And why did you come here to New Orleans specifically?” Switching between English and Spanish, he replied with a smile, “I had an aunt who worked here for a large law firm. And because historically New Orleans is the bridge for many Hondurans. *Si teníamos alguien, era aquí en Nueva Orleans,*” or roughly translated, “if we knew anyone here [in the US], he or she was in New Orleans.” Julio’s father had worked for the New Orleans-based banana industry in Honduras in the mid-twentieth century. Active in the local union for banana workers, his professional connections had opened up possibilities for his family to migrate to New Orleans.

The origins of the metaphorical bridge Julio points to lie in the commodity trade – primarily in bananas and other fruit products – beginning in the late nineteenth century. Throughout the twentieth century, promotional materials painted New Orleans as the “Gateway to the Americas” (Bolner, Yerton, and Darcé 2003). In the 1960s a sign proclaiming the slogan even greeted visitors arriving at the New Orleans international airport (Gruesz 2006, 491). Firms headquartered in New Orleans such as United and Standard Fruit became deeply involved in the political economy of Central America starting in the early twentieth century and beyond (Acker 1988; Karnes 1978; Soluri 2005). The linkages between these past relations of capital and subsequent generations of migration are reflected in the accounts of migrants I spoke with, nearly all of whom had family, relatives, or close family friends who had already settled in New Orleans. While these linkages remain, the differences between those who migrated earlier and those who came in the wake of Katrina cannot be overstated. While Julio obtained a visa to study in the US relatively easily, his wife María who came after Katrina not only underwent a

difficult journey over land to arrive, but continues to live under the cloud of undocumented insecurity.

How is this history of the commodity trade linked to the experiences of Honduran migrant workers today in the New Orleans construction industry? As a port city, New Orleans has for centuries connected the Gulf South region and the US more broadly to the Caribbean, but also Central America, West Africa, and Western Europe (Adams and Striffler 2014; Campanella 2008; Hall 1995; Powell 2013; Solnit and Snedeker 2013; Sublette 2008). Flows – both old and new – of labor, goods, and capital have shaped the trajectory of the city as desirable not just for arriving migrants, but also as a departure point for migrants seeking economic opportunity in Central America. Both Honduras and New Orleans were arguably co-constituted through the interventions of these New Orleans-based fruit companies in Honduras in the early-to mid-twentieth century.

“Localizing” New Orleans as a site of arrival and departure historically and materially situates its development into an urban center.¹³ By contextualizing the development of New Orleans through the expansion of US capital beyond national borders and the goods and labor that flowed into and out of the city’s port, it is possible to situate the archival research I conducted during fieldwork and explicate how labor regimes have been linked. The “banana men” (Langley and Schoonover 1995), or leaders of companies like Standard and United, and Honduran banana workers alike have actively engaged in and shaped these social and historical formations. The reasons these

¹³ Trouillot (2003, 122-123, 128) draws a significant distinction amongst “location” as historically situated and constructed; “locale” as a “venue,” or a place defined by what occurs; and “locality” as a place related to through its “human content” and social specificities.

fruit companies headquartered in New Orleans date back to its earliest colonization as an imperial port.

In the early eighteenth century, the French and Spanish-speaking free Blacks arrived in the area of New Orleans, a long-standing indigenous settlement (Powell 2013). The rivers and lakes flowing downstream from Quebec, Canada to Louisiana and emptying into the ocean created a busy route of commerce that linked French colonial outposts (Solnit and Snedeker 2013). Migration to New Orleans during this early era developed alongside a public reputation of New Orleans as a site of debauchery and criminality. French sources at the time articulated the city as attracting “undesirables” such as “tobacco smugglers, thieves, beggars, vagabonds, orphans, the unemployed, the incorrigible, the vicious, the depraved, the wrongly accused, and bystanders” sent from France to the discursively “inhospitable” climate of Louisiana, often under conditions of indentured servitude (Sublette 2008, 52-53). As Dawdy and Weyhing (2008) found in their archaeological study of New Orleans, from the eighteenth century on city administrators and other chroniclers began embracing to varying degrees the reputation of New Orleans as a site of insubordination characteristic of frontier towns.

While divergent approaches to law, economics, and slavery under French, Spanish, and Anglo-American colonial regimes helped to institutionalize particular practices in the city in ways that have both set it apart from and embedded it within the rest of the US South (Spain 1979),¹⁴ it was the introduction of a regularized and systematic slave trade to New Orleans in 1719 that marked its development into a town of expanded trade (Fussell 2007). While most of the slave trade focused on the hugely

¹⁴ Though these eras of governance are separated into distinct periods, in reality conflicting and overlapping trade practices, legal philosophies, and cultural practices often accompanied changes in political regimes (Campanella 2008, 26, 32).

prosperous Saint-Domingue, New Orleans was a key port in the trans-Atlantic and Caribbean routes over which slaves were brought (Spain 1979, 83).¹⁵ Due to the weakness of France in light of Spain's increased colonial hegemony in the region, particularly in Cuba and the other port city of Havana, Spain began taking over the occupation of Louisiana from France in the period 1762-1769 (Garvey and Widmer 2013, 292). While Spain was only officially in charge of New Orleans and the surrounding area from 1769 to 1803, this was a significant period in the history of New Orleans and the broader region, due not only to the political backdrop of the Haitian, French, and American revolutions, but also as a result of increased trade with Cuba (which lasted until the US's embargo in the mid-twentieth century) and the revenue from silver extraction in Peru and Mexico en route to Spain (Sublette 2008, 4, 98, 105).

Yet governing New Orleans meant governing a predominantly French-speaking population unhappy with the stricter presence of a Spanish colonial power. Spain's state apparatus had developed centralizing tendencies through centuries of religious wars and attempts to govern the Iberian peninsula from the fifteenth century on (Powell 2013). Spanish governance in New Orleans introduced a taxation system; safety codes and inspections for public health purposes; other public works such as nighttime lighting, firefighting, policing, and levee construction; and the standardization of a variety of professions through licensing procedures. In many ways, the Spanish colonial presence established New Orleans as what many would consider a modern urban center. The mid-1790s also saw the increased migration into New Orleans of Anglo-American workers.

¹⁵ Saint-Domingue was the territory later known as Haiti after its revolution in the period 1791-1804. Along with the broad array of trade skills that slaves brought with them from the various locations of Africa that they hailed from, they also introduced many musical, culinary, and syncretic religious traditions that continue to characterize the social, cultural, and economic life of New Orleans today (Hall 1995; Evans 2011).

While in 1790 there were seven French-speakers for every English-speaker, by the end of the 1790s, that ratio had decreased to three-to-one (Domínguez 1986, 110).¹⁶

At the time of the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 and the transfer of New Orleans into Anglo-America, New Orleans was already embedded within the vast network of the sugar trade, centered particularly in the area of Saint-Domingue (Spain 1979, 84). The Haitian Revolution and subsequent founding of the Republic of Haiti provoked a massive refugee flow of mostly white Saint-Domingans and their slaves into New Orleans from Cuba in 1809, thus opening up multiple avenues of trade that had been previously held by Saint-Domingue (Domínguez 1986, 115; Evans 2011, 25). After 1809, the number of slaves, free people of color, and whites became approximately equal (Campanella 2008, 27). Like the Spanish authorities, personal correspondences and newspaper accounts from the era report an Anglo-American administration finding it hard to rule the “unruly, indignant, and polyglot population” resulting from earlier rule (Thompson 2009, 4) that was “confronted with the brash vulgarities and backwoods manners of the ‘*Americains*’” (Spain 1979, 84).

After an economic depression in the late eighteenth century, the introduction of the cotton gin and the discovery of sugarcane extraction in the area in the early nineteenth century led to a resurgence of New Orleans’ economic status (Spain 1979, 84).¹⁷ In the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century when the US took over governorship, New Orleans became the largest slave market in the country and remained an economy larger

¹⁶ While the French-produced aspects of the city, e.g. architecture, have remained the “the least well preserved and least understood period of the city’s history,” Frenchness rather than Spanishness continues to be discursively constructed as a primary characteristic of New Orleanian identity in the present moment (Dawdy 2008, xvi). It is with Anglo-American rule that this reputation, ironically, is solidified.

¹⁷ Demand from a rapidly industrializing Great Britain fed the need for an increased production of cotton (Smith and Cothren 1999). Ironically, the cotton gin “doomed generations of African Americans to slavery, an institution many people had hoped was fading” as the process made the processing of previously unworkable cotton possible (Sublette 2008, 169).

than cotton, an industry itself dominated by the labor of slaves (Thompson 2009, 10). In this sense, New Orleans is a deeply Southern city, as the slave economy helped to establish trade relations between the many states of the South. New Orleans helped to construct the “white South” as a self-aware “nation” intent upon controlling westward expansion in competition with the North (Sublette 2008, 238).

More than just a receiving city for migrants – both voluntary and forced – New Orleans also served as a jumping-off point for US imperial interests. US imperial formation has been a layered and gradated process of expansions of sovereignty, “from Guam and Samoa to Puerto Rico and Cuba, from the Philippines to Tennessee, and Oklahoma to the Middle East” (Stoler 2006, 8). By problematizing the US as an “exceptional” case and thus immune to the labels of imperialism and empire, Ann Laura Stoler (2006, 9) argues for viewing empires as “states of becoming (and, for those ruled, as states of deferral), as polities with protean rather than fixed taxonomies and mobile populations whose designated borders at any one time were not necessarily the force fields in which they operated or even their sovereign limits.”

Thus, relations of power were complicated and multi-layered in the many forms of colonial rule in New Orleans and beyond, while remaining mutable as well. Like empire, the city itself can be seen as emerging through an ongoing “state of becoming” through changing populations, capital formations, and legal codes. The early nineteenth century constituted an era in which resource extraction from the Americas was ongoing and the development of American capitalism continued unabated. The introduction of the

steamboat ushered in an era of increased trade both up and down river.¹⁸ As labor historian Eric Arnesen (1991, vii) describes it, steamboat traffic provided a spectacle of “hundreds of ships and thousands of men” within the economic landscape of New Orleans in which a diverse group of workers labored together, though in racially and ethnically stratified conditions (cf. Spain 1979, 88-89). In addition, this was a period of nascent tourism as travelers from Europe and other regions from the US began to explore the distinctive nature of the city’s markets, portside area, and ethnic mix of people. The reputation of the city as exotic Other on the one hand and a “Sodom and Gomorrah” on the other continued unabated as written accounts seeped out into the larger world (Heitman 2012). New Orleans also became a port for travel to areas like Central America.

As early as the late nineteenth century, the writer and journalist Lafcadio Hearn was among the first to describe “authentic” New Orleans to the larger world (Heitman 2012). His passionate descriptions of Mardi Gras; Creole cuisine, language, and music; voodoo ritual; and even political corruption and police abuse helped to construct an image of the city as an exotic site of cosmopolitan spectacle, cultural authenticity, and tropical decadence and disorder within the US, an imagining that has survived to the present day among the broader American public (Breunlin and Regis 2006, 744).¹⁹

¹⁸ Significantly, in 1810 Louisiana registered seventy-six thousand people. In 1820 it increased to 154,000 (Sublette 2008, 261). In New Orleans a population of eight thousand residents in 1803 increased to more than sixty thousand in 1836 (Winston 1924, 200).

¹⁹ Beyond Hearn’s original proclamations, this articulation of place-based uniqueness has, through time, come to be a powerful means of self-identification for New Orleanians as well as attribution from outsiders. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, for instance, researchers and journalists reported a common refrain from displaced individuals: “there’s no place like New Orleans” (Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2009; Morrice 2013). While people often view their place of residence as unique, for many vulnerable New Orleanians, this discursive construction points to the value in saving the city – including its poorer neighborhoods – after Katrina. Phrases like the one above are also printed on merchandise sold across the city. These forms of attachment are not only affective; they are commodified and packaged as a form of the city that can be consumed (Gotham 2002, 2007). At times these affective and commodified sentiments are difficult to disentangle. In response to my question about whether or not he goes to Bourbon Street, considering how many tourists frequent the strip, an African-American construction worker in his fifties

Under American colonial rule, the early to mid-nineteenth century constituted the apex of New Orleans' status as economic powerhouse. In 1840 it was the fourth largest port in the world after New York, Liverpool, and London, while also being the third most populated city in the country (Fussell 2007, 848). During the years 1837-1860 New Orleans became the largest immigrant destination in the South and second in the country after New York (Fussell 2007, 848). After that point, the city's population and strong economic position steadily began to decline throughout the next century into today. The Progressive Era throughout the US in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century brought with it extensive changes to New Orleans' neighborhoods through investments into electrification, sewerage, public transportation, and spaces of leisure such as public parks (Colten 2002), all of which helped to forge a large industrial and bureaucratic base of workers. World War II expansion of the shipping industry in New Orleans also broadened the industrial labor market while also promoting increased patronage in the burgeoning hospitality industry and increased in-migration from Italy, Germany, and Ireland (Dixon 2014; Fouts 2017b).

As the only "pre-Sunbelt" metropolis within the Confederacy (Adams and Striffler 2014, xii), New Orleans experienced an early growth of industry and waged labor and had a racially heterogeneous population relative to other US South and Atlantic cities. Before the Frenchmen Sieur de Bienville's colonization of the city in the early eighteenth century, Native American communities living in the area had long set up a market exchange in the area of present-day New Orleans (Nunez 2014, 167). Under the French and Spanish colonial influences of the eighteenth century, free people of color in

and lifelong New Orleanian informed me with a laugh, "Of course! We're not going to let the tourists have all the fun!"

New Orleans dominated service industries such as baking, butchery, tailoring, and midwifery and manufacturing crafts such as carpentry, joining, woodworking, and smithery, as well as commercial enterprise (Frey 2014, 200-201). Interactions across the color line during the French period ensured a skilled working class that lived mainly in neighborhoods such as the Faubourg Marigny and Treme. The latter is known as a predominantly Black working class neighborhood (Frey 2014, 202; Jackson 2011; Perry 2015; Thomas 2012) in which individuals “can trace their family’s history in the oldest continuously free black neighborhood in North America back hundreds of years” (Anthony 1978 in Lipsitz 2011) and today features a growing Latinx residential population.

While Germans and Irish arrived in the early to mid-nineteenth century, towards the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, large numbers of Sicilians arrived and replaced the Irish as a newly “stigmatized working class, who, along with blacks, did much of the menial labor of the city” (Fussell 2007, 850). The Vaccaro and D’Antoni families of Standard Fruit Company were among this migrant group who, in 1910, constituted thirty-nine percent of the population of Louisiana (Fussell 2007, 850). While federal investments of the Progressive (late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries), Depression, and (post) World War II eras provided job stability for many residents, the rise of alternate trade systems for transporting goods and increasing mechanization of the longshoring process ensured a sharp economic and demographic decline in New Orleans in the twentieth century. These investments in the first half of the twentieth century in public works and extensive draining and sewerage systems also promoted further segregation along racial and class lines in which low-lying and low-valued land was

given largely to people of color and poor whites under an established Jim Crow legal and social structure (Colten 2002, 253).²⁰

Echoing similar post-Fordist (Gotham 2002; Harvey 1990; Sassen 1991) changes across the U.S., New Orleans' manufacturing base declined from the mid-twentieth century on. City planners took advantage of a strong sense of place identity to promote a city open for touristic consumption. With the 1970s came the Superdome construction and the ecology of hotels and other accommodations that allowed New Orleans to become one of the largest convention centers of the South (Dixon 2014; Gotham 2007). In ways that reverberate into the present, like other touristic centers, the performance and poetics of New Orleans allowed "industrial production" to give way to "cultural consumption" (Regis 2001, 753). Yet, the tourism industry is characterized by what Dixon (2014, 207) refers to as "age, race, and sex discrimination along with substance abuse." Such forms of discrimination coupled with lack of union density in the industry have prevented upward mobility for the many thousands of New Orleans residents working in hospitality. Alongside such twentieth century economic decline and often a cause of some of that decline through a hollowing out of the tax base was the "white flight" from the city to the suburbs such as Metairie and Kenner, a process mobilized by racial desegregation in the public schools occurring from 1960 on (Fussell 2011, 851).

This historical analysis has highlighted how the globalized material and historic relations of empire (Harvey 1990; Mintz 1985; Roseberry 1989; Trouillot 1991, 2003;

²⁰ These developments in the early- to mid-twentieth century represented a divergence from earlier patterns of residential settlement, in which legacies of slavery dictated building, as "slavery required blacks to live in close proximity to their white owners. This created a mixed residential pattern that was characteristic of other Southern cities in the nineteenth century. The rigid caste/race system defined social distance when physical distance was lacking" (Spain 1979, 82). This "backyard pattern," as it was known (Demerath and Gilmore 1954 in Spain 1979, 83), served to keep watch over Black slaves and prevent their resistance through organizing, not for purposes of "racial integration" (Spain 1979, 86).

Wallerstein 2004; Wolf 1982) have intricately formed New Orleans as a French city, a Southern mecca, former economic powerhouse, and receiving city for Latinx migrants. This “throwntogetherness” of the local, regional, and global, as Massey (2005) terms it, confounds any notion of the city as singularly isolated as an exotic excess of colonialism. Further, it establishes how these historically relevant translocal and transnational processes under the colonial regimes of the city helped to create a city open to work-seeking migrants and a springboard for expanding capital interests under continuing conditions of inequality. Throughout, migration has been central to these connections.

Katrina and Rebuilding

Hurricanes have long loomed large in the realities and imaginations of New Orleans residents due to the city’s location on the mouth of the Mississippi River and its low-lying land. In the current era of the Anthropocene (Steffen, Crutzen, and McNeill 2007), or human-driven climate change, Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent flooding of eighty percent of the city (Campanella 2008) has so thoroughly affected the lives of residents and the city’s built structures that many divide time into B.K. (Before Katrina) and A.K. (After Katrina) (Trethewey 2010).²¹ These perceptions of disaster highlight the devastation of the flooding while also pointing to how instrumental Latinx migrant labor was to rebuilding. The flooding was the catalyst for federal and local investments into rebuilding, which led to a booming reconstruction industry.

²¹ This division can at times exaggerate the absence of housing problems before Katrina. As a long-time resident scoffed to me, dilapidated and rundown housing was a widespread problem long before Katrina but the storm provided opportunities for politicians and others to attribute housing ills to the failure of the levee system. This comment squares with my own memories of the city’s built landscape in 2000.

The damage wrought by Katrina exposes how social, political, and ecological vulnerabilities interact to produce unequal harm and subsequent work conditions. Roughly half of New Orleans is below and the other half is above sea level, largely due to soil sinkage, rising water levels, and human intervention into the natural sedimentation process of the Mississippi River (Solnit and Snedeker 2013, 2). On average, however, the city is “six feet below sea level” (Gramling and Hagelman 2005, 115). Through centuries of storms and floods, “topographic elevation” became a “scarce resource” and subsequently New Orleans has historically witnessed particular geographical stratifications of city living in which “higher land meant relative safety, security, salubrity, beauty, comfort, even morality” (Campanella 2008, 80-81). New Orleans’ location on low ground makes it periodically vulnerable to spillovers from heightened rain and storm activity that tends to originate in the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico. At the same time the city is an important ecological actor in the region, as New Orleans is best thought of as a “liver, an expanse of soggy land doing some of what a liver does, filtering poisons, keeping the body going, necessary to survival and infinitely fragile” (Solnit and Snedeker 2013, 2).

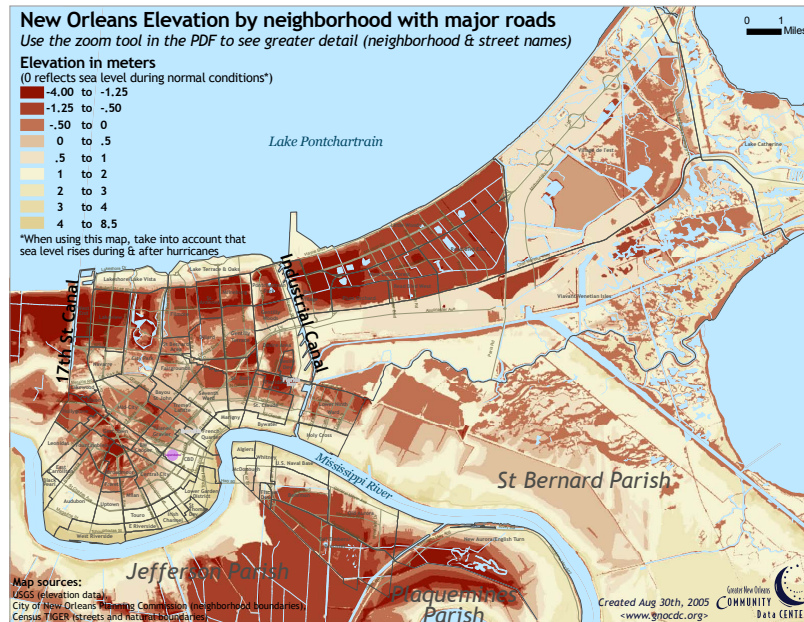
New Orleans’ settlement between Lake Pontchartrain and the Mississippi River, though a tenuous position in terms of hurricane risk, was actually a strategic decision, though not for ecological reasons. The location at the mouth of the Mississippi River allowed the contemporary French colonial empire and subsequent Spanish and US colonial expansions to gain access to both the trading ships and boats navigating down the river and those arriving from other countries. If the city had been settled further inland there would have been less environmental precariousness, though its status as a

key port city in international trade would have likewise been less pronounced (Sublette 2008, 10-11). Subsequently, for centuries hurricanes and flooding have dotted the historical timeline, helping to shape the contours of building and rebuilding in New Orleans.

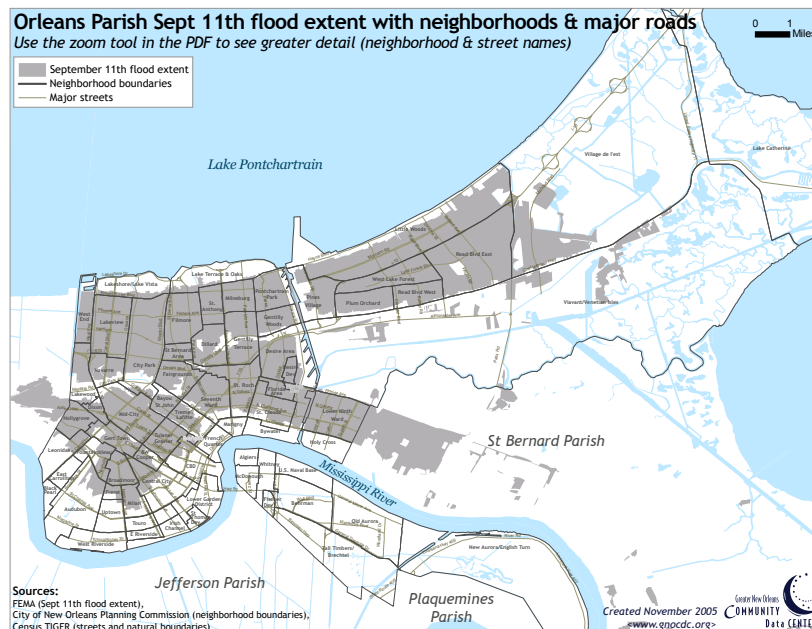
Responses by city planners and elites to these storms and floods reveal a great deal about the city's status as environmentally precarious. Historical analysis of technological changes and public and private investments meant to control environmental risk, improved sanitation services which sought to decrease water-borne illnesses, and the aforementioned racialized settlement patterns all highlight a complicated process of ecological transformation. Human intervention initially highly dependent on slave labor (Daly 2006, 136) transformed areas of the city that were once swampy, uninhabitable, and located closer to the lake into habitable areas of settlement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, largely for working-class white residents who were able to gain deed settlements not extended to Blacks and free people of color (Colten 2002, 239). Rich, largely white families remained on the natural levees located next to the Mississippi River. At the same time, this historical development has meant an increasing vulnerability to flooding in the event of storms.²² Additionally, sinking has been exacerbated in the past century, as increased levee construction has kept natural sedimentation from settling in, and heightened swamp drainage and human interaction have only accelerated this process (Comfort 2006). Ironically, Hurricane Katrina in many ways returned the city to its natural boundaries as the hardest hit areas tended to be

²² In 1900 ninety percent of New Orleans residents lived above sea level while in 1960 only half of them did (Campanella 2008, 53). As of 2000, only thirty-eight percent lived above sea level (Campanella 2008, 63).

poorer areas located in areas below sea level (Daly 2006, 137). Maps 1.4 and 1.5 illustrate the higher location of the French Quarter, one of the earliest areas of settlement.



Map 1.4: Neighborhood Elevation Levels in New Orleans. Source: The Data Center.



Map 1.5: Post-Katrina Flooding in the City of New Orleans and New Orleans East. Source: The Data Center.

In the wake of Katrina, which had flooded most of the densely populated areas of the city, nearly fifty percent of the rebuilding workforce was Latinx (Fletcher et al. 2006),

with most doing the difficult, unhealthy, and risky tasks of initial cleanup and removal, gutting, sheetrock, painting, roofing, and carpentry (Fletcher et al. 2006). New Orleans was four percent Latinx before Katrina and according to the 2000 Census Bureau, numbered twenty percent soon afterwards (US Census Bureau, 2000, Metropolitan Area Population Estimates in Negi, Cepeda, and Valdez 2013, 355), with nearly half of those workers in that period from Honduras (Negi, Cepeda, and Valdez 2013, 358). In the wake of Katrina, new forms of capital investment have reinvigorated particular neighborhoods while ignoring others still struggling to rebuild. In New Orleans gentrification is a “microlevel, block-by-block phenomenon” best understood through the “tourist bubble” that continues to expand in certain areas (Gladstone and Préau 2008, 138). This means that neighborhoods surrounding areas such as the French Quarter, like historically-Black Tremé or the more elevated Marigny and Bywater, are home to creeping gentrification and the remodeling of homes, increasing rents, and an influx of largely white, wealthier residents (Gladstone and Préau 2008, 140-141).

This analysis of New Orleans’ environmental vulnerability highlights the urban geography of residential inequalities. The work of producing these residences is also stratified in terms of who builds what and how. Honduran migrant workers today labor in a construction industry whose building sites range from large-scale, federally-funded, union projects to individual “fly-by-night” residential operations. Honduran migrant workers often work under or as (sub)contractors. At times they labor alongside undocumented and documented migrant workers²³ and union members and are often in

²³ On a national level, in contrast to Mexican and other Central American migrants, Hondurans have the highest rate of undocumented status, with “58 percent of Mexicans, 57 percent of Salvadorans, 71 percent of Guatemalans, and 77 percent of Hondurans” being informally authorized (Massey and Pren 2012, 24).

communication with workers' and immigrant rights organizations. For many migrants involved in construction work, on-site tasks involve dangerous, physically demanding work necessary to maintaining the residential infrastructure of the city. Wage theft, heightened workplace injury risk due to the selective distribution of work tasks and lack of safety equipment, and precarious work availability rank high among migrant worker experiences in the building trades throughout the U.S. (Walter, Bourgois, and Loinaz 2014) and, as I found in my research, in New Orleans as well.

Since Katrina, one-fifth of all jobs in New Orleans have either been in construction or hospitality (Schneider and Jayaraman 2014, 230). These industries have long been characterized by unreliable work hours, low wages, and lack of benefits and protections. The Bush administration's policy in the immediate aftermath of Katrina of suspending labor protections and enforcement (Adams 2013; Adams, Van Hattum, and English 2009; Katz 2008) exacerbated already existing inequalities, as these jobs have most often been filled by workers of color, recent migrants, and workers with low levels of formal education (Schneider and Jayaraman 2014, 230). Nonetheless, as the third largest private industry in the New Orleans area (Schneider and Jayaraman 2014, 239), construction continues to expand in the area and attract migrant workers from Central America, Mexico, Brazil, and other countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Methods

My first predissertation research trip to New Orleans in 2011 revealed a city more visibly Latinx in the post-Katrina era than it had been during a summer I had spent there in 2000 before graduate school. In 2011, *loncheras* and Spanish-language grocers,

restaurants, and billboards dotted the streets of both urban and suburban New Orleans. I came to know many Latinx migrants waiting at day labor sites, working on construction worksites, and organizing politically for the right to remain. These initial introductions not only pointed me towards a vibrant and growing Honduran community but also helped me to form key relationships with interlocutors. I followed the six-week visit in 2011 with another six-week stay in summer 2012. This predissertation research led to an extended fieldwork period from September 2013 to December 2014, with a short follow-up visit in April 2016.

During these cumulative months of ethnographic fieldwork and archival research in New Orleans I spent hundreds of hours participating and observing at construction worksites, migrant homes, wage claim clinics, immigration court, union hall gatherings, non-profit and city council meetings, worker-led protests, and job placement clinics and day labor sites. I interacted with Hondurans and others at local Honduran restaurants, festivals and baby showers, Catholic teach-ins, and an ongoing ESL (English as a Second Language) course for workers, Coffee and English (hereafter CAE). At CAE, I worked as a volunteer teacher of English, attending every Sunday morning to mingle and teach after Spanish-language Mass. In addition to dozens of informal interviews with Honduran workers, non-profit advocates, union officials, federal employees, and labor and racial justice organizers, I conducted forty formal, semi-structured interviews – mainly with Honduran migrant workers – on topics ranging from reasons for migrating to incidences of work injury and wage theft to experiences with crime and interactions with law enforcement. While I conducted one-on-one interviews with these migrants, I spent time with the families of many of them in their homes and at the social events detailed above.

I have continued to keep in touch with numerous interlocutors through email, smart phone apps such as Whatsapp, and social media platforms like Facebook. I have used pseudonyms for all interviewees and interlocutors in this dissertation in order to protect the identities of research participants. Likewise, I have changed some details of businesses, place names, occupations, and educational background, also in order to protect the identities of any participants.

Throughout my four stays in New Orleans I lived in a variety of neighborhoods, including the more suburban Lakeview, gentrifying Marigny and Lower Garden District, and working class Hollygrove/Northwest Carrollton and Treme/Mid-City. I offered my own labor reciprocally by helping informally authorized migrants navigate Medicaid offices, job placement firms, immigration court, and asylum application forms. Rather than limit myself by shadowing with one organization, I instead cycled throughout much of the non-profit world of migrant advocacy in New Orleans. Many of the protests that I attended and observed were organized by the New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice (hereafter referred to as NOWCRJ). NOWCRJ organized low-wage workers soon after Katrina, when much of the city's Black population was displaced – losing home and work in the process – in favor of Latinx workers arriving from outside of the city, often with the tacit and overt support of city and business leaders. In reaction to these racial tensions, NOWCRJ formed the Congress of Day Laborers, which advocates for undocumented workers (known informally and hereafter as the *Congreso*), STAND with Dignity, which organizes African-American workers, and a chapter of the National Guestworker Alliance, which organizes legal workers laboring under the precarious

status of guestworker. These groups support one another under the NOWCRJ umbrella showing up for each other's actions and events.

Finally, I researched the primary documents of the Standard Fruit Company's archives in Tulane University's Special Collections, conducted keyword searches into the archives of the preeminent newspaper in New Orleans, the *Times Picayune*,²⁴ and explored the oral histories of New Orleans residents of Honduran descent in the Beatrice Rodriguez Owsley collection of the University of New Orleans' Special Collections. This archival research has helped in better understanding how multiple generations of Honduran migration to New Orleans is informed by the commodity trade in bananas and the historical perspectives on migration into and out of the city.

Chapter Outline

In Chapter 2, "Trading Bananas: Histories of the Honduran-New Orleans Commodity Trade," I examine how the interventions of New Orleans-based fruit companies in Honduras have contributed to present-day Honduran labor migration to New Orleans. My ethnographic interviews reveal that earlier generations of migrants who arrived in the 1940s-1980s retained elite connections to the fruit trade through parents or other family who held mid- to high-level positions in firms such as Standard and United Fruit or the Honduran government, largely an appendage of the fruit companies for much of this time. While fewer in number than the post-Katrina Honduran community, their elite-level connections to the banana trade strengthened the notion at the time among

²⁴ Published since 1837, the *Times Picayune* is the main daily newspaper read by New Orleanians, with the exception of 2012-2014 when the newspaper was bought out by a larger, out-of-state company and moved, controversially, to thrice-weekly print service. Since 2014, the newspaper has returned to daily print publication. Nola.com is the online version of the newspaper.

Honduran elites, New Orleanian politicians, and journalists alike that New Orleans was a Honduran town (Sluyter et al. 2015).

From the 1970s into the post-Katrina era, the demographics of migrating Hondurans shifted towards more working class individuals seeking increased economic opportunity. Many post-Katrina Honduran migrants range from the working class (e.g. farmers and *maquiladora* workers) to middle class (e.g. aspiring university students, low-level bureaucrats, small business owners, teachers, and white collar professionals). As I found in my research, the history of the banana trade is often unfamiliar to many of these migrants because so few have close personal connections to the industry. This is an industry that has largely abandoned its presence in New Orleans, thus further severing that connection between the two locations. Instead, many post-Katrina migrants pointed to work in rebuilding as a pull factor for arrival. Yet, when I inquired as a matter of habit, every single Honduran migrant reported having family or close family acquaintances in the city.²⁵ And while network-mediated migration has played a role in spurring migration to New Orleans, the history of that migratory path has been relatively unexplored by scholars, with some exceptions (Euraque 2004; Fouts 2017a; Sluyter et al. 2015).

These waves of migration arguably followed a “cumulative causation” effect in which earlier migrations changed the social conditions under which individuals and households subsequently decided to emigrate, most often in a way that made more migration increasingly probable (Massey et al. 1993, 451).²⁶ According to this theory, the first to migrate are middle to upper-middle class residents and as migration flows become established, income inequality within the home setting increases and relative deprivation

²⁵ Many post-Katrina arrivals reported to me as hailing from banana industry-heavy cities such as La Ceiba and San Pedro Sula, findings echoed in other studies (Sluyter et al. 2015).

²⁶ For more on the cumulative causation effect, see Myrdal 1957.

becomes an impetus for poorer residents to migrate (Massey et al. 1993, 451-452). While helpful in drawing causal linkages between waves of migration, it is important to remember that beyond migration itself, corporate and state imperialism, economic exploitation, and political corruption played key roles in exacerbating the structural inequalities that continue to encourage emigration from Honduras. Rather than viewing the earlier commodity trade as wholly separate from today's Honduras, a place in which migrants report that finding decent work and protection from gang violence and state-sanctioned corruption are nearly impossible, contemporary labor emigration is conceivably tied to how US capital extracted profit and intervened in the political governance of Honduras in ways that reverberate into the present.

I initially entered the archives asking the question: how did New Orleans itself benefit and develop through the expansion of US capital in Honduras? Earlier works have examined in depth how the U.S. has intervened politically and economically in Honduras (Acker 1988; Euraque 1996; Langley and Schoonover 1995; Soluri 2005; Striffler and Moberg 2003; Wiley 2008) with fewer examining the flows of capital in the opposite direction. However, tracing profit brought back from Honduras to New Orleans proved elusive. Not only the ledgers and letters in Standard's archives but also the gaps and silences highlight how the histories of exploitation in Honduras and the forms of investment brought back to New Orleans remain difficult to analyze when examining only the material sources that remain.

Rather than monetary profit brought back, it is arguably instead human migration to New Orleans that has remained one of the most sustaining effects of US capital's dominance in the region. Better understanding the contemporary settlement of Hondurans

in New Orleans involves examining the archival traces left (and not left) by firms such as Standard Fruit Company, headquartered in New Orleans and active in the Honduran port city of La Ceiba. By asking how archives both reveal and occlude forms of capital accumulation, this study contributes to historically-informed anthropological studies that examine how archives produce a particular “truth” while omitting the perspectives of the less powerful. Integrating these multiple histories into analysis helps in situating the present-day experiences of Honduran migrants who have sought work in New Orleans, particularly after Katrina.

Honduran migrants’ work experiences in the residential building trades animate Chapter 3, “Embodying Labor and the Work Ethic on the Raced and Gendered Worksite.” Job site inequalities like work injury, wage theft, and potential detention characterize the search for waged labor in the building trades. For many migrants, such risky and exacting work – the jobs “Americans won’t do” – heightens their vulnerability. Yet, it is through that vulnerability that individuals have attained a certain degree of social mobility, bounded as it may be. Migrants not only articulated their labor in terms of a racialized work ethic that enables the material well-being of family and provides them with a sense of pride and dignity, but also as a sacrifice that should legitimize their (often undocumented) presence in New Orleans and the right to stay.

Work as a basic activity of human existence not only ensures sustenance and material accumulation for individuals and their kin, but also provides a means through which people make meaning, express emotions and forms of sociality with others, relate to their material world, and contribute to and contest structures of inequality. Drawing upon Karl Marx, the anthropologist Nicholas De Genova (2009, 39) argues that one of

the most basic existential liberties, freedom of movement, refers to the fundamental autonomy of the individual to maneuver and utilize one's body through time and space. Human labor, as a "creative and productive ... power," is itself "grounded in a process whereby human life purposefully mediates its own embeddedness within nature" (De Genova 2009, 40). Labor, then, as a fundamental way of engaging with the world in addition to being rife with potential for exploitation, may itself constitute a means of engagement and concretization rather than merely alienation or abstraction.

This study of labor aids in understanding how political economy, i.e. who gets what and why under structures of inequality, is enmeshed with everyday human experience as an embodied process. In the case of Honduran migrants in the construction industry, the bodily effects of work injury, embodied sensing of potential wage theft, and carefully attuned attention to the dangers of law enforcement and criminals alike reveal how insecurity maps onto the body and the public spaces of the city. I therefore draw upon the work of anthropologists who have examined the vulnerabilities and exploitation of migrant workers within the U.S.²⁷ to explore worker experience at the point of production,²⁸ in this case New Orleans' residential building industry.

Through the ethnographic study of Honduran migrant workers in production, this dissertation argues that labor – as an embodied process upon which social inequalities are mapped – can also be a means through which individuals make meaning and assert belonging. Such analysis further qualifies anthropological study of worker subjectivity under capitalist regimes. By "social inequality," I refer to disparities characterized by

²⁷ Such scholarship includes Adler 2005, Benson 2012, De Genova 2005, Goldstein and Alonso-Bejarano 2017, Gomberg-Muñoz 2010, Heyman 2016, Horton 2016, Miraftab 2016, Striffler 2005; Ordóñez 2015, Stuesse 2010, and Zolniski 2006.

²⁸ For work on examining labor in production see Braverman 1998, Burawoy 1979, Comaroff and Comaroff 2001, Iskandar 2012, Warhurst, Thompson, and Nickson 2008, and Willis 1977.

intersecting factors of race (Gregory and Sanjek 1994; Hall 1991; Maskovsky 2006; Mullings and Wali 2001; Ong 1996), class (Harvey 2005; Kasmir and Carbonella 2008; Kingfisher and Maskovsky 2008), gender (Mahler and Pessar 2006; Mai and King 2009; Menjívar and Walsh 2017), and legal status (Chávez 1992; De Genova 2002, 2005; Willen 2007). Such understanding is also enriched through the study of the broader political economy of New Orleans' construction industry, the historical and contemporary labor markets in the city, and structural labor enforcement mechanisms that have failed to sustain a safety net for vulnerable workers.

These structures of enforcement and labor markets scaffolding Honduran migrant worker experience are the focus of Chapter 4: “‘There is no Labor Landscape Here’: Labor Market Stratification, Subcontracting, and Enforcement in New Orleans.” Lack of labor law enforcement within the “right-to-work”²⁹ state of Louisiana contributes to the work injury and wage theft highlighted in Chapter 3. At the same time, construction workers themselves, migrant organizers, non-profit workers, and federal agency employees play a role in redressing these vulnerabilities. Focusing on a wage theft clinic opened in the wake of egregious post-Katrina labor law violations, I show how such advocates act together with workers to make these violations morally legible and legally actionable. As migrants assert their right to stay through contributions their labor has made to the city, here too advocates also attempt to draw upon this labor as a way of making claims upon a state nominally focused on protecting all workers' rights, regardless of legal status.

²⁹ “Right-to-work” has its roots in the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 and refers to the regulations and statutes enacted in various US states meant to block union requirements in workplaces and discourage unionization by allowing workers to choose to join the representing union and pay dues (Steusse 2010, 27). Union supporters often sardonically refer to this phrase as “right-to-work-for-less.”

Additionally, I examine how, rather than strictly undocumented, many Honduran migrants exist within a gray zone in which they may start businesses, pay taxes, and even buy a house, yet cannot obtain work permits to do the work that they have paid taxes on. The burdens of seeking compensation for stolen wages or being “in limbo in the right way,” in the words of one advocate, highlight the additional material and affective stresses faced by migrant workers beyond the actual work they perform. As scholars have highlighted, under conditions of economic insecurity and neoliberal restructuring of the economy, low-wage workers are not only deprived of opportunities but in fact are further economically disenfranchised through the burdens of being poor.³⁰ For informally authorized migrants, that process is doubly insecure when considering their inability to work legally.

Chapter 5: “Facing Insecurity from Honduras to New Orleans” explores how insecurity borne of crime and poverty in Honduras inform circuits of mobility and migrant perspectives on everyday life in New Orleans, which comes with its own dangers of crime and exposure to law enforcement as undocumented individuals. Much of the insecurity in Honduras arises from what many migrants referred to as “*delincuencia*” (“crime”), “*corrupción*” (“corruption”), and “*impunidad*” (“impunity”) of Honduran state (-sanctioned) actors, and the spillover effects from the drug trade. Compounded with that is present-day economic deprivation in Honduras that makes it difficult to earn a living wage and provide for self and kin as commodity prices and living costs continue to increase in the wake of a devastating Hurricane Mitch in 1998, US-supported militarization and securitization in the 2000s (Vine 2014), the 2008 global financial

³⁰ For more on how poverty enacts added costs onto the poor within the US context, see Barnes 2012, Ehrenreich 2001, Lutz 2014, and Morgen and Maskovsky 2003.

crisis, and a 2009 coup that further exacerbated political instability (Fasquelle 2011; Menjívar and Walsh 2017; Rivera, Strønen, and Ystanes 2017; Sladkova 2013).³¹ Yet, crisis conditions do not end with the decision to leave Honduras. Difficult journeys, challenges in work and daily life in New Orleans, and the ever-present risk of detainment and subsequent deportation for those who are undocumented persist and constitute sustained crisis over multiple stages in the migratory cycle. Personal histories of exploitative conditions and structural violence characterize the life trajectories of migrants in their process of emigrating, arriving in New Orleans, and potentially departing the U.S., whether willingly or not.

Stricter immigration policy, heightened securitization on the Mexico-US border in the post-9/11 era, and increased coordination between federal and local law enforcement on immigration and deportation³² work in tandem with the drug and arms trade to make migration costlier, harder, and more dangerous from the departure point to the arrival in cities such as New Orleans. Present-day hardline attitudes towards migration have roots in U.S. history. From the mid-nineteenth century on, demagogic and populist anti-immigrant discourses have cycled in and out of the US public consciousness (Chávez 2001, 2008; Kazin 2016; Marrujo 2003; Ngai 2004) in ways that rarely mirror the actual “trends and patterns of migration” (Massey and Pren 2012, 2). Following on the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, quotas introduced in 1921 and 1924 attempted to stem immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe while forbidding immigration from Africa and Asia (Massey and Pren 2012, 2-3). With changes enacted by the civil rights

³¹ Outside of countries embroiled in war, Honduras “has since been called the most violent country in the world ... with 86 murders per 100,000 people, a rate five times that of Mexico’s” (Sladkova 2013, 87).

³² For more on the growth of the deportation regime in the post-9/11 era, see Aranda and Vaquera 2015, Coleman and Stuesse 2016, Goldstein and Alonso-Bejarano 2017, Gomberg-Muñoz and Nussbaum-Barbarena 2011, Leerkes, Leach, and Bachmeier 2012, and Steusse and Coleman 2014.

movement and a xenophobic right wing dormant, lawmakers liberalized immigration law with the Hart-Cellar Act in 1965 and gradually Latin American migration began to gain ground (Aranda and Vaquera 2015, 88). From the 1970s on and paralleling national economic recession, however, nativist political pressures led to the expansion of the “bureaucratic machinery of enforcement,” regardless of downward trends in undocumented migration (Massey and Pren 2012, 9).

Deportations accelerated starting under Clinton-era reforms (Massey and Pren 2012, 15-16) and on into the post-9/11 expansion of the US security state’s deportation regime under the Bush administration (De Genova and Peutz 2010). Until the nineties, deportations had held steady at no more than 50,000 annually for several decades prior. After 1996 legislation the number rose to 200,000 per year, with up to 400,000 in 2009 (Massey and Pren 2012, 15-16). Under Obama’s second term, these numbers decreased to nearly 350,000 deportations in 2016 (Chishti, Pierce, and Bolter 2017). This expansion of enforcement has led to an increased presence of ICE³³ on the ground and working with local law enforcement. The Trump administration has only heightened enforcement. In the first two months of his administration in 2017 ICE had performed thirty-two percent more deportation arrests as compared to the same period the year prior, many of which were not for criminal acts, in a reversal of priority under the Obama administration (Sacchetti and O’Keefe 2017). Thus, beyond the risks of everyday work, informally authorized Honduran migrants also have to cope with the insecurities that arise out of “working while undocumented.”

³³ ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), the federal law enforcement agency tasked with enforcing immigration and customs law, falls under the purview of the Department of Homeland Security.

The public “crisis” of the child migrant surge from the Northern Triangle countries of Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala during the summer of 2014 (Negroponte 2014) unfolded as I was conducting fieldwork. This so-called crisis opened up several opportunities for migrants to articulate to me and others their own experiences of violence and insecurity back in Honduras, their travel northward, and their subsequent settlement in New Orleans. Migrants drew upon dichotomies of insecurity and security, danger and opportunity, and freedom and oppression that highlight a complex spectrum of risk that they must shoulder in order to ensure access to work and well-being. Long viewed as a city with a high crime rate, New Orleans in fact emerges for many Honduran migrants as a relatively safe city, though interviewees recognize crime and the ever-present risk of deportation. Understanding the anxieties present in migrants’ lives necessitates viewing such insecurities as overlapping, negotiated, and transnationally linked. Analyzing how migrants experience insecurities as layered upon one another transnationally from emigration to settlement to possible deportation and how they assess risk accordingly contributes to studies of international migration that incorporate the securitization and criminalization of border-crossing migrants in the post-9/11 era.

It is in the social spaces of churches and grassroots advocacy groups that many Honduran migrants have found relief from the ubiquitous insecurities of worksites and daily life in the city. Chapter 6, “Forging Belonging through Language Learning and Protest” analyzes how the places in which migrants learn English such as Coffee and English (CAE) or organize to fight worksite injustice and deportation (*el Congreso*) actually produce opportunities for individuals to enact informal engagement that leads to civic interpretations of belonging in New Orleans. While many migrants arrived with

family or have formed new families in New Orleans, for those living far from their loved ones, these social spaces can help to fill the absence. I examine the concepts of “conviviality” (Illich 1973) and “insurgent citizenship” (Holston 2009) in order to explore how Honduran migrants – nominally belonging to the same community but varied in their interests and political commitments – forge social and political belonging through their participation in these non-work spaces. Theories of citizenship benefit from the examination here of how labor can serve as a political tool through which to assert innovative and radical forms of civic belonging. Though grappling with multiple forms of insecurity, it is through a moral assertion to the right to stay that Honduran migrant workers are cementing their presence today in New Orleans, even though that presence has long existed through histories of the commodity trade.

Chapter 2
Trading Bananas: Histories of the Honduran-New Orleans Commodity Trade

“Did you know that United Fruit would buy a barrel of bananas for one cent?”

Juan paused here for emphasis, looking me in the eye, and indicating the large size of the barrel with his arms. He continued, lowering his arms and holding up an index finger, “Not in American dollars but one cent of Honduran currency! Not everyone knows this!” We were sitting and chatting in the small lobby off of Juan’s car repair shop located on a suburban strip in the New Orleans suburb of Metairie in March of 2014. Juan, now in his fifties, came from an urban, middle-class family in Honduras and had nearly finished law school there, only leaving when he had to find a full-time job to support his growing family. He had worked several jobs in New Orleans, including construction, before opening up his shop a few years after working in post-Katrina reconstruction as a contractor. As part of an even later wave of Honduran migrants, Juan had migrated to the U.S. from Honduras in the 1980s and many of his stories revolved around his experiences in New Orleans from that time into the post-Katrina era.

During more than a dozen trips to the repair shop throughout my fieldwork in New Orleans between 2013 and 2016, Juan would often mention the low prices United Fruit offered Honduran banana growers throughout the robust fruit trade of the early to mid-twentieth century. A self-professed student of history,³⁴ he also pointed to the exploitative relations and labor struggles that accompanied their presence, particularly in

³⁴ As a self-avowed former socialist with continued leftist leanings, Juan’s perspective on United Fruit reflects a political critique associated with the Left in regards to the fruit companies. He asked me not to tell other Hondurans about his political persuasions, however, as the majority of Hondurans in New Orleans were, paraphrasing his words, quite conservative politically. I also heard this from some of the “regulars,” or Juan’s acquaintances and friends who often dropped by the garage. However, I have been unable to find any scholarly or journalistic work on the political attitudes of Honduran migrants in the diaspora.

regards to the giant, United Fruit Company. United Fruit's outsized influence³⁵ involved employing thousands of Hondurans, many of whom worked as plantation laborers and others who worked in management, the latter experiencing increased social and economic mobility. Many such employees would eventually leave Honduras for New Orleans, including high-ranking Honduran managers sending their children to the Catholic schools of New Orleans, seeking treatment in New Orleans-area hospitals, and buying property in the Gulf South region in the 1950s and 1960s. That generation of Honduran immigrants and their descendants remain today, particularly in the suburbs of New Orleans.³⁶ I met some of them not through post-Katrina migrants, but thanks to interlocutors such as Juan and Christine, the latter having worked within the Latinx community and whose membership in a local Catholic Church introduced her to many longstanding members of the Honduran community in greater New Orleans.

The fact that I did not meet many of these older Hondurans through post-Katrina Honduran migrants points to a generational and class-based divide. I found that hometown associations, often an organizational means through which earlier migrants aid in settling newer migrants hailing from similar regions,³⁷ largely did not exist during the period in which I conducted fieldwork. Additionally, while local Lion's Club chapters counted in their membership older Hondurans who did charity work for individuals in

³⁵ The term "giant" refers to an immensely powerful conglomerate controlling "more than one million acres of Central America as well as a fleet of a hundred vessels and most of Central America's rail lines. By 1930, it had assets of more than \$242 million and owned more than three million acres. By 1952 it was exporting 1.6 million stems of bananas a year, accounting for between eighty and ninety per cent of all banana trade with the United States" (Acker 1988, 63).

³⁶ The oral histories of many Honduran migrants who arrived in the mid-twentieth century, now stored in the Beatrice Rodriguez Owsley collection (Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans), reflected such reasons for migrating and areas of eventual settlement in greater New Orleans.

³⁷ For more on the role of hometown associations in integrating migrants into the host society and maintaining ties with home, see Çağlar 2006, Çelik 2005; Cohen 2011; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Stanton 1992, Faist 2007, Fitzgerald 2008, Mahler and Pessar 2006, Orozco and Lapointe 2004, and Pessar and Mahler 2003.

Honduras and migrants in New Orleans, they largely moved in separate social circles. In the words of Christine, the interlocutor who had worked many years with Latinx migrants, the upper class, earlier arrivals of Hondurans viewed themselves as belonging to a more elite community that had formulated close ties between Honduras and New Orleans. One individual of Honduran descent, Rigoberto, now in his sixties and successfully retired from a career as a unionized welder, had arrived as a teenager to New Orleans. He pointed to how arriving undocumented Hondurans are his brothers and understandably searching for decent work, but that as a “union man,” in his words, he worried about the “well-paid jobs that others [undocumented migrants] will take for less money.” For Rigoberto, his sympathy for Hondurans who arrive in the present moment was tempered by what he viewed as his concerns as a US citizen and union member.

These generational divisions highlight how New Orleans-based interventions in Honduras meant to extract commodities affected the socio-political and economic trajectories of Honduran society in ways that encouraged emigration. Furthermore, past labor regimes of banana cultivation and the political economy of circum-Caribbean trade leading to capital brought back from Honduras clearly infused the New Orleans economy with investments. How did the presence of fruit companies in Honduras encourage flows of not just human migration but forms of capital to New Orleans? As I found in my own archival research, it has proven difficult to assess the impacts of this capital return.

This chapter explores, first, how interventions on the part of the New Orleans-based fruit companies in Honduran labor markets were inextricably linked with the subsequent migrations that have come to provide the city with a flexible labor pool that has played a key role in rebuilding. Second, analysis of the papers of the Standard Fruit

Company, the smaller competitor to United Fruit, reveals how such historical documents can simultaneously capture and occlude the structures of inequality that have influenced generations of human migratory flows. “Reading across the archival grain” (Stoler 2009) takes into account the narrative perspective of the Standard officials who compiled the documents. Considering the fissures and absences in the written word helps to understand not only the perspectives and biases of those who created the archives but also the how the archive itself is discursively constructed as documented truth (Stoler 2009; Trouillot 1995; Zeitlyn 2012, 464). The ideologies of empire that emerge from the wealth-reflecting ledgers and business correspondence in Standard’s archives leads to a greater understanding of how the circulation of people in and out of the port city was deeply influenced by an expansionist capitalist transnational class based in New Orleans and supported throughout public discourse in the form of the local news media.

Scholars working in colonial archives (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992; Stoler 2009, Trouillot 1995) have taken a critical perspective on how historical narrative is recorded, organized, and studied, i.e. the historiographical aspects of archival research. Instead of just analyzing relations of power that are reflected within the archives’ content, examining how the archive itself is constructed through such relations of power, with hidden narratives and unseen truths is key (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992; Trouillot 1995, 28). In her study of the Dutch colonial presence in Indonesia, Ann Stoler (2009, 22) points to the dual visibility and invisibility of actors in what remains of a colonial power:

these chapters pause at the hands and habits of those charged with the writing, recording, sorting, and proliferation of documents, in the unremarkable form in which writerly practices appeared; in the tone and tenor of a reprimand, a dismissal, or praise, in floridly clear or illegible signatures at the bottom of a neatly copied page. Sometimes persons become visible in the entitled scrawls of an angry query across a report, or remain invisible in the faceless, careful handwriting of “copy machines” (as Eurasian clerks were disparagingly called) – subjects whose racially marked positions conferred no place for, nor right to, a signature at all.

Though not an explicitly colonial presence, the hegemony of fruit companies in Honduras constituted a powerful presence with quasi-imperial imperatives. Thus, in analyzing how the archive was compiled, i.e. through Standard officials seeking to preserve the firm's legacy, the Standard archives constitute a "corpus of writing," or an organizing of some "social facts" that produce particular forms of knowing while obstructing others (cf. Stoler 2009, 22), in this case the effects of the firm on the workers recruited from the local labor market.

Such workers were often the topic of discussions with Juan. We often sat in his shop that serviced customers needing new and used auto parts. Tires adorned the lobby walls and a TV mounted above the ground was often tuned to Univisión – a Spanish-language channel based out of Miami. Because customers often came in and interrupted our conversations, I conducted a rolling interview with him over several months. At times I brought *baleadas* – a Honduran meal made of fried beans, cheese, avocado, and other ingredients wrapped in a flour tortilla – or he ordered conch soup from one of several nearby Honduran restaurants. Like many social events in New Orleans, our conversations frequently occurred over food. Ariel, Juan's assistant, often sat with us, sitting quietly and jumping up when a customer would approach in his or her car. Ariel was in his mid-twenties, with an easy smile and friendly demeanor. He had undergone an arduous journey from Honduras, through Mexico, and finally to New Orleans only a few years earlier.

As I chatted with Ariel that day, Juan came in and out of the room, puttering around the coffee machine, talking with customers, and gathering documents before eventually sitting down to discuss United Fruit's 1-cent purchases. Ariel also listened,

like me bemused and pondering the newness of the information. Indeed, in the early days of the fruit trade in the late nineteenth century, the ruling Honduran Liberal Party attempted to institute a two-cent tax on every banana stem exported but in 1912 Manuel Bonilla, the first Honduran leader with the aid of the fruit companies, repealed the initiative. Economists have stated that had the tax been implemented, the Honduran state would have received “nearly \$121 million between 1912 and 1955, and the country’s income would have increased by 50 per cent” (Acker 1988, 60-61). This is just one example of how United Fruit’s interventions affected Honduras’ social and political trajectory in the twentieth century.

United Fruit in Honduras and New Orleans

During the summer of 2012 I explored the contents of nearly a dozen boxes filled with folders at the archives of Standard Fruit Company at Tulane University’s Special Collections. After several visits, the archivist asked what I was researching. Upon replying to him, “the history of the banana trade,” his face brightened with interest and he mentioned the recent bestselling book by Rich Cohen (2012) on Samuel Zemurray, or Sam the Banana Man, Russian Jewish immigrant to New Orleans, initial head of Cuyamel Fruit Company, and later through a corporate takeover in 1933, United Fruit Company. Zemurray and United Fruit more broadly played an outsized role in Central American politics. An instigator of a coup in Honduras in 1911, Zemurray formed a private army to intervene in the politics of the region and dominated labor relations for decades. To give an idea of Zemurray’s immense wealth: he began Cuyamel Fruit with

an initial investment in 1911 of \$5 million, only to sell it to United Fruit for \$29 million, thus garnering a 480 percent profit (Acker 1988, 61).

Yet, on that day, the archivist detailed to me how some New Orleanians responded with anger and found the book slanderous. For many local residents, Zemurray was an exemplary figure of charity and giving to the city (Sparks 2017). Multiple New Orleans institutions benefitted from his philanthropic donations, including Touro Infirmary Hospital, one of the largest private hospitals in New Orleans today, a youth rehabilitation center, and Tulane University, to which he donated approximately \$10 million in today's amount to establish the first public health institution in the U.S. (Waddington 2012). Further, Tulane's Special Collections – the very building that housed us as we held this conversation – is located in the Roger Thayer Stone Center for Latin American Studies. The Stone Center was founded by Doris Zemurray Stone (anthropologist and Zemurray's daughter) and her husband, Roger Thayer. Zemurray's influence was not just vast in Honduras, but New Orleans also.³⁸ But, as the archivist went on to joke, the sentiment embracing Zemurray's legacy might not be shared by exploited Central American workers. This interchange underscores how commodity extraction and capital flows out of Honduras took the form of significant investments into New Orleans, though not without contention over historical truths in relation to this polarizing figure.

³⁸ Shortly after that interaction, I attempted to attend a book signing with Rich Cohen at a local bookstore, Octavia Books. However, the line to hear him speak was so long that I could not get in, further highlighting the keen interest New Orleanians hold towards Zemurray and his lasting influence.

Scholars have long emphasized the circuitry of global capital and labor through time and space that have historically linked societies in complex webs of inequality.³⁹ Similarly, the historical trajectories that have informed New Orleans' "location" (Trouillot 2003) as a port city connecting the Gulf South region to the rest of the U.S. and circum-Caribbean and beyond include the introduction of the trans-Atlantic slave trade to the city in 1719 (Hall 1995) followed by its decline as a major port center from the mid-nineteenth century on. This decline parallels a growing interest of New Orleans-based capital in Honduras, mostly springing from a burgeoning commodity trade of wood, tobacco, vanilla, cocoa, coconuts, and, in particular, bananas.

This interest on the part of figures such as Zemurray and other New Orleans-based capitalists in Honduras mirrored (and perhaps bolstered) US governmental efforts to intervene in the affairs of Central American countries. From the mid-nineteenth century on, Central America rapidly became a central front for war between imperial global powers, with the 1823 Monroe Doctrine initially putting forth a "US right to protect Latin America from any European power" only to later establish "the right of the United States to correct Central American 'immorality'" in a bid to justify intervention (Acker 1988, 21). US corporate interests seeking to gain access to cheap raw materials and cheap labor for commodity production also moved in. In exchange for nearly unfettered access to land, natural resources, and tax exemptions (Soluri 2005, 36), New Orleans- and Gulf region-based fruit companies such as United Fruit were contracted to build the railroads⁴⁰ and other transport infrastructure of the burgeoning Honduran

³⁹ For more on global inequality, see Harvey 1990, Mintz 1985, Roseberry 1989, Sassen 1991, Trouillot 1991, 2003, Wallerstein 2004, and Wolf 1982.

⁴⁰ At times, these companies subcontracted to other firms, in this case a Boston company, to "construct and place in running order 110 miles of the new road from Puerto Cortes to Truxillo" (*Times*

nation-state. Such infrastructural access obtained through a weakened Honduran state allowed a legal avenue through which companies such as United Fruit gained power over resources, often following a familiar process: “in return for constructing and operating piers, railroads, and telegraph lines, the concessionaires received rights to soil, timber, water, and mineral resources in addition to tax and duty exemptions” (Soluri 2005, 43).

A 1947 letter written from one Standard Fruit official to another details how one concession granted to Tropical Radio Telegraph Company, a United Fruit subsidiary and corporate rival, would ensure improved telegraph service. In addition to an extension of the concession by twenty years, the official wrote, it will also ensure the

right to rent any privately owned radio station now existing in Honduras – or that may be installed in the future ... In compensation, the Tropical Radio Telegraph Company promises to spend during the next two years \$125,000 to improve radio and radiotelephone communications in Honduras and to guarantee the Government of Honduras a revenue of no less than \$12,000 per year.⁴¹

This access ensured that well into the twentieth century the northern coast of the country and its main banana-growing area, primarily the port city of La Ceiba, would receive the infrastructure to be linked with foreign port cities such as New Orleans while remaining cut off from Tegucigalpa, the capital city (Euraque 2004; Wiley 2008, 10-11). Such policies deprived the majority of Hondurans access to important infrastructure. The reputation of the monopolistic and hegemonic United Fruit, or “*El Pulpo*” (“the Octopus”), omnipresent in multiple Central American countries, emerged partially through such practices and partially through the direct political and military interventions into Central American sovereignty (Soluri 2005; Striffler 2002).

Picayune, February 5, 1888). More than a mere commodity producer and seller, United and other banana companies functioned through a complex ecology of subsidiaries, interconnected through transport, labor, insurance, tourism, and financial institutions (Karnes 1978).

⁴¹ Standard Fruit Company Papers, Box 6, Folder 28, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library Special Collections, Tulane University.

In addition to the investments into New Orleans' public and private institutions, United Fruit's role as an employer and commodity/transport/financial conglomerate also ensured recruitment of a local labor force. As a primary destination for the banana boats carrying cargo and passengers alike, New Orleans became a receiving city for Hondurans seeking expanded opportunities for themselves and their children. Many of these Hondurans and their descendants remained in the area, as the following ethnographic vignette highlights.

In a spacious house in Metairie, Sal – a retired doctor now in his eighties – and I sipped Cokes as he recounted his life story. Like many summer days in New Orleans, on this July 2014 day rain had earlier appeared suddenly and ferociously and drenched the streets, causing the potholes to fill with water as I drove to his low-lying, brick house. Barely able to see in front of me, I parked my car in the small open-air garage and rang the doorbell. Sal and his wife, Rosa welcomed me into a living room filled with various ornaments and keepsakes and framed photographs of numerous individuals, presumably family. We passed through a living room with the TV on into a dining room where we sat together. With Rosa sitting next to him, Sal held his hands together as he matter-of-factly told his life story. His blue eyes matched his short-sleeved, button-down shirt. His straightforward narration was punctuated by momentary glances at his watch and then at the TV. His wife later told me that he was interested in watching the news in Spanish that came on once a day on a local channel and that he most likely missed while sitting with me.

Sal recounted in English:

When I finished high school, my father made a decision to send us to the States. At that time my father used to work for the Tela Railroad Company, which was a subsidiary of United Fruit. And the people who were "first class employees," United used to give a gift to help their sons to send

them to the States. They used to pay the transportation only. And our parents used to pay the school, you know.

Sal's use of the term "first class employees" referred to workers in management and other positions of leadership or support for United Fruit's various business ventures, as opposed to plantation laborers. He said he arrived in 1942 or 1943 to attend high school at Holy Cross School⁴² in New Orleans.

As early as 1903, children of banana company executives arrived to New Orleans to study, as a *Times Picayune* article from the era notes (September 22, 1903). Yet another *Times Picayune* article entitled "Bulk of New Orleans' Latin Population Born From Honduran Migration" (McQuaid 1991), describes how young, elite Hondurans, hailing mostly from United Fruit families, knew one another while being schooled in New Orleans in the mid-twentieth century, often visiting the company's main office at 321 St. Charles Avenue, where "the secretary of President Samuel Zemurray was sort of an informal guardian ... 'You'd go by the office on a school day to pick up a check your parents might have sent you, or if they had some money for you,' Weinberger said. 'Those were beautiful days, when you needed gloves and hats to go out on Canal Street. We'd all meet under the clock at Walgreen's after school.'"

At Tela Railroad Company, Sal's father served as the head of a grocery store for one of the large banana plantations. While his father oversaw a crew of forty employees, Sal grew up watching farmers who worked for the company cutting banana trees, washing the fruits, wrapping them in nets and carrying them on their shoulders to put on the train, which then directly took the crops to the wharves of Tela or Cortés to set sail

⁴² Like many private schools in New Orleans, Holy Cross School is Catholic. Located in the city's Archdiocese, it was founded in 1849 (<http://www.holycrosstigers.com/hc/>, accessed October 23, 2017).

for the port of New Orleans. Before his father worked for United Fruit, he was a government employee and before that served as a revolutionary in the army of right-wing leader General Tiburcio Carías. Sal hailed from a relatively privileged class of people whose families had access to circles of power both within the Honduran governing elite and the fruit companies. As these banana companies negotiated access to land and labor with the Honduran state, most ordinary Honduran workers gained little in return (Langley and Schoonover 1995, 8, 16; Soluri 2005, 36). Some Hondurans, like Sal's father, were able to establish themselves within the middle and upper middle classes and draw upon the opportunity to migrate to New Orleans, thus constituting an earlier group of migrants who raised children, more easily gained citizenship, and experienced upward social mobility in the greater New Orleans area.

The relationships forged between New Orleans-based fruit companies and Honduras undoubtedly "altered the landscapes" of both places (Euraque 2004, 5), with the firms' investments into local schools, hospitals, and insurance companies furthering its presence in both places. Further, US corporate involvement in Honduras – whether negotiating down banana prices, dominating in the political process through military interventions, or constructing and later deconstructing an entire infrastructure in self-interest – has arguably contributed to the structural conditions that have exacerbated socio-economic deprivation and personal insecurity in the network-mediated migration that has continued beyond the initial generation of diplomat families and the fruit company managerial class. Sal's experience growing up amidst the relations of state, capital, and labor and later immigrating to New Orleans constitutes one perspective on Honduras-New Orleans relations. What other narrative perspectives emerge, particularly

upon examining the documented traces of New Orleans-based capital and its interests in Honduras?

Standard Fruit: Ledgers, Accounts, and Omissions

The one hundred-page document was green, musty-smelling, and typewritten. “Founding the Standard Fruit Company: A Study in Unpremeditated Empire,” authored by Carlos A. Matute⁴³ was in the first folder of the first box of the Standard Fruit Company archives and was the first document I saw at the Special Collections at Tulane University. The collection consisted mainly of business records and personal correspondence.⁴⁴ Archivists brought any of the seventeen large boxes filled with manila folders that I selected whenever I visited the airy, wood-paneled room throughout 2013 and 2014 while conducting fieldwork.

On the very first page of the document Matute wrote the following:

In the latter part of the last century, two visionary brothers born in the Italy of Garibaldi, named Salvador and Carmelo D’Antoni, arrived in the city of New Orleans in search of wider horizons to satisfy their desire for progress. A few years after their arrival in the city, these brothers started the business of buying and selling bananas and other fruit which came to port in boats that sailed the Miss. River ... (Matute 1966, 1, Standard Fruit Company Papers, Box 1, File 1).

I soon realized that this hagiographic account differed from the accounting books and financial statements that comprised the remaining files in the collection, mostly in its narrative prose and recounting of the origin tale of Standard. This tale lies in migration, though from Italy to the U.S. United Fruit’s smaller competitor Standard Fruit Company was founded in the late nineteenth century and established its dominance on the northern

⁴³ Standard Fruit Company Papers, Box 7, File 8, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library Special Collections, Tulane University.

⁴⁴ In an attempt to trace the genealogy of the Standard archive at Tulane, i.e. the “origin story” of how the \$1 billion endowment-holding university acquired the documents, why, and by whom, I contacted the library’s archive office. The response I received from an employee there via email was that the “internal accession files” were closed to the public. In this regard, the very process of acquiring the collection remains opaque and difficult to pin down.

coast of Honduras in the early twentieth century (Wiley 2008), along with Cuyamel, which later became United Fruit Company. Standard Fruit in particular stands out among the banana companies because of the close relationship it retained between the Honduran port city of La Ceiba and New Orleans (Acker 1988, 62; Euraque 2004, 4-5). Traces of La Ceiba remain in the New Orleans area. In Metairie a large tire shop has the name, “El Ceibeño” (or, “The Man from La Ceiba”), emblazoned across the side. When I mentioned this to Juan he informed me that the owner wasn’t from Honduras but El Salvador. “Still,” as Juan pointed out with a laugh, “he certainly knows his customer base!”



Photo 2.1. *El Ceibeño* Tire Shop. Photo by author, 2014.

As Standard Fruit’s general manager and frequent name appearing within correspondence materials, Salvador D’Antoni lived in La Ceiba where, as Matute put it, “his loyalty and sincere devotion to the community of La Ceiba ... was appreciated an [sic] respected by the Hondurans. His relations with officials of the government was always very cordial, thus setting and [sic] example for the future,” while supposedly

working side-by-side with Honduran workers.⁴⁵ This brand of modernist myth-making paints the D'Antonis and Vaccaros (the latter family having married into the fruit-producing D'Antonis) as frontiersmen furthering an ideology of innovation and progress nested within a hard-working, "everyman" ethos.⁴⁶ As poor migrants from Sicily, the D'Antonis and Vaccaros had started initially as sharecroppers and later became small-scale farmers in the orange groves of Mississippi and Louisiana.⁴⁷

In Matute's biographical account, the narrative perspective is overtly hagiographic and clearly prioritizes the perspective of the fruit companies and their interests in the commodity trade in Honduras. Yet, even with official documents and accounting ledgers, content is characterized by narrative perspectives (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995) that both speak to and ignore much of past exploitation. At the outset, the seemingly endless reams of paper, financially divvying up revenue and expenses, can seem fairly straightforward. Issues relating (largely) to fruit production and exports ranged from the large-scale, such as tax negotiations with the IRS or worker visa compliance issues with the US Department of State, to the more small-scale, like procuring loans for minor repairs, correcting tree counts, or even obtaining approval for patch jobs on machinery, including one particularly involved discussion on the procurement of a molasses tank. All such decisions had to pass through Standard's New Orleans-based headquarters for approval and thus remain as the partial records of transnational relations of capital and labor.

⁴⁵ Standard Fruit Company Papers, Box 7, File 8, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library Special Collections, Tulane University.

⁴⁶ Such depictions also accompanied accounts of Sam Zemurray also (Cohen 2013).

⁴⁷ A widespread freeze that destroyed crops all across the southern US states in 1899 initially led the brothers and others to look abroad for commodity production (Karnes 1978).

While this paper trail is itself part of the material traces of capital, amidst this bureaucratic commodity chain stretched across the Caribbean and the Gulf, a great deal remains unsaid and thus potentially unknowable. In a letter detailing wage negotiations, for instance, what was the perspective of the Honduran workers or the workers brought over from the West Indies to labor in the banana plantations? In bank statements listing New Orleans-based stockholders, what were the effects of such acquired wealth on the Jim Crow-era city? In ledgers detailing the amount the Honduran state “owed” Standard, what was happening to the country’s sovereignty in exchange? Just as “empire has a labor history” (Bender and Lipman 2015, 1), so do the quasi-imperial corporations like United Fruit who functioned like states through their hegemony in the region have a history of labor.

STANDARD FRUIT & DISTILLING COMPANY
LIST OF STOCKHOLDERS
ON JUNE 21, 1923. SHEET NO. 1.

<u>NAMES</u>	<u>ADDRESSES</u>	<u>NO. SHARES</u>
McClellan, R.	c/o V.B.&Co. N. O. La.	14
Pan American Securities Co.	c/o C.H. Ellis, U.P. Co. N.O. La.	45
Paterno, Albert F.	c/o Paterno Deep Well Co. N.O. La.	12
Paterno, Margaret	c/o Paterno Deep Well Co. N.O. La.	12
Paterno, Jno. B.	c/o Paterno Deep Well Co. N.O. La.	12
Palmer, Mrs. Josephine Burke	c/o Paterno Deep Well Co. N.O. La.	40
Quintero, Mrs. Rosa M.	c/o Quintero & Quintero, N.O. La.	30
Reed, Paul	c/o Reed Bros. 63 Mason St. Milwaukee.	12
Robinson, C. G.	c/o C.G. Robinson & Co. N.O. La.	60
Ramspeck, F. E.	c/o Canal Bank, N. O. La.	1
Scamp, F.	c/o Ramon Atia. Tegucigalpa, HOND.	30
Staigg, R.P.	c/o Rosenfeld Co. 68 William St. N.Y.	10
Strom, Mrs. Annie L. (widow, etc.)	No. 6 West 41st St. New York.	10
Swabrick, Mrs. Elizabeth Burke	5809 St. Charles Ave. N.O. La.	40
Vaccaro, Lucas J.	c/o V.B.&Co. N. O. La.	10
Vaccaro, Felix F.	c/o V.B.&Co. N. O. La.	10
Vaccaro Bros. & Co.	c/o V.B.&Co. N. O. La.	900
Vaccaro, Louis	c/o V.B.&Co. N. O. La.	80
Vaccaro, Joseph	c/o V.B.&Co. N. O. La.	70
Vaccaro, John	c/o V.B.&Co. N. O. La.	10
Villare, St. Denis J.	1507 Henry Clay, N.O. La.	10
Vasselinis, Mrs. C. de la	5524 Prytanis St. N.O. La.	20

Photo 2.2: List of Standard Fruit Stockholders, June 21, 1923. Standard Fruit Company Papers, Special Collections, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library Special Collections, Tulane University. Photo by author, 2014.

VACCARO BROTHERS & COMPANY.
CEIBA DIVISION. YEAR DEC, 31, 1918.

LIST SHOWING AMERICAN EMPLOYEES IN HONDURAS WITH SALARY OF \$800.00 OR MORE YEARLY.

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RACE</u>	<u>OCCUPATION</u>	<u>ANNUAL SALARY PAID</u>	<u>MARRIED</u>
F. M. Brown	White	Clerk	\$2400.00	Yes.
M. G. Garbajal	White	Clerk	2000.00	Yes.
J. P. Chulotta	White	Clerk	2000.00	Yes.
G. E. Sarrafin	White	Clerk	1800.00	Yes.
S. W. W. Amis	White	Clerk	1725.00	No.
X W. T. Newman	White	Clerk	2024.16	Yes.
X Miss I. McCaughey	White	Nurse	1100.00	No
Philip Douglas	White	Foreman	1274.50	Yes.
M. J. Hill	White	Chief Engineer	2280.00	No.
George Dunbar	Negro	Bridge Foreman	1230.00	Yes.
Henry Godson	White	Plumber	1480.00	Yes.
Chas. Clark	White	Train Master	1600.00	No.
John Lewis	Negro	Loco. Engineer	1025.00	No
E. F. Zimmerman	White	Traveling Engineer	1800.00	Yes.
Wm. Spears	White	Roundhouse Foreman	1515.00	No.
Chas. Oberle	White	Master Mechanic	2425.00	Yes.
H. W. Seed	White	Clerk	808.33	No
Robt. Weiss	White	Finsmith	807.00	No.
John Montelepro	White	Gummy Manager.	1825.83	Yes
D. W. Sweetman	White	Electrician	1225.00	Yes
Henry Hopkins	White	Telephone Man	1464.00	Yes.

Photo. 2.3: List of Standard Fruit American employees by race, occupation, income, and marital status, December 31, 1918. . Standard Fruit Company Papers, Special Collections, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library Special Collections, Tulane University. Photo by author, 2014.

Operating subtly – through ledgers and letters alike – in the Standard archive it was possible to see hints at strategies meant to pay off this or that Honduran official, or high-level negotiations over tax forgiveness, or even tactics for obtaining a docile workforce. Workforce issues take up a large part of the concerns of Standard officials writing back and forth. One letter entitled “Labor Conditions in General” and dated May 2, 1924⁴⁸ includes the following: “The Railroad Department reports conditions

⁴⁸ Standard Fruit Company Papers, May 2, 1924, Box 17, File 16, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library Special Collections, Tulane University.

satisfactory. Mr. Roberts reported that the Farms Department are having very little trouble getting laborers for the farms, there is a surplus of labor around Ceiba and the reason for same we cannot account for.”⁴⁹ A Feb. 1, 1922 letter,⁵⁰ for instance, directs all expenditures to be filled out on a form and sent to New Orleans to receive a signature of approval either by D’Antoni or Felix Vaccaro, stating “There can be no increase in wages of any employe [*sic*] in any company except on application approved by New Orleans Office ... It is desired that no employes [*sic*], other than the ordinary laboring force be relieved from service without having first taken the matter up with New Orleans Office.” Though perhaps not unusual in its concern with events transpiring far from headquarters, this letter indicates the firm grip that Standard’s New Orleans office held over the plantations and the closeness of the relations between the two locations.

Yet another letter, dated November 22, 1924 and entitled “Crew Cars at Papaloteca” details the working conditions for laborers on the plantation:

The cars which are now at Papaloteca were reported by Mr. O’Brien as unfit for our workmen. These cars are now used for sleeping quarters and as they are not watertight and now, especially during our rainy season these cars leak badly, the mattresses and coverings under which these men sleep become water soaked and, naturally, the crews when arising in the morning are really in no fit humor for work. Mr. O’Brien suggested that a temporary car in good shape be sent out to Papaloteca and then each one of these cars be brought in until all of them are placed in such condition as will give these crews, at least, dry sleeping quarters. Mr. Scott instructed that this should be done.

Why were workers sleeping in what were presumably railroad cars? Were they migrant workers from other parts of Honduras or Central America or, as Echeverri-Gent (1992) details, the West Indies living away from their family? We know that in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, workers “lived in overcrowded barracks, ate

⁴⁹ Incidentally, United had a reputation for ensuring labor surpluses in order to ensure lower wages and increased difficulty for local workers to organize by flooding the area with guest workers from other regions and countries (Echeverri-Gent 1992), though I cannot verify that United had anything to do with this particular surplus.

⁵⁰ Standard Fruit Company Papers, Box 7, File 8, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library Special Collections, Tulane University

poorly, and suffered from recurrent bouts of malaria” in which “working conditions were so bad that the average useful life of a plantation worker was a mere twelve years” (Acker 1988, 62). Standard had a reputation as a more “benevolent employer” than United Fruit (Euraque 2004) yet in reading these documents against the archival grain (Stoler 2009) the perspectives of management seeking to retain a compliant workforce dominate while worker perspectives remain elusive.

Concerns with labor go beyond the workforce into the realm of worker commodification. In a letter dated March 19, 1947, written by an insurance agent of Pan American Life Insurance Company⁵¹ and addressed to Mr. Thomas Ledyard, treasurer of a Standard-owned factory in La Ceiba, the author lays out the items of the contract agreed upon by all parties in regards to worker vulnerability to accidents. These items include precise and actuarial accounting of the value of each worker, including accidental death and dismemberment, with consideration of “both hands, or,” “both feet, or,” “one hand and one foot, or,” and on with various combinations of limbs and eyes.⁵² Though not an uncommon practice among companies to this day, the insuring of laborers’ lives highlights how commodity trade production involves the commodification of workers and their literal bodies to the benefit of capital.⁵³

Though worker unrest and labor organizing was widespread throughout the fruit companies’ involvement in Honduras (Acker 1988), explicit reference to prickly capital-

⁵¹ The company was itself formed in New Orleans for the initial purpose of insuring the produce shipped from Central America and still retains its headquarters in New Orleans (<https://www.palig.com/about-us/history>, accessed September 3, 2016).

⁵² Standard Fruit Company Papers, Box 8, Folder 29, 1947 April-May, Special Collections, Tulane University, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library Special Collections, Tulane University

⁵³ It is important to note that commodification under capitalism has always been fluid and subject to constant shifts and heterogeneity (Kopytoff 1986, 82-83; Roseberry 1997, 31).

labor relations was rare in the Standard Fruit archives. One exception that I found was a State Department cable, date illegible, which states the following:

Mr. Sloan, the American Consul who has just come from La Ceiba, tells me that the principal Carias leader in that district, Munguia, is a very dangerous man. He organized a destructive strike there in 1919 and was on the point of attacking La Ceiba for the avowed purpose of looting and burning it, when an American warship arrived in the harbor ... Mr. Sloan says that he has seen no evidence whatever that Vaccaro Brothers have taken any part in the present political contest.

Similar to the workforce-related letters and documents above, this letter also presents a view from management's perspective, though betraying more forcefully the fearful emotions wrapped up in the potential conflict between labor and capital. By tracing the silences of workers' voices (Trouillot 1995) in these documents, it is possible to begin to weave a story of nation- and empire-building through such lists of investments and records of ownership.⁵⁴ It is also possible to do so through the voices of individuals who experienced conditions informed by the fruit companies.

The modern-day migrations of Hondurans are also the patterned and embodied traces of the paths of capital, labor, and goods that have linked US empire-building with Honduras for more than a century. Julio, the aforementioned fifty-year old chef of Honduran descent whose father worked for Standard Fruit Company in the nineteen sixties and seventies in Honduras, opined that in many ways the American companies were ideal employers: "They arrived with the structures that American companies have – treating their employees well, paying well, and respecting their workforce."⁵⁵ At the same

⁵⁴ In addition, the voices of women were stunningly absent within the archive. With the exception of stockholders in New Orleans who were women, or passing mentions of employees' wives, the gendered perspective in the correspondence and records reflected male voices.

⁵⁵ US Americans also sought work with such successful companies. I found in the Standard archives one particularly enthusiastic letter dating back to November 15, 1923 from a young agricultural botanist who was a graduate of both the University of Notre Dame and the Louisiana Sugar School. Though having published numerous academic papers in journals on the topic of tropical fruit, he pointedly wrote that he could "also handle labor" in the tropical terrain of Honduras' northern coast (Standard Fruit Company Papers, Box 1, Folder 12, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library Special Collections, Tulane University).

time, he pointed to the companies' anti-unionism and mentioned the high price his father paid for being a labor activist, thus contributing to his family's emigration. Honduras has a vibrant history of labor organizing and unionism (Acker 1988; Echeverri-Gent 1992) and alongside the proletarianization of workers in the late nineteenth century came the growth of waged workers in the mining and agricultural industries and their subsequent organizing into unions (Acker 1988, 79).⁵⁶ These labor policies have had direct impact on Julio's migratory journey. Indeed, it was due to labor strikes in the nineteen fifties – the large-scale strike of 1954 in particular (Acker 1988; Euraque 2004; McQuaid 1991; Pine 2008), often called the Honduran "Paris Commune" in which 35,000 banana workers joined with factory workers to strike (Reichman 2011, 81) – that pushed the Honduran government to adopt more stringent laws to protect workers and restrict how many foreign workers companies could bring in.

In response, companies such as United Fruit simply left (McQuaid 1991). Parallel in time to such labor unrest in Honduras was a similar organizing effort in which New Orleans longshoremen working at the port where bananas were received decried lowered wages and decreased crews as a result of increasing mechanization. Also similarly, the fruit companies reacted by just leaving (Reed 1972). Continued emigration from Honduras goes beyond labor strikes to factors such as natural disasters and political and economic instability, the latter of which accelerated from the early 1960s on (Euraque 2004, 1, 7). Close examination of the Standard Fruit's archives reveals aspects of how the

⁵⁶ Organizing among banana workers on the part of Honduran labor unions led to strikes against Cuyamel Fruit Company in 1916. Banana workers were among the first to initiate early forms of union organizing in Honduras, many of whom were West Indian workers who became industrial laborers before Honduran workers but who later suffered racial discrimination and deportation as Black workers (Echeverri-Gent 1992, 276, 282; Euraque 2003). In fact, deportation of British West Indians was one of the central tenets of the growing Honduran labor movement in the early to mid-twentieth century (Echeverri-Gent 1992, 301-302).

firm structured its finances and workforce, but as Julio's perspective on his own father's experiences as a worker indicates, gaps and ambiguities are part of the archive and any narrative of New Orleans-Honduras relations. Julio's narrative also points to how the power differentials between labor and capital can strongly influence life-altering decisions, such as the choice to emigrate.

“Money and Muscle”: The Politics of Migration

A January 13, 1877 *Times Picayune* letter to the editor – to this day one of the newspaper's most widely read sections – attempts to make “exploration” in Central America attractive to fellow New Orleans businessmen. Entitled “Republic of Honduras: Advantages and Grand Future of that Central American Republic, and to New Orleans, to be Brought About by Direct Trade,” a Fred'k Jonson of 176 Clio Street, New Orleans makes a case for economic expansion:

The people of the United States of America have unfortunately been laboring under very many erroneous statements prejudicial to the republics of Central America to mutual loss of commerce and communication, especially with the republic of Honduras. The attention of gentleman of enterprise is particularly called to the geographical position of Honduras and the delta of the Mississippi River ... Having in the past fifteen years personally explored the coast, rivers, and interior and knowing whereof I speak. I intend to make manifest the wealth, beauty and advantages of this beautiful country for which nature has done so much and man so little. (Jonson 1877).

This excerpt contains multiple themes, including the desire on the part of New Orleanian business elites to expand economic opportunity to Central America, the early migratory paths between and linked geographies of commodity-rich Honduras and Mississippi River-adjacent New Orleans, and the ideologies of manifest destiny that characterized US expansion both within and beyond domestic borders to Central America to access resources, capital, and labor (Acker 1988, 15). It is within such a backdrop of expansion and perceived opportunity that fruit companies sought to enter Honduras. What does the

discourse of the popular press at the time reveal and obscure about how New Orleans-based capital imagined the city and Honduras alike?

The impulse on the part of businessmen in New Orleans to draw upon earlier economic success and utilize the geographic position of New Orleans for trade sought to fight the city's popular identity as a "colonial backwater" (Dawdy 2008; Gotham 2002, 2007) with only intermittent eras of economic prosperity. There were two strands of thought on the part of the New Orleans business elite of the time, the first being to import immigrant labor and investment.⁵⁷

New Orleans should have more immigration ... Orleanians seem to be hustlers and boosters, but records show that the city is not getting its share of the immigration that is coming to the United States. With so many steamship lines entering a port as there are here the number of immigrants who pass through that port should far exceed the number coming to this city ... (T)he state has rich soils and many opportunities to offer the immigrant, but it would seem no one has gone after him strong enough to bring him to New Orleans. In that way other cities of the South are ahead of this.⁵⁸

In this excerpt from 1913, the writer exalts the potential of New Orleans while decrying the lack of organization and preparedness for explicitly attracting the type of labor necessary to elevating the city into the top ranks of fellow US South cities. This type of sentiment emphasizing the strategic geographic position and spirit of the local people is a familiar trope found throughout accounts of New Orleans to the present day, while also explicitly ignoring the effects of Jim Crow-era laws on the social mobility and accessibility of African-Americans to the local job market.

⁵⁷ This was true of not just US Americans, but also Honduran elites "anxious to demonstrate the need for Yankee ingenuity (and capital) to tap the potential of the tropics" (Soluri 2005, 36).

⁵⁸ Assistant Commissioner of Immigration Frank H. Learned, *Times Picayune*, August 28, 1912.

The second concern on the part of the New Orleans capitalist class was emigration in order to bring back capital from other lands, in a similar desire for economic development.⁵⁹

If the farmers of the South only appreciated how easy a good living could be made in the Central American countries they would migrate there. I want to open up European connections to direct European immigration in that direction, and the more people we can get in those countries the better it would be for New Orleans. If the Government of Honduras will co-operate with me, and I think it will, I will get them all the people they want. Money and muscle is what is needed in Honduras for the development of the country. (Mr. W.H. Coe.⁶⁰ 1921. "Honduras Fruit Possibilities." *Times Picayune*, December 12)

In many ways, by attempting to appeal to the "hustlers and boosters" of the first excerpt, the writer Coe here encourages emigration for purposes of wealth creation. Here Central America's position as an inhabitable and "developable" space characterized by a malleable state apparatus is a foregone conclusion. Not unlike the modern-day "get rich quick" schemes, such editorials were ubiquitous in what was the mass medium of the day in New Orleans.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the newspaper was also a clearinghouse for city gossip and thinly veiled public relations pieces.⁶¹ Much of the reporting on political intrigue and brewing revolutions in Honduras came through notable visitors from Honduras in New Orleans. Placed alongside an article entitled "Real Estate Men Are Interested in New Movement" with the sub-heading "Desire to See Louisiana Lands Settled by the Skilled Farmers of Europe," a 1914 *Times Picayune* article⁶²

⁵⁹ See *Times Picayune* headlines such as "Honduras National Railroad: Map Showing Route and Rich Resources of the Republic Along This New Line, To Be Opened for New Orleans" (September 20, 1909) and "Latin-American Trade to be Developed Now ... If Properly Handled Immense Business Would Pour into Warehouses of the Crescent City" (February 8, 1896), which showcase similar sentiments.

⁶⁰ This individual was described in the *Times Picayune* as "a New York capitalist," with several hundred acres of bananas in Honduras and plans to plant hundreds more.

⁶¹ All of the articles discussed here were found using a keyword search for "New Orleans" and "Honduras" within the available records of the *Times Picayune* at the Tulane University Special Collections.

⁶² "Honduras Merchant Buys Home Here: Gen. Ruis Rivera of Ceiba Decides to Make New Orleans Permanent Residence." *Times Picayune*, December 6.

detailed the purchase of a New Orleans home by a General Rivera, a rich businessman from La Ceiba. The article states, “the coming of Gen. Rivera to New Orleans as a resident is considered a matter for congratulation by the real estate people. He is one of the wealthiest business men of Honduras, and after the recent Ceiba fire came to New Orleans and purchased a very large amount of material for the rebuilding of that city.” Such articles served to promote the notion of New Orleans as a desirable locale for foreign dignitaries and wealthy businessmen from Central America.

Not unlike today, anti-immigrant strains also existed. In an article entitled “The Growth of New Orleans as an Immigration Port” in November 11, 1895, a Chief Immigration Commissioner, named Stamp, states in regards to rising numbers of immigrants and supposed increasing rates of disease, “I admit that with such waves of immigration as we have recently had here, the matter assumes a very different phase, although we have had very good luck so far” and went on to call for an immigrant processing center to rival the larger ports of New York, Baltimore, and Boston. Similarly, in a September 20, 1904 *Times Picayune* article entitled “News and Notables at the New Orleans Hotels,” Frank P. Sargent, Chief of the Bureau of Immigration⁶³ decried Chinese immigration, claiming, “Chinese must be kept out ... and in New Orleans, as all other places, we expect the co-operation of the transportation companies.” Interestingly, directly under that is a short piece about how a Honduran customs official from La Ceiba feels welcome in New Orleans and gushes about the investments the Vaccaro Brothers are making in his home city. These seemingly contradictory perspectives on the mobility of people in and out of the city reflect the tensions that arise when the interests of capital desiring labor for wealth accumulation conflict with a politics of anti-immigration.

⁶³ This office was an earlier iteration of what we now refer to as ICE.

Such interests of capital include subtly calling for American intervention as a useful tool for the Honduran ruling elite. In an earlier *Times Picayune* interview from November 7, 1879 with Don Domingo Vasquez, a former Honduran president, he revealed to the reporter that, if he could “regain control, I would greatly alter existing conditions in Honduras, encourage the immigration of Americans, by all means in my power, and endeavor to form a higher and more sterling middle class. Americans I admire in every way.” In a “News and Notables at the New Orleans Hotels” article dated May 10, 1909, a Dr. Luis Sequeira arriving on the Oteri Steamship Orleanian from La Ceiba explained the desire for political change on the part of Hondurans protesting increasing tariffs on imported goods:

The fact is that they are not satisfied with the present Government at all. The best people in the country would be glad to have an American protectorate. While there doesn't appear to be any revolutionary movement brewing at present, I believe that the people would welcome anything that would bring a change in government, and if it would result in American intervention and cause the establishment of a protectorate it would be delighted.

In the same ship's cargo, not surprisingly, was “16,000 bunches of bananas, 30,000 cocoanuts and 5,000 bunches of plantains.” Arguably an early form of the transnational capitalist class (Sassen 1991), such actors were criss-crossing the Caribbean Sea in sustained attempts to foment unrest in Honduras and New Orleans to benefit their own political interest, with some actively working against the interests of laborers in both locations.

Beyond the tensions between pro- and anti-immigration advocates throughout this period, New Orleans elites looked to a nascent tourism industry to boost economic growth, a pattern that has continued until the present day (Gotham 2002, 2007). Promoters of the city throughout this time drew upon symbolic and discursive modes to “frame” New Orleans as representing a particularly localized form of authenticity

(Gotham 2007, 332). The period of the early twentieth century coincided with the growth of mass media outlets such as films, tourism brochures and visitors' guides, photography, radio, and literary accounts of the city and beyond. All of these sources contributed to developing a tourism industry, including the reformulation of local cultural practices as open for mass consumption and the city as a springboard to other "exotic" locales in Central and South America (Gotham 2007, 326). After the end of World War II, Standard Fruit was able to buy surplus ships from the US government at an extreme discount. Going public in 1924 and adding "Steamship" to "Standard Fruit Company," Standard started selling tickets to ride on "pleasure cruises" reaching various port cities in the circum-Caribbean such as La Ceiba, Havana, New Orleans, Kingston, Cap Haitien, Vera Cruz, and Tampico, among others. More than ten years later, Standard Fruit had thirty-five ships under operation (McQuaid 1991).

New Orleans' government elites were keen on increased tourism revenue through the steamship industry much earlier. In a February 8, 1896 *Times Picayune* article⁶⁴ a New Orleans city official stated that:

we trust to find the commercial interests of New Orleans reaching out more and more for the great trade of Nicaragua and other southern countries. They have no idea what an immense business can be done there, if they would only put out some representatives and canvass the country. The Caribbean Line hopes to give such rates on business from this city as will encourage the local commercial interests to work up this great undeveloped business.

The steamships, then, emerge as an important component of facilitating not just the commodity trade, but also the growing moneyed elite of the U.S. seeking travel initially in New Orleans and then abroad. A tourist pamphlet from the Standard Fruit archives

⁶⁴ "Another Line to Central America: Local and Western Capital Put in Two Vessels, To Develop Fruit and Other Trade with Nicaragua, Other Ships Will Soon Follow, If New Orleans Is Alive to the Opportunity to Extend Her Growing Commerce."

shows the hotel that awaits tourists arriving from New Orleans to Honduras, presumably disembarking from a Standard Fruit ship.



See Photo 2.4: Hotel Panamericano Pamphlet. Standard Fruit Company Papers, Special Collections, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library Special Collections, Tulane University. Photo by author, 2011.

Whether seeking wealthy foreign tourists, working-age labor migrants, or New Orleanian entrepreneurs to expand abroad, the city's political class actively sought opportunities that always seemed just out of reach. As one Colonel T.C. Bayliss noted in regards to Honduras when comparing New Orleans to the booming New York, "the business of that country properly belongs, as I have said, to New Orleans, and all New

Orleans has to do to get it is to ask for it.”⁶⁵ This argument – evoking the nineteenth century imperialist and expansionist ideology of manifest destiny – focused on Honduras as the source of potential profit for New Orleans. To what degree did these newspaper articles influence the Vaccaro Brothers or other expansionist fruit company businessmen seeking new economic opportunities? We can begin to trace a discursive thread of quasi-imperial corporate expansion into a society from which eager city elites sought to extract profit to bring home to New Orleans.

Examining more than a century of institutionalized efforts to expand beyond the city limits in search of wealth also further illustrates what archaeologist of New Orleans, Shannon Lee Dawdy argues is the benefits of viewing the city through a historical lens in that:

the long-term perspective destroys a cherished myth of New Orleans – that it is lost in history, stubbornly traditional, and culturally conservative. It has, in fact, constantly adapted to environmental challenges, dramatic population fluctuations, and global economic shifts (Dawdy 2008, xiv).

The history of the banana trade forged between New Orleans and Honduras highlights how the city and its many actors have been actively involved in capital expansion, wealth-seeking migrations, and imperial ambitions.

Conclusion

Chiquita Brands International (formerly United Fruit Company) announced in 2014 that it was returning to New Orleans as its headquarters after several decades in Charlotte, North Carolina. Splashed on the cover of the Port of New Orleans newsletter that arrived in the mail at my Treme apartment in 2014 was a giant photo of a banana and

⁶⁵ 1896. “Another Line to Central America.” *Times Picayune*, February 8.

headline announcing Chiquita's return. This was big news in a city chronically suffering from a dearth of "good jobs" and always seeking increased investment. Media reports covering the news (Sayre 2014; Thompson 2016) largely glossed over the historical role of the fruit companies anchored in New Orleans and active in the commodity trade of the circum-Caribbean. Instead, these accounts largely emphasized the economic opportunities such a return would bring New Orleans, not unlike the city elites of more than a century ago.



Photo 2.5: Port Record Cover. Photo by author, 2014.

By their nature, many commodities are ephemeral in nature, subject to

consumption or decay. In vain I searched for material remnants of the banana trade in New Orleans in antique shops by walking methodically through the gridded streets of the French Quarter, up and down Magazine Street and parallel to St. Charles Avenue, both of which wind their way from the French Quarter to Uptown. I even toured Oak Street, itself a historically significant shopping area in the Uptown district of New Orleans. Yet, in all the shops I entered, I found just one artifact – a postcard – related to the banana trade. In a small, cramped shop in the French Quarter, the shop owner popped up excitedly with it after spending a chatty twenty minutes of digging through a large box of postcards. The card featured an illustration of a receiving dock in the port of New Orleans, with a conveyor belt and workers sorting bananas. Otherwise, I found no crates,⁶⁶ no documents, and no mementos, i.e. few material remains of what was an industry so important to the New Orleans economy and so influential in Honduras.



Photo 2.6: Front of Unloading Bananas Postcard. Photo by author, 2017.

⁶⁶ In the early days of the banana trade, ropes and nets were used, also leaving little to no trace.

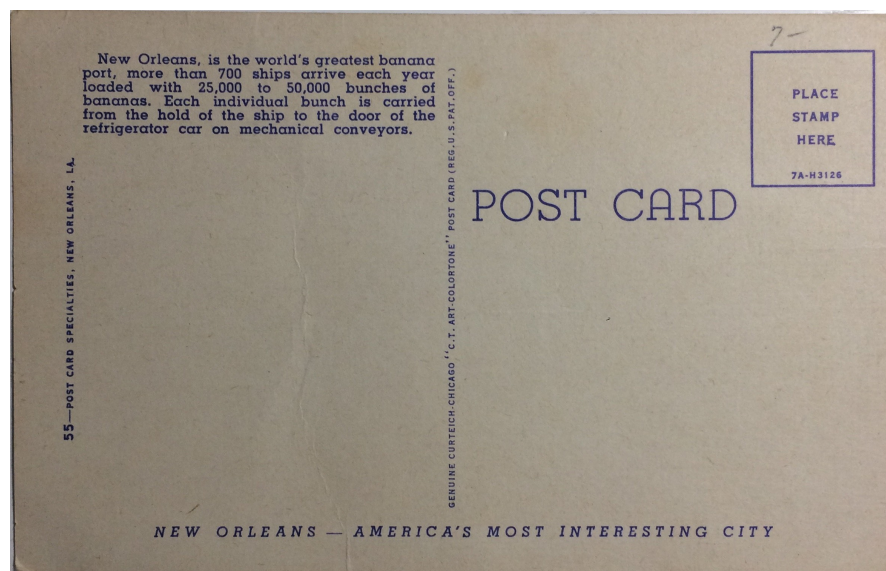


Photo 2.7: Back of Unloading Bananas Postcard. Photo by author, 2017.

For most New Orleanians today – including Honduran migrants – the banana is a mere food item, nutritious, readily available,⁶⁷ and relatively cheap. Sidney Mintz's (1985) history of sugar traced how, in the seventeenth century, the commodity was the common denominator in a rapidly expanding global capitalism in which a trans-Atlantic slave trade ensured sugarcane production and fulfilled the consumption desires of wealthier parts of the world such as Great Britain. As his analysis highlighted, commodities go beyond being mere products. Instead, they can serve as the fulcrum against which multiple relations of labor exploitation, capitalist expansion, and patterns of consumption are formed. Similarly, tracing the banana from the plantations of Honduras to the ships headed to the port of New Orleans to an eager public caught up in a seemingly insatiable desire for the nutritious fruit (Jelly-Schapiro 2013) reveals how Honduran migration is yet another effect of the larger fruit economy in the circum-

⁶⁷ Bananas have long been at risk of dying out due to Panama Disease (Striffler 2002, 31). Historically, both the risk of disease and the need to cultivate bananas in new fields roughly every decade led to a mobile industry, ready to leave to new regions and even new countries, therefore strengthening management's hand in stifling labor organizing and strikes (Striffler 2002, 32).

Caribbean, linking the labor regimes of United and Standard Fruit in Honduras with the labor pool of Honduran migrant workers that have helped in rebuilding New Orleans.

Yet, the inevitable gaps and silences arising from archives constructed by a selective source meant to preserve the reputation and legacy of a company such as Standard Fruit, call out for going “beyond written sources” in order to build an alternate archive, as the historical anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff (1992), among others, advocate (Brettell 1998). Interlocutors such as Juan, Sal, and Julio provide accounts of state, capital, and labor in ways that illuminate how the politics of the banana trade affected everyday lives and, in turn, how we understand the many histories of the transnational commodity trade through such voices. Subsequently, such analysis allows us to take into account how structural and historical conditions can contribute to the migration of Hondurans in the first place, with implications that stretch into the contemporary moment. In so doing, it may be possible to more fully consider, in the words of Ned Sublette (2008), “the world that made New Orleans,” as well as the New Orleans that made (at least part of) the world.

Chapter 3 *Embodying Labor and the Work Ethic on the Gendered Worksite*

I often sat with my neighbors, Armirio and his cousins, on the front porch of the large, double-shotgun house that they shared in New Orleans' Treme neighborhood, drinking beers and chatting. On this breezy, mild October Sunday in 2014, however, it was just the fifty-something construction worker and me, sipping the water he offered and enjoying the lentil *koefte*s I brought. Having talked several times before, I asked if I could ask him a series of questions in a semi-structured interview about his experiences migrating to and living in post-Katrina New Orleans. Armirio – that day wearing jeans, denim shirt, cowboy hat, and leather boots (fashions he had picked up when he lived in Mexico) – described his work life, telling me in Spanish how he and other Honduran migrants, “help this country. We come to work like donkeys because they can exploit you as they want. At times we work more than we should....If they say to me ‘I want you to finish this today,’ then I have to finish it.” For undocumented migrants like Armirio, the ability to remain in New Orleans depends very much on their capacity to provide labor at the will of the (sub)contractor, the homeowner, and the building industry, i.e. the “they” of his statement.

The result for Armirio is a sense of precarity: “We are not treated the same way as a citizen because an American citizen - he works, he does his labor peacefully... calmly, with lots of security.”⁶⁸ This assures him that nothing will happen to him, that he does not fall, and we do not have that security.” Whether “falling” refers to a metaphorical loss of

⁶⁸ As numerous studies indicate (Carbonella 2014; Ehrenreich 2001; Holmes 2007; Kasmir and Carbonella 2014), the documented worker in the U.S. also faces precarity though varying in degree based on the intersections of race, class, gender, ability, education levels, unionization rates, and regional disparities.

income or livelihood or a literal fall on a worksite, Armirio's words explicitly reference the multiple insecurities that undocumented workers face in their day-to-day lives in regards to their labor. In the same interview, however, he also said, "But, I like my work. I like working ... Yes, I am proud to be a hardworking person, I like to earn my money honorably, honestly ... there is nothing that bothers me in that way."

The entrenched insecurity as well as satisfaction found in work reflects the tensions of how laborers perceive their workaday lives under exploitative circumstances. Like Armirio, other Honduran migrants reported to me a stark recognition of the vulnerabilities inherent in the types of work they are assigned to. This vulnerability is also how these individuals articulated their labor as tying them to and legitimizing their presence in the city, providing themselves with a sense of pride and dignity at the material results of their labor, and establishing an identity within a work ethic.

The forms of political organizing that have emerged as a result of worksite exploitation and aggressive law enforcement presence have drawn upon the risks that Armirio outlined in conversation and reflect how the immigrants rights discourse in the U.S. has rhetorically shifted from framing migrants as "a socially marginal group to a productive force that provides labor central to economic growth," a scenario in which immigrants emerge as "hard working, tax paying, law abiding, and in general good US citizens – even though they are excluded from United States citizenship" (Gomberg-Muñoz and Nussbaum-Barberena 2011, 372). However, enveloped within the work ethic claims of many of my Honduran interlocutors are exclusionary and racialized statements centered on the "hard-working Latino" and the African-American Other.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Other scholars have examined how capital prevents intersectional and interracial worksite solidarity, instead further exacerbating racial tensions on the worksite between Latinxs and African

How have Honduran migrants experienced the worksite inequalities such as work injury, wage theft, and the ever-present threat of deportation that they then leverage to assert social belongingness to New Orleans? Taking Gomberg-Muñoz and Nussbaum-Barbarena's point further, the specific labor of post-Katrina rebuilding has arguably been central to the discourse of the right to remain in New Orleans. In addition to access to safe worksites and the right to remain, many migrants reported to me a desire to be recognized by the broader public for their sacrifice. Similarly, work, wrote the popular historian Studs Terkel (1972, xiii), is "a search for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying."

The embodied vulnerabilities of risking work injury on worksites, being marked as vulnerable to wage theft, and "walking while Latinx" in the city are the experiences that Honduran migrants have leveraged to assert the right to stay while integrating an understanding of hard work and ethical obligation, i.e. the "recognition" that Terkel so eloquently spoke of. In the California farming industry where indigenous Mexican workers labor, work is "segregated along an ethnicity-citizenship-labour hierarchy" in which all levels of the industry participate – often unwillingly – in maintaining this configuration (Holmes 2007, 41). Similarly, Honduran migrants in the New Orleans construction have been "naturalized" as Latinx workers into a sector that operates in perpetuating structural inequalities. Construction worksites, as Águila (2016, 122) argues, are particularly "privileged spaces for understanding certain ethnic demarcation

Americans (Rouse 1995; De Genova 2005, 2010; Miraftab 2016). Some Hondurans viewed Black workers and to a lesser extent, white workers, as simply not wanting to do the dirty work of reconstruction themselves rather than attributing displacement and importation of migrant labor as reasons.

processes,” often in ways that reserve the most hazardous work for certain groups of workers.

Embodied Worker Vulnerabilities

Construction is dangerous work. Even small-scale building sites carry with them hidden and not-so-hidden dangers such as risk of burns; exposure to toxic chemicals; falls from roofs; and injuries from weather, heavy lifting, and machinery malfunctions, all of which were reported to me by numerous migrant workers. Within the construction industry, Latinxs experience the highest rate of work accidents in the U.S. (Workers Defense Project 2013). Large general contracting companies have established systems of safety, hold regular meetings, and organize the worksite to minimize injury. On more small-scale, largely residential, worksites, however, the situation is largely unregulated.⁷⁰

Like construction workers in general (Applebaum 1981; Paap 2006), migrant workers I spoke with viewed injuries on the worksite as always possible; for many it is inherent in the nature of the job. As Tom, an investigator with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (hereafter EEOC) said quite simply in regards to migrant workers, “they work hurt.” Work injury was also a ubiquitous topic of discussion amongst Hondurans. On a Sunday morning in the local Catholic Church where I was teaching English to the mostly Central American migrants of CAE, I followed up with Mario, a Honduran who had hurt his back while lifting heavy materials and had sought compensation from his boss, a subcontractor. At the time the pain was such that he could not work. As we chatted over coffee before class started, my neighbor Armirio – who

⁷⁰ However, it is often difficult to ascertain work injury, even among “reputable” contractors (Workers Defense Project 2013).

also was attending the English classes – casually interjected his own story about how he had fallen off a roof. He rolled up his sleeve and pointed with a callused hand at the scar on his arm. Mario nodded stoically and explained that though his injury was not visible, it still existed. In fact, the MRI that he had done did not show anything wrong with his back. However, he did not trust the doctor or hospital because his boss, the subcontractor, had found the doctor for him.⁷¹

These varying work injuries – some visible, some not – highlight how the “human organism,” as Wacquant (1995, 70), drawing on Freud, argues, is an “active, self-transforming subject,” malleable and flexible, with potential both for taxing labor and the creativity that many migrants told me they enjoyed about construction work. On the other hand, there are limits to what a body can produce through human labor. Studying the working body and work injury in particular becomes an important means of denaturalizing labor by helping us to understand how the risks and inequalities of the worksite are mapped onto the worker’s body. As Wolkowitz (2006, 15) points out, “instrumental activity, including labour, evokes awareness mainly of targets outside ourselves rather than the body from which we experience,” thus the body is often forgotten as a tool itself, only appearing when discussing, for instance, workplace injury, or when some bodily capability breaks down.

Denaturalizing the way in which we use our bodies reveals how “bodies are physical entities, organisms located in biological and physiological processes, symbolic

⁷¹ A fellow non-Latinx volunteer, Angela, helped Mario with his visits to the doctor and stated privately to me that the doctor was a “straight shooter.” However, Mario’s unease is not unfounded. As Holmes (2007, 52) found in his study of indigenous Mexican workers in the California agricultural industry, doctors often did not believe patients with legitimate medical concerns related to work injury. Patients often mistrusted doctors as a result. The farms the workers labored on often hired those very doctors to attend to worker injuries.

objects transformed by culture and represented by images of various kinds, and *pace* Merleau-Ponty, our way of knowing the world” (Wolkowitz 2006, 15-16). At the same time, this focus on embodiment must retain a concern with how structures of inequality and exploitation characterize contemporary labor (Wolkowitz 2006, 6). In an industry like construction, where the availability of jobs is unpredictable and laborers easily replaceable, the work itself “shapes and sometimes mandates how workers relate to their bodies, to their tools, and to the materials” (Paap 2006, 8). As a result, on the construction site individuals often mediate just how much risk to undertake in order to finish a task quicker (Paap 2006, 8).

Ethnographic studies have analyzed how worker subjectivity under capitalism emerges through forms of inequality and embodied labor, including by the creation of physically aggressive, traditionally masculine, and counter-hegemonic stances against “meaningless” work (Willis 1977), dispositions that build social capital and income within the closed world of a sector (Wacquant 1995), resistance against morally objectionable, gendered working conditions (Ong 1987), the construction of nationhood and multiculturalism through the worksite itself (Hankins 2014), and even the tendency of high-wage, white collar workers of Wall Street to enact the market itself through overwork (Ho 2009). As low-wage, racialized workers, Honduran migrant workers risk work injury in ways they recognize as structurally unequal, as Armirio’s sentiment indicates.

Such structures of inequality are key to studies of structural violence, or the reproduced socio-economic inequalities that ensure bodily harm (Bourgois 2001; Farmer 1999; Scheper-Hughes 1992). Worksites are themselves structured by larger inequalities

informed by race, legal status, social class, and globalization (De Genova 2005; Holmes 2007; Ordóñez 2015). As Latinx workers often perform the most dangerous and unregulated work on construction sites, the (sub)contractors (often former construction workers themselves), homeowners, and bureaucratic officials tasked with oversight and regulation all contribute to the reproduction of insecure worksites. Similarly, stratification within the New Orleans construction labor market means that the mostly undocumented Latinx migrants work on smaller, residential sites that are less regulated, while unionized workers tend to labor on larger, more regulated worksites (Gillen et al. 2002; Weil 1992; Williams et al. 2010).

For many migrants I spoke with, work injury was a signal to get out of the industry. In Mario's case, his back injury exacerbated the deep loneliness he felt in New Orleans and his aim was to receive compensation from his employer and move to Miami to be near his brothers. Juan, the car repair shop owner, recounted to me his experience of falling from some scaffolding as well as stepping on a nail, a subsequent infection, and his eventual decision to go work in the local Coca-Cola factory back in the 1980s when the last vestiges of manufacturing still existed in New Orleans. For Pablo, now a successful contractor, working around asbestos – though with the necessary safety equipment – was a trigger to return to school for a higher education degree and to escape to the air-conditioned environment of accounting: “Well, they didn't pay too much, but it was nice. They had music [*laughter*], air-conditioning, I had my little chair to sit down on.” Like the “pink collar,” working class women working in a corporate informatics company in Carla Freeman's (2000) ethnographic study of Barbados, the social status accrued and comforting environment of the office provided a “distinction” for Pablo

important within his local social context, notwithstanding lower pay (Bourdieu 1987 in Freeman 2000).

Due to the higher cost for those who lack both health insurance and workers' compensation (Workers Defense Project 2013), not to mention possible interactions with law enforcement interested in their legal status, migrant workers often resisted going to hospitals or clinics unless absolutely necessary. Instead, a complex, informal ecology of non-profit and religious support networks help individuals coping with such injuries. I spoke with teachers, social workers, lawyers, volunteers, and pastors who aided migrants in navigating an opaque and expensive health care system and the process of gaining compensation from bosses. Angela, a fellow volunteer at the English class, helped an uninsured Mario by paying for his MRI and confronting the subcontractor directly about compensation.

In another instance that highlights the role homeowners play in work injury for construction workers, a young parishioner in his early twenties came to a local Methodist pastor, Sandro Delgado, for help. While using a nail gun on a worksite, the nail hit another nail, which then ricocheted back into his eye, subsequently causing him to lose two-thirds of sight in that eye. The subcontractor disappeared and liability fell on the homeowner. After initially offering ten thousand dollars plus medical expenses, the Pastor contacted the homeowner and eventually negotiated \$35,000. Pastor Delgado recounted to me in regards to the homeowner,

I noticed that she was attending a church, this lady. From India. She's a Hindu lady living in the States, working hard in the area of rebuilding houses and selling. She's a businesswoman, a mother, and a Christian lady. And I say to her, "I'm not a lawyer. I'm calling you as a pastor, and a friend, and as a parent."

When I asked him how it felt to go from being a pastor to *de facto* legal advocate, he threw his hands up in mock frustration and stated that this is what one does under difficult circumstances. The experiences of workers and advocates highlight the worksite inequalities that characterize residential building in New Orleans. Work injury is doubly painful, both physically and in how it limits one's earning potential. During my weekly trips to teach English, when I asked many Latinx migrants how their week went, a "good" week was defined by the high availability of work, a bad week one in which there was only one or two days of work.

Alongside the precarious nature of work in construction comes the possibility of not being paid when work is found. Wilmer, a 33-year old construction worker-turned-subcontractor from Honduras, informed me:

In this industry, there's lots of wage theft. You work for people but they don't want to pay you afterwards. You can feel it. They start to make a lot of excuses, they try to make you feel bad about the work you did. For instance, if you are painting, they come by the worksite and say, "I don't like this color," even if they picked it! They say, "Ah, you are Latino, you will probably steal my money." You have to fight for your wage. And they threaten to call the police because you are illegal.

Wilmer's recounting of stolen wages echoes the worksite experiences of many Latinx immigrant workers in the building trades. The embodied sensing of a forthcoming refusal to pay on the part of contractors and subcontractors is but one aspect of wage theft, which is a multi-faceted and widespread phenomenon. Wage theft includes partial or no payment to workers for work performed, lack of overtime pay, and paying under the minimum wage. "Misclassification" is an illegal process by which employers wrongly classify employees as independent contractors, thereby sidestepping requirements such as overtime, workers compensation, Social Security payments, and so forth (Department of Labor 2017). According to Workers Defense Project, an advocacy and research organization based in Austin, forty percent of the construction workforce in Texas, for

instance, is misclassified as independent contractors (Workers Defense Project 2013, iii). As María, the *lonchera* owner, pointed out to me, discrimination does not just occur according to one's face-to-face treatment of an undocumented worker, but also how and when one pays that worker.

Worker organizing early in post-Katrina rebuilding occurred partly because of such ill treatment on the part of contractors and homeowners. Within this environment of widespread exploitation and impunity, migrants also develop ways of minimizing risk of wage theft. Armirio recounted how he settled in with one contractor he trusted and avoided day labor waiting sites, where bosses change by the day, thus putting workers in more vulnerable positions for wage theft.⁷² While interviewing Pastor Delgado in his office, he printed for me a short contract form on his computer that he gives workers who then produce them for their employers to sign. However, to what degree workers feel empowered enough to use these forms with contractors? Being undocumented, non-fluent in English, and often merely being visibly “Latinx” immediately puts many individuals in a position in which they feel they cannot demand a signed contract or overtime.

Other laborers recounted to me informal organizing on day labor sites in order to avoid unscrupulous subcontractors, akin to the “moral economy” of Bay Area day labor sites where workers carefully manage jobs and protection through tenuous though temporarily binding friendships (Ordóñez 2015, 27, 58). Antonio, a Guatemalan construction worker, explained how he asks for his money up front. He is in the position to do that, having built up a reputation for being dependable and doing good work.⁷³ He

⁷² For more on such risk minimization strategies among day laborers, see Ordóñez 2015 and Valenzuela 2001.

⁷³ Reputation is, arguably, a worker's resume in construction and subcontracting within the building trades (Applebaum 1981, 38; Valenzuela 2001, 345).

also largely avoids day labor sites because of the risks of non-payment, unpredictability of job availability, and the possibility that day labor sites may become targets of law enforcement. Stratification within the Latinx migrant labor pool occurs between more newly arrived migrants with smaller networks who rely on day labor sites and workers like Antonio and Armirio who have drawn on their contacts and work experiences to establish themselves within more reliable jobs. As I noticed over my visits to the field from 2011 to 2016, as the rebuilding phase drew to a close, day labor sites also decreased in number.

For the migrants, or “hidden workers,” laboring “somewhere along the continuum of employment and enslavement” in the agricultural lands of California, their non-visibility to the broader public is one key reason for their “continued exploitation” (Holmes 2007, 41). In New Orleans, on the other hand, Latinx workers are very visible in their presence on residential worksites throughout a densely populated city and through the success of social justice organizations such as the *Congreso* that have encouraged migrants to come out of the shadows. But for many Latinx migrants, simply moving through urban space racially encodes their potential status as undocumented and leaves them vulnerable to both crime and law enforcement alike.

After Katrina, Pastor Delgado heard directly from victims of theft several times a week and was even told of multiple thefts committed against the same person. He talked of how undocumented immigrants were referred to locally as “walking ATMs” because of their vulnerability to potential thieves who recognized their likelihood of being paid in cash, having cash on them due to lack of bank accounts, and hesitancy to go to the authorities. Such hesitancy is not only rooted in a fear of being deported. An “open mic”

night that the US Department of Justice held for individuals to discuss their experiences with the NOPD (New Orleans Police Department)⁷⁴ revealed to the Pastor an astonishingly high number of Latinxs who were arrested on Friday or Saturday and held over the weekend. When the migrants were able to pay the bond and leave jail, their cash would be missing. It turns out most undocumented workers got paid in cash at the end of the work week and corrupt members of the police force were targeting them accordingly.

Although there is public transportation in the city, many immigrants find they have to drive in order to fulfill the employment opportunities that exist. For Indra, a twenty-something undocumented Honduran migrant working in housekeeping, driving is a necessity to get to the various sites that her temp agency assigns her to. While sitting and chatting in her kitchen, she motioned down to her foot and stated in English, “For the Spanish people, driving is our Achilles heel.” She made clear that migrant vulnerability is greatest when driving without a license because of the risk of being stopped by the police, subsequently arrested, and possibly deported. Similar to other places throughout the U.S. such as Atlanta (Coleman and Stuesse 2016, 526), local law enforcement working in concert with ICE have set up roadblocks and implemented traffic stops often to check the status of drivers.

In her recounting, Indra engages in “bodily vigilance,” in which the phenomenology of illegality is embodied by migrants in an ongoing sensing of public space as potentially dangerous (Willen 2007, 17). In her work on migrants visibly coded as foreign and undocumented in Israel, Willen (2007, 23) argues that just as migrant

⁷⁴ The Obama administration Justice Department’s 2011 report on the NOPD (<http://www.nola.gov/nopd/nopd-consent-decree/>) highlighted widespread civilian disillusionment with the police. Research has highlighted the deep mistrust day laborers hold towards law enforcement and the US justice system more broadly (Bucher, Manasse, & Tarasawa 2010; Negi, Cepeda, and Valdez 2013; Ordóñez 2015; Valenzuela 2003).

bodies are “read” by the broader public as foreign, so do migrants embody a

consciousness of ongoing awareness of that ascription of illegality and thus must:

constantly negotiate the tension between body as object and body as subject, or between their own embodied experiences of self in social context, on one hand, and their familiarity with the symbolic code – replete with racial, ethnic, and national signals and associated with particular kinds of positive and negative moral values – through which they, in their bodies, are being read. These patterns of sensing, and of being sensed by, other people are by no means value neutral; rather, the aesthetics of Otherness are tightly wound up in a deeply rooted biopolitics of Otherness.

As residents going about their daily business in the city, Honduran migrants also recognize their deportability and their potential subjection to law enforcement. Through the Achilles heel analogy, Indra points to what was in Greek mythology literally the ultimate bodily vulnerability. This recognition illustrates how migrants are constantly mediating their being-in-the-world by anticipating how others will view them as Other.

Indra also had her own dramatic story of being stopped by a police officer, only to be let go. She recounted how that day her hair was very nicely done and she was well-dressed so he cautioned her for the next time and let her go. Her story, like countless others, highlights the bodily insecurities that infuse everyday, workaday lives and helps to denaturalize not just the working body (Wolkowitz 2006) but also the vulnerabilities inherent in the seemingly mundane activities that scaffold worklife. Thus, insecurity surrounding the possibility of being deported is necessarily wrapped up in the forms of “economic insecurity” that overlay day-to-day life for Latinx migrants. As Goldstein and Alonso-Bejarano (2017, 3, 9) point out:

The immigrant’s survival of many years of illegality thus functions as a disciplinary enforcement of the subordination of her labor. In other words, the disposability of the Latin American undocumented worker in the United States is a result of the production of illegality as a social condition that provides an apparatus for sustaining the vulnerability and tractability of unauthorized immigrants as workers through the use of deportability as a biopolitical apparatus of regulation (Goldstein and Alonso-Bejarano 2017, 3).

As a “social condition,” illegality and deportability are vulnerabilities that migrants embody in their day-to-day lives. Interestingly, while their labor is subordinated, it is the

ability and desire to work that migrants in turn assert as what distinguishes them as individuals worthy of the right to stay.

The Work Ethic and the Politics of Race

Early in my fieldwork in June 2011, I assisted a group of four to five volunteers from a local Catholic Church to provide food and water to day laborers waiting for work in front of a Home Depot in the Mid-City district of New Orleans.⁷⁵ At seven o'clock in the morning, the weather was already hot and humid as a dozen or so workers gathered under trees for shade. I chatted with a Honduran man in his twenties, darkly tanned and wearing a short-sleeved white t-shirt and baseball cap.⁷⁶ “We are a commodity here,” he deadpanned in English, referring to his experience doing a variety of jobs in neighborhoods in post-Katrina clean-up and later reconstruction. When I asked him to explain, he cocked his head and crossed his arms, recounting the story of an African-American family that was pushed out of their home after Katrina. The mother was crying at their state as they were made homeless by the landlady. The landlady wanted the migrant and another man to clean everything. Not only was the house filthy, in his words, but she had also only wanted to pay him twenty dollars for three hours of work. He and fellow workers refused and left. The day laborer asked rhetorically, “Why would someone offer so little for such difficult work?” While his story signals how he and his fellow workers arguably had a good sense of the value of their labor and were able to

⁷⁵ On a follow-up research trip in April, 2016, I saw that this Home Depot had closed, largely because the work of rebuilding had also ended (Sayre 2013).

⁷⁶ As an informal interview, I did not ask for any day laborers’ names on this particular day in order to protect their anonymity.

informally organize to refuse poor labor conditions, he was firmly critiquing the compensation of that labor.

Many Honduran migrants echoed similar sentiments in interviews with me. When Armirio stated that, “we come to work like donkeys,” he, along with the day laborer, was signaling the status of Latinx migrant workers. At the same time, this acknowledgement of exploitation largely critiqued the structural conditions that lead to such realities, not the work itself. Instead, many Honduran migrants explicitly pointed to a willingness to work hard, arguably a work ethic key to their identities. The term “work ethic” originates with Max Weber’s interpretive and historical analysis of labor in modernity. In “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism” Weber (1992, 38) analyzed how, within the last several centuries in the Protestant Western world, a particular set of ethical rules began as a manifestation of religious beliefs and a desire to enact Godly works while living. Within this perspective, capitalism and thus work itself became an ethical practice, rather than just a constituent part of material relations.

This labor discipline in turn worked to sever the relations between religiosity and a work ethic, thus leading to subsequent disillusionment with modern life that had become increasingly mechanized and bureaucratized (Giddens 1992; Weber 1992:123-124). Weber’s interpretive and methodological focus on the subjectivity of the individual (Abrams 1983) focused on the work ethic as a particularly Protestant phenomenon that drove the development of capitalism. Yet, more relevant to this discussion, considering his emphasis on the non-material aspects of worklife helps in asking: What does an individual’s work mean to him or her and how does that in turn inform their social and material surroundings? For post-Katrina migrants, whose work was difficult and

dangerous, their answers went beyond the material into the realm of the moral, affective, and familial.

Speaking with these migrants revealed how they framed their labor as not just a necessary act to survive, but also as a sacrifice for family and to the city of New Orleans, the latter explicitly political in its assertion of belonging. Migrants simultaneously indexed their hard work to their ethnic identity as Latinxs and in the process questioned the conditions under which that ethnic identity has made them a target to law enforcement. For María, there was a clear connection between economic deprivation in Honduras and hard work in New Orleans, stating, “This is not to boast, but there is no people more hard-working than the Latin people. They do so for many reasons, the most important of which is necessity ... people who come from there [Honduras], where there is such a need – when one finds a job, one values it.”

Pinpointing the exact date she arrived in New Orleans after Katrina, María went on to detail her can-do attitude at getting to work immediately, using the phrase “*manos a la obra*” (“let’s get to work,” or literally, “hands to the work”) and clapping her hands for emphasis. María’s evocation of hard work and Latinxs willingness to do the jobs “Americans won’t do” reflects a powerful discourse within the U.S. (Chávez 2007). While the “Latino worker” indexes hard work for many, on the flip side, there is also the more perniciously xenophobic discourse of the Latino who comes to the U.S. “illegally” and refuses to work, thus living off public resources for free, i.e. the Latino “threat” (Chávez 2001, 2008; De Genova 2002).

“We crossed the border with our ladder and our brush in our hand” was a common refrain that Pablo, a successful general contractor, often heard in regards to

Honduran migrants like him. Having crossed the border decades ago, leaving his eight siblings and university schooling to join his older sister in New Orleans, Pablo had since legalized his status and lived with his U.S.-born wife and two sons in a large Victorian house in the Mid-City district. He recounted his work history to me, from his first job cleaning someone's house (something he felt humiliated doing at the time due to what he termed his "macho upbringing") to landscaping ("It was hot and you wake up at like 6 a.m. By 7 a.m. you feel like someone dumped a bucket of water on you because of humidity and heat. But it was something I had to do."), to asphaltting, demolition, and asbestos removal (a job he never felt safe performing and suffered a serious burn while doing), to office work and night school, and finally to his own contracting business as a licensed general contractor. As highlighted above, throughout our conversation, Juan wove into his narrative the affective dimensions of these jobs, the sensory aspects that accompanied them, and the risks and opportunities he juggled throughout. Each job played a significant role in his story of upward social mobility and settlement in New Orleans.

Though stated with a chuckle, Pablo's comment about crossing the border with ladder and brush in hand along with María's "*manos a la obra*" comment draw upon bodily metaphors to highlight how the central aim in coming to New Orleans is to work, make money, and provide for self and kin while at the same time invoking an awareness of the meta-narrative and tropes of the "hard-working Latino." María replied to my question about how she feels about the work she did first in reconstruction and later with her own *lonchera*, stating, "It's a pride and a blessing. It is an opportunity to fight and to bring our family together ... because there are people I have to fight for ... I have a

brother who is blind and my father who is elderly ... so, I have to offer love, passion to what I do.” Thus, the work itself as well as the ability to work hard not only ensures material earnings but presents opportunities to unite family, as well as provide a personal source of pride and self-recognition. For someone like María, work is also a reason to fight. Studies of women and their working lives in various cultural contexts similarly highlight how labor and the ability to provide for far-away kin can provide a value that goes beyond the material rewards afforded workers through their work (Conradson and McKay 2007; Ibarra 2002; McKay 2007). Though most post-Katrina migrants framed their work as mainly to help self and family, women I spoke with were more likely to mention “sacrifice” as a key component of that labor. Here María is asserting the affective resonance of the work she does. Work cannot only provide material sustenance; it must have meaning.

In her political theorizing of how Nazi bureaucrats enacted the Holocaust and how technocrats developed nuclear bombs (Sennett 2008, 2), Hannah Arendt meditated on the nature of human labor by positing a hierarchy of human practices that ascend respectively in order of importance for fulfilling the normative human condition, i.e. “labor,” “work,” and “action.” Humans are inevitably caught up in natural rhythms of life, such as birth, death, and the ability to work the earth in ways to ensure survival, or “labor” (*animal laborans*), i.e. the physical sustenance and reproduction of life that is immediately consumed (Arendt 2000, 182). “Work,” or *homo faber*, constitutes the human potential for technology and the creation of artifacts that transform the earth and leave a trace through time and space (Arendt 2000, 293-295). Lastly, it is “action,” a “political

capacity” through which individuals using speech are able to create new worlds of civility and compromise (Arendt 2000, 167-169; Baehr 2000, xxix).

In the World War II era of modernity, as work and economic life more broadly extended into moral and political arenas, the ends came to justify the means in ways that eventually led to a loss of “intrinsic worth” of everyday life and humanity (Baehr 2000, xxxi). Second, with modernity and industrialization *animal laborans* came to replace *homo faber*, as automation displaces individual creativity (Baehr 2000, xxxi), an anomie not unlike Weber’s proclamations on modernity. While Marx, for instance, celebrated labor [or labor power, as the “set of mental and physical capabilities exercised in the labor process” (Burawoy 1979, 135)] as the material basis of creative individuality and the basis for political organizing, Arendt saw this perspective as dangerously instrumental in its negation of politics in favor of material relations that violently viewed “individual actors as analogous to objects of nature,” rendering them “pliable and dispensable” (Baehr 2000, xxxii). In other words, by ‘collapsing “action” into “work”’ (Baehr 2000, xxx) humans can avoid discounting the basic humanity of others, as politics is the standard-bearer for material life (Sennett 2008, 1). Sociologist Richard Sennett (2008, 7) further qualifies this perspective by arguing for more closely examining the forms of sociality, finely textured economic practices, and even religious perspectives that play a role in determining human and material interaction in production. Work can be both exploitative and pleasurable, but more importantly it can also be revealing of the very political engagement Arendt (2000) argued can be depoliticized in work life under modernity.

Like many of the migrants I spoke with who are active in the *Congreso*, María argued that her labor in post-Katrina clean-up and subsequent rebuilding should shield her from discrimination, exploitation, and deportation. In this regard, her worklife is infused with both political capability and action. Many *Congreso* worker constituents believed that the labor they expended in rebuilding a city bereft of workers for low wages allowed New Orleans to emerge as a successful city on the rebound. Now that rebuilding is over, residents and politicians expect them to leave. For these workers, their labor has been a sacrifice and a deeply moral practice.

At the same time, this common evocation of a shared work ethic and sacrifice is not without conflict. One of the reasons the NOWCRJ was formed was because of post-Katrina “black and brown tension,” as Alejandra, a community organizer in the Latinx community, called the results of the displacement of New Orleans’ overwhelmingly African-American working population in favor of Latinx workers. In many of my interviews with Honduran migrants, they articulated their work ethic as contrasting with US-born workers and African-Americans in particular. Auto repair shop owner Juan, for example, started as a construction worker and then became a contractor and expressed confusion at why native-born Americans were working for him when they had the language skills to truly excel at contracting. He then went on to point to a lack of self-esteem and the absence of a desire to work hard as characterizing Black workers, stating in English: “It’s nothing against the skin color. It’s the attitude inside – doesn’t [*sic*] feel proud of what they’re doing. They just let the time goes [*sic*] to get pay [*sic*] ... With the Spanish, or American, or white people, they feel proud at what they do and they feel

satisfaction that if they're doing something really nicely, looks pretty, and looks excellent ...”

Perhaps because of my unintended bodily reaction or a self-realization of how his dialogue may have sounded, at this point Juan stopped himself and apologized for sounding like a racist. These prejudicial sentiments came up often in my conversations with Honduran migrants, though to varying degrees, and always with a follow-up statement distancing the speaker from racism. Luiz, a subcontractor, informed me that hiring older Black workers or accepting jobs from older Black customers is okay because it is mainly African-American youths that “create problems on the worksite.” Another interlocutor, Fernando, told me stories of African-Americans in his neighborhood telling him to “go home” to Guatemala, because he was Latino, a Spanish-speaker, and undocumented. He qualified his statement by pointing out that educated Blacks do work hard but that it is difficult to get that education under conditions of poverty.

Indeed, when asked further about worksite discrimination, many Latinx workers reported witnessing discrimination against Black workers by white bosses, in the process recognizing the injustice of the situation. As racialized workers that face discrimination within the New Orleans labor markets, tensions between African-Americans and Latinxs (Trujillo-Pagan 2012, 63-64) highlight that the workplace itself is a key location in which the “historically significant social and exchange relations under capitalism are produced and reproduced” (De Genova 2010, 250) as well as structures of racism and social inequality (Gomberg-Muñoz 2012; Holmes 2007; Miraftab 2016; Paap 2006; Trujillo-Pagan 2012).

Rather than a sentiment held by Latinx migrants only, such racialized views on the Black work ethic are characteristic of how racial groups are placed within a hierarchy of deservingness within US society (Alexander 2010; Gomberg-Muñoz 2012). In the past several decades, the implementation of stringent and unequally applied sentencing laws in the wake of the War on Drugs of the 1980s has led to an explosion in incarceration rates that have unequally targeted African Americans in what Michelle Alexander (2010) has termed the “New Jim Crow.”⁷⁷ Gomberg-Muñoz (2012) argues that the criminalization of both undocumented Latinx migrants and African Americans are linked in an increasingly securitized US law enforcement complex – the War on Terror following on the heels of the War on Drugs – that ensures the reproduction of racism in historically familiar ways, i.e. “rendering certain workers at once more vulnerable to oppressive labor practices and justifying such oppression with a rhetoric of moral inferiority” (Gomberg-Muñoz 2012, 341).

Individuals, then, imbue their work with moral meaning in racialized ways, as ethnographic study of working class men in the U.S. found: “While many whites see blacks as lazy and contrast their own work ethic with that of black workers, blacks see whites as domineering and contrast them with their own solidarity and warmth. Each group perceives the other as lacking with respect to the specific universal moral rules each embodies and privileges most.” Under neoliberal capitalism and continued racial inequalities, workers of particular racial groups become deportable or unemployable. These logics lead to a system that pits marginalized workers against one another in a

⁷⁷ From 1970 to 2003, the US prison population increased by seven hundred percent. During that same period, “African Americans were eight times more likely – and Latinos three times more likely --- to be incarcerated than Whites” (Western 2006 in Gomberg-Muñoz 2012, 340). Strict drug laws targeting Black communities and discriminatory sentencing practices explain much of the disparities in prosecution and sentencing, i.e. a form of “racialized control” (Alexander 2010).

racialized form of labor discipline. In the case of post-Katrina New Orleans, Black displacement has allowed for an uneasy Latinx emplacement.

I also witnessed many instances of camaraderie between Blacks and Latinxs, not only through the NOWCRJ, but also in the historically middle-class African-American neighborhood of Treme, where neighborliness remains an important practice. Many Latinxs living in New Orleans proper tend to reside in working class, historically African-American neighborhoods. To what degree these tensions would exist regardless of the racial background of the native-born US residents is not clear. On the other hand, for many migrants, it was fellow Latinxs who were seen as the most exploitative. Armirio, for instance, voiced his happiness with an African-American boss and complained about the treatment of him by a Latinx boss. On a day labor waiting site, one Honduran laborer I spoke with launched into a discussion of how fellow Latinxs were the worst at ripping off their fellow workers and decried their lack of solidarity. Another Latinx interviewee laughingly denounced the ascent of Latinxs into management positions throughout the city because, now being bosses, they will inevitably turn around only to treat their workers poorly. These types of ironic and self-deprecating statements act as a subtle critique of an identity politics that assumes ethnic solidarity.

Beyond social boundary-making through the work ethic, many Hondurans explicitly mulled over what they saw as the pitfalls of working too hard. In particular, some documented immigrants or those set on legalizing their status and settling in the New Orleans area critiqued other migrants who were overwhelmingly preoccupied with just work and argued that it blocked their integration into US society. For Indra, sending

money home is an important part of work life in the U.S., but she admitted the following with a chuckle:

Now we start to live like American people. Get nice clothes, nice stuff. I sacrificed a lot in the beginning for others and now I want to live for me. Life is lived only once. I don't want to be like some Spanish people living like sardines just to save money. They save money for people in Honduras then family spends all of the money and when they get back nothing is left!

These varied articulations of a work ethic, then, both praise and subtly critique a perceived Latinx identity that is grounded in hard work, sacrifice, and flexibility. As theorists of workers under modernity, Weber's interpretive approach to meaning in work and Arendt's theorizing on political action as it relates to human labor offer a means to better parse how work is more than the material means through which individuals support themselves and family. These ethics of work also reflect a broader racialized hierarchy in which deservingness is meted out in stratified ways to different racial groups in the post-Katrina New Orleans context. Latinxs and African-Americans, both subordinated workers, are nonetheless cognizant of these structural inequalities on the worksite and beyond.

Contracting and Gender in the Labor Process

My first experience in an all-male space while in the field was actually located far from a construction site. Instead, it was a union hall in suburban Metairie, for the local chapter of the building trades of the AFL-CIO. The heads of each of the trades that fall under the umbrella of the building union were attending. Rob, employed in the upper tiers of management, had suggested I attend and welcomed me into the air-conditioned auditorium. He gestured at the donuts and coffee set up to our right as people gathered in small groups chatting before the meeting. All were men, the vast majority were white

with only one who appeared to be African American and another Latino, and nearly all were in their forties, fifties, and sixties. An animated personality, Rob loudly announced that I was studying construction workers and that I spoke Spanish. That led to some giggles. Upon hearing me speak the Latino man came over and introduced himself as Honduran, saying “Hey, beautiful!” in Spanish. There was a lot of jocular ribbing going on and at one point Rob leaned in and told me to not pay anyone any mind. When the meeting started the group took a vote on whether or not they accepted my presence as a non-union member. They all agreed and as I took a seat in the back, things seemed to settle down. At one point in the meeting, however, a man discussing some order of business suddenly cursed, using the f-word. He immediately turned around, looked at me, and apologized, stating “There’s a lady in the house.” Everyone laughed, including me. I demurred and insisted that I myself cursed “like a sailor.”

My presence in the union hall clearly affected the dynamics of the male worker interaction. I stood out as a potentially desirable subject (the “hey, beautiful!” remark) and someone to protect (Rob’s insistence that I ignore some of the comments and the apologies for cursing). As studies of women in male-dominated fields indicate (Paap 2006; Rolston 2014), the presence of women in traditionally masculine industries necessarily shifts the worksite dynamics in ways both positive and negative for both male and female workers. This interaction with the management of the building trades union also further shows how construction in the U.S. and the upper echelons of construction unions are largely male-dominated, with men constituting more than ninety percent of the workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016).

Similarly, most ethnographic studies of building concern male workers (Applebaum 1981; Gherardi and Nicolini 2002; Sykes 1969), and the majority don't explicitly address gender, as Paap (2006) points out. Residential building sites are gendered spaces where mostly men predominate within the loose and autonomous nature of subcontracting. As I found to my surprise in my research, however, many Honduran migrant women who arrived in the immediate post-Katrina era easily found work in initial clean-up and waste removal. Though conditions were difficult in terms of finding places to sleep, working long hours, and toiling under conditions of extreme heat and pollution, nearly all recounted being happy to have done the work. The pay was good and gender discrimination seemed to matter less in a disaster recovery context where any working body was needed. When clean-up and the initial phase of rebuilding ended, however, many of these women were forced out of the industry and into more low-paid work, such as housekeeping. A small number stayed working in renovation and construction with trusted subcontractors.⁷⁸ I also witnessed some husband and wife teams working on construction sites.

I examine here how the labor process of subcontracted residential building in New Orleans has presented windows of opportunity for men and, to a much lesser extent, women to earn higher wages than in other low-wage industries, retain a degree of flexibility, and become upwardly mobile, though in limited and precarious ways. Migrants' undocumented status and lack of language skills in an already unpredictable industry force many to move from worker into subcontractor status and back again.

⁷⁸ I was not able to find any figures assessing the gender breakdown of Latinx migrant workers in post-Katrina rebuilding.

Throughout, skill and hard work remain paramount as values intrinsic to the labor process for these migrants.

A hierarchy according to management and worker, skilled trade versus “unskilled” trade,⁷⁹ and unionized and non-unionized exists, often on the same construction site. Additionally, regulatory structures and compliance to them, local social and economic conditions, and the scale of the worksite all play a role in dictating how the labor process unfolds in construction (Águila 2016, 124). As a “community of practice” (Wenger 1998), on the construction site workers integrate into a social group and in turn produce new forms of identity through participation. Within the building trades, knowledge is highly context-based and learned on the ground, while “work is often fragmented and involves much mobility” (Pink et al. 2010, 653). Flexibility and skill, therefore, are paramount in what is less of an industry and more of a set of “related but relatively heterogeneous subindustries” (Águila 2016, 124-125).

Scholars of the shopfloor of factories in the mid-twentieth century (Braverman 1998, Burawoy 1979) were concerned with the labor process,⁸⁰ or how the division of labor in production into its “constituent elements” (Braverman 1998, 52) involves the extraction of surplus labor through exploitative social relations and increasingly dehumanizing, routinized work. Burawoy (1979, x-xi) found that through strict control of

⁷⁹ Building involves more than 25 trades or positions, including masonry, plumbing, installation, carpentry, boilermaking, glazing, insulation, painting, paving, metal work, roofing, equipment operation, and other miscellaneous tasks performed by laborers and managers alike (Workers Defense Project 2013, 10).

⁸⁰ Growing changes to the economy from manufacturing to flexible accumulation and increasing neoliberal governance that emerged in the nineteen seventies and beyond (Thompson and Smith 2009, 254) have expanded the field of study of the labor process. Studies of work have enriched conceptualizations of the labor process through an explicit focus on how the worksite informs labor subjectivity (Freeman 2000; Ong 1987, Zaloom 2006). Ethnographies within anthropology explicitly utilizing labor process theory examine how on-the-ground worker experiences of the labor process complicate overly generalizing approaches through historical analysis and the intersections of race, class, and gender (De Genova 2005, 2009, 2010; Goldín 2001; Hakken 2000; Iskandar 2012; Jefremovas 2002; Wilson 2005).

the work environment, shifting work configurations, and limited professional mobility, management was able to create a work context that subtly pits workers against one another, thus obscuring worker recognition of shared exploitation. Individuals learned to police their own labor while managerial control seemingly decreased, with the surplus from their labor largely going to the managerial class (Burawoy 1979, 72; 106-107). Consent then is “expressed though, and is the result of, the organization of activities” (Burawoy 1979, 27).

Within the community of practice of small-scale construction, managerial control at first glance seems to function in an opposite manner from the shopfloor. Rather than strict control and segmented work tasks, subcontracting and construction work are instead more free-flowing, flexible, and autonomous. This does not mean, of course, that worksites are non-hierarchical; far from it. Furthermore, rather than segmented, overly controlled work, it is precisely the loose nature of subcontracting, the hiring of undocumented labor, and the relative high wages for a low-wage industry that ensures consent on the construction site. The following vignettes highlight this process.

Larissa, a single mother in her late thirties, arrived in New Orleans immediately after Katrina following a brief stop in Houston. She spent only three days resting and recovering from the itching, fever, and foot sores she had acquired on her travel over the US-Mexico border. She immediately began working in clean-up, hauling furniture and material goods out of previously flooded buildings. In a matter of two months Larissa had learned how to sand and paint. I observed her in spring of 2014 as she worked on the construction of her own home in the working-class Hollygrove neighborhood with the help of Habitat for Humanity. That day she showed me how to carefully paint the corners

where the walls meet the ceiling and she laughed at my terrible painting skills. I later sat with her in her furnished house on a follow-up trip in 2016 and she motioned around her with a smile, stating that she had repainted the entire house herself after she moved in because she was not satisfied with the work of the Habitat volunteers.



Photo 3.1: Larissa's House Under Construction. Photo by author, 2014.



Photo 3.2: Larissa's Completed House. Photo by author, 2016.

When I asked Larissa if she liked the work of clean-up and construction and how it was to work in an industry that was traditionally male-dominated, she replied in Spanish:

Construction is mostly men, but I liked it. I liked it because they said to me: "Do you want to work at the hotels?" And I would ask them: "And how much do they pay there?" "It's not much," they said, "but whether it rains or not, you go into work." So I replied, "No, I'd better stick to building, I'm fine." [laughs]

Me: And how was it working with men? Was it ever an issue?

Larissa: It was fine. It was not difficult. They did not say, "Oh, you're a woman, you can't work here." Because of Katrina, the contractors just wanted workers, they did not care if it was a male or a female.

For Larissa, high wages made the rainy weather and precarious job availability worth it. Over time, she learned the trade of painting, drywall, and roofing, and began working under an older Honduran male contractor. She also gained a reputation for being an excellent painter who was particularly fearless on the roofs of houses they were contracted to renovate. Larissa counted herself as lucky to find such a supportive contractor as a boss, otherwise, she stated, she most likely would be working for lower wages in housekeeping for one of the large hotel chains in the city. Indeed, nearly all the

women I spoke with who worked in post-Katrina clean-up and rebuilding had shifted into housekeeping work, either in private homes or in the hospitality industry. While largely a male-dominated industry, the political economy of post-Katrina reconstruction “undermined gender” (Rolston 2014) in ways that enabled a temporary opening for women workers.

While Larissa professed happiness with the work itself and her pay, questions remained about her work conditions. Once while visiting her I ran into her boss and she introduced me. He was friendly but guarded, and changed the topic when I asked about accompanying him and his work crew on some jobs. When I later asked her about safety gear, she stated that her boss was quite concerned about her safety and warned her to be careful, but nothing about equipment itself. She also did not receive overtime. In this regard Larissa is not different from the vast majority of undocumented Honduran migrant workers I spoke with.⁸¹

As managers, (sub)contractors rely on the flexibility and aforementioned work ethic of migrant laborers. But closer ethnographic examination of the labor process of small-scale building sites in New Orleans reveals how thin the line between worker and management is. Wilmer, for instance, was a Honduran subcontractor and former post-Katrina reconstruction worker in his thirties who was hired by a contractor in charge of the renovation of whole houses to do drywall. Wilmer in turn had workers that he hired under him. Yet, he was there on sites working alongside them. When I asked him on a worksite why he wasn’t wearing safety goggles that he insisted I wear, he claimed that it annoyed him and slowed down his work. By working more quickly, he could finish the

⁸¹ Larissa did, however, receive permission to work through a U-Visa, a special status given victims of domestic abuse.

job sooner and move on to another site. Pressures on workers to forego safety equipment or work more quickly and keep employers happy are often due to fears of employer sanction or vulnerability due to undocumented status (Delp, Podolsky, and Aguilar 2009; Walter, Bourgois, and Loinaz 2014), or what Fussell (2011, 593) terms the “deportation threat dynamic.” When I asked if he felt silly wearing safety equipment (my way of subtly asking a gendered question about manliness on the worksite), he insisted he had no problem with how it looked, just that it got in the way of switching from one task to another.

These practices of shifting between worker and subcontractor, foregoing certain rules of safety, and hiring undocumented workers highlight how individuals seek to earn more and become upwardly mobile. Working one’s way out of an “immigrant niche” (Sisk and Bankston 2014, 312) in which a migrant group is overrepresented in comparison to its overall representation in the labor market in that area, such as Honduran migrant (mostly) men in construction in New Orleans, is challenging. For many such individuals, becoming a subcontractor or contractor is the only way to gain social mobility. These “survivalist entrepreneurs,” as Valenzuela (2001, 335) calls them, work their way up in an economy that is informal and precarious. In one research study of undocumented Latino men and their working lives in the U.S., they “identified migration as a source of both increased work opportunities and increased feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness” (Alcalde 2011, 465). Somewhat similarly, I found that the men I spoke with enjoyed the work they did and found vulnerability and powerlessness not in terms of their wages or even working conditions, but primarily

through their legal status and language deficiencies, as my discussion with a Honduran subcontractor, Luiz, illustrates.

At seven-thirty on a weekday morning, the Central City Home Depot located near the Superdome is bustling. Nearly hidden off an industrial street, the road to the Home Depot on that November 2014 morning was bumpy and surprisingly overgrown with vegetation. I rode with Luiz, a subcontractor who worked mainly on residential tiling and bathroom fixtures. On the first of at least a dozen stops that day, I witnessed streams of people coming in and out of the Home Depot, carrying lumber, safety equipment, and machinery to waiting trucks and vans. For contractors, as I came to learn, a large chunk of time is spent driving. A worksite in and of itself, Luiz's van presented an intimate portrait of a subcontractor's workaday life. Packets of cigarettes, half-empty Gatorade bottles, various hardware instruments, and receipts all adorned the dashboard and cup holders.⁸²

⁸² The truck, or work van, is a staple of construction work and indicates how, to a large degree, subcontractors "own their means of production" (Applebaum 1981, 114).



Photo 3.3: Home Depot in the Early Morning. Photo by author, 2014.



Photo 3.4: Luiz' Work Van. Photo by author, 2014.

That day we visited Home Depot three times and drove from one worksite to another, starting with a wealthy house in a tony neighborhood of the Uptown district where a Honduran husband and wife team were working for Luiz. After he checked on their progress we drove out to the suburb of Metairie, to a low-lying brick structure typical of houses in the area, where Luiz supervised his brother's work on the installation of a tub. As 50 Cent played in the background, two workers – one African-American, the other white – came in and out, working on another room of the house. Eventually, the general contractor – a white man in his forties – showed up and he and Luiz engaged in a back-and-forth over the installation of the tub. Luiz protested that the current set-up would inevitably cause water to seep through and cause mold to grow in a few short years. Later in the day at another worksite he directed my attention to a tub that had similarly been poorly installed.



Photo 3.5: Luiz and His Worker. Photo by author, 2014.

For Luiz, as is common in the building trades (Applebaum 1981), workmanship is a form of social capital and on one of the many trips we made that day, he voiced his frustration at how his skills go unrecognized because of what he terms his “poor English” and Latinx identity, even though he comes from a background of carpentry and masonry. As I found throughout my research, there is a range of skills that migrants arrive with that are often invisible to the native-born. The popular saying that “cheap labor isn’t skilled; skilled labor isn’t cheap” is not necessarily true. As we passed through suburban strip malls and signs for lawyers advertising their work injury and workers compensation rates in Spanish, Luiz would connect to his workers via Facetime to see how work was

progressing.⁸³ Beyond just driving, Luiz was also using that time as a mediator of human relationships, something typical in jobs such as contracting where who you know gets you new jobs and how you manage your workers ensures future jobs (Valenzuela 2001, 345). While contractors prefer the flexibility of contracting in a labor market where they are at a disadvantage due to legal status, lack of formal education, and racial discrimination (Valenzuela 2003, 349), in my research I found that most subcontractors did it because they had to.⁸⁴

Conclusion

Like the sentiment expressed by Armando at the beginning of this chapter, laborers explicitly reference pride as a key component of workmanship in the building trades. As builders, they “feel they produce something real and tangible. They can see the physical evidence of what they accomplish and the physical labor that tells on their bodies gives testimony to the integrity of their work” (Applebaum 1981, 29). Despite the risk of work injury, as migrants explained to me, construction remains an occupation that fulfills their capacity for creativity. Wilmer, a subcontractor in his thirties and former post-Katrina reconstruction worker, told me of his desire to buy a house to fix up, not only because it is cheaper, but because of the importance of building your own home. For

⁸³ While the “construction site is a physical frame within which social events take place” (Applebaum 1981, 51), mobile technology has allowed for the worksite to extend onto the roads and highways connecting urban and suburban New Orleans and has become a staple on construction worksites themselves (Pink et al. 2010, 651)

⁸⁴ This is echoed in other social settings. As Blim (1990, 11) points out in his ethnography of small-scale manufacturing in Italy, the “old-fashioned” forms of labor exploitation through such practices as the patronage- and kinship-based recruitment and *lavoro nero*, or “under-the-table” work meant to circumvent taxation and worker protections, pensions, and insurance afforded by the state, ensures the reproduction of the local economy. In fact, it is precisely through that labor control that small scale manufacturing remains profitable and many firm owners themselves become waged workers when their firms fail, and vice-versa (Blim 1990, 145, 161-162).

many workers and subcontractors, the *homo faber* and creativity of craftsmanship is what counters their frustrations and vulnerabilities surrounding undocumented status, wage theft, work injuries, and lacking language skills. Compensation is clearly important, as is recognition for their role in rebuilding New Orleans. But pride in the quality of the work they have accomplished is also meaningful. Similarly, in a study of US working class men, morality emerged as the driving force of their work lives in ways that counter “economic definitions of success” and that “maintain dignity” in the face of decreasing material opportunity (Lamont 2000, 3).

These affective connections to the labor process are constituted through the working body itself. Kris Paap (2006, 109), a woman ethnographer of men in construction, argues that the very physical outcomes of construction work such as weathered skin and bodily strength are part of what she terms the “physiology of masculinity” that is central to how the working class white construction workers she studied construct their masculinity and belonging within the market economy. These bodily effects are converted into a “public and psychological wage of masculinity” that remain unacknowledged and therefore naturalized by the men and broader society (Paap 2006, 110). Such “somatic modes of attention” (Csordas 1993, 138), in which a dialectic of attuned consciousness and shared social participation leads to bodily practices that are culturally patterned occur in union halls, construction sites, and even the constantly mobile office space of a subcontractor’s truck. It arguably also occurs for women like Larissa, proving her mettle through fearlessness on dangerous work tasks such as roofing.

On that day driving from site to site, Luiz recounted to me his efforts in migrating to New Orleans and working for seven years without seeing his family. Though

undocumented, he has been able to relocate them to the area and today they live in the quiet suburban neighborhood of Kenner. For Luiz, from the moment he arrived in the U.S., he has sought more and more work, as I witnessed riding with him from six thirty in the morning to six thirty at night. In many ways, Luiz was not unlike other migrant workers and (sub)contractors with whom I had spoken. He had experienced work injury, wage theft, and the threat of deportation. He helped to rebuild the city. He also embraced a work ethic that tied hard work to past struggle and necessity while also drawing upon a racialized hierarchy. Yet, he had created a life in greater New Orleans, owning a small brick house featuring a neatly manicured front lawn and, as I saw when he dropped off his daughter after picking her up from school, a trampoline set up for both his children to enjoy. Unlike other suburban families, however, Luiz continued to labor under added insecurities, never confident that the tribulations that he had leveraged in exchange for staying in the city would protect him and his family. This lack of protections is structurally embedded within the labor markets of the New Orleans construction industry, as the next chapter explores.

Chapter 4
***“There is no Labor Landscape Here”: Labor Market Stratification, Subcontracting,
and Enforcement in New Orleans***

Oak Street is a historically commercial thoroughfare in the Uptown district of New Orleans. The antique shops, gourmet hamburger joints, and artisan bakeries that line the conspicuously pothole-free strip signal an ongoing process of gentrification. Renovations are a common sight and on a sunny day in April of 2014, construction workers climbed scaffolding across the street from the café window where I sat with Karen, a labor lawyer working on behalf of low-wage workers. In response to my question about how she viewed the labor landscape, i.e. the conditions for low-wage workers in New Orleans, she deadpanned in response, “For most people here there really isn’t a labor landscape.” Karen detailed what she termed the lack of an infrastructure to protect low-wage workers across industries in New Orleans and, more broadly, Louisiana. While she had previously worked with unions on the West Coast, for Karen the process of acclimating to the local labor laws and practices had often been a difficult task.



Photo 4.1: Workers on an Oak Street Scaffold. Photo by author, 2014.

As I spoke with a variety of non-profit advocates, federal investigators, and local grassroots organizers working on migrant and worker rights during fieldwork, I came to see how advocates and labor law enforcement officials attempt to make worksite inequalities such as wage theft and work injury legally and morally actionable under a chronic state of underfunding and institutionalized inattention. Just as migrants are leveraging their embodied experiences of work to assert the right to stay in a city they helped to rebuild, advocates also leverage this labor to assert the rights migrants have as

workers to access just pay, safe worksites, and freedom of movement within the city.

Within such a setting, migrants must learn to be in limbo in the right way, to paraphrase the wording of one advocate.

Karen's wry response reflects a pervasive view among such advocates regarding the exploitative nature of the larger economic structures that affect worker experience in the building trades. Similarly, Natalie, another labor organizer and lawyer, stated to me on an evening in October, 2014:

These systems are built to keep people poor so that they'll continue to work shitty jobs that they don't get paid for. This is the economy of the South. That has been the economy of the South since England and Spain and everyone colonized it, right? Getting people to work for free. This isn't a new concept. This is an extension of that. This is just the whatever millionth iteration of that.

Such structural barriers – i.e. what Natalie refers to as “these systems” – obstruct improved working conditions and upward mobility within New Orleans. Natalie took into account historical factors such as colonial regimes and slavery while comparing Louisiana to other states and regions:

I think the thing that's so frustrating when you look at the whole – just more maybe progressive legislation that's coming out of other places, we're not even close to being able to *ask* for any of that. It's like, can you just, I don't know, pay people for what they already did? [*chuckle*] We're at that level. We are trying to catch up to even the most basic of standards.

Indeed, in contrast to other regions in the U.S., states in the US South have more “right-to-work” laws that make unionization more difficult,⁸⁵ have less federal labor enforcement, and are more likely to enact policies that favor capital over labor, such as tax incentive schemes meant to bring in increased corporate presence in the hopes of creating jobs. At the same time, New Orleans proper has a rich history of worker organizing and unionization among longshoremen and in the building trades (Arnesen

⁸⁵ While it is harder to unionize in the South, the decrease in unionization is a nation-wide phenomenon that began from the 1970s on within the era of post-Fordist globalization (Clawson and Clawson 1999; Kalleberg 2009; Wallerstein and Western 2000).

1991, 2014). The tensions between a conservative state government and progressive urban political culture have long played out within New Orleans' labor markets as well.

Rather than viewing the informally authorized Latinx experience of vulnerability and organizing in post-Katrina (re)building as anomalous, then, conceptualizing their experiences as rooted in histories of exploitation and worker organizing within New Orleans' labor markets better contextualizes present-day inequalities. Any recent history of working New Orleans must include the massive displacement of African-Americans – the bulk of New Orleans' working class – in the post-Katrina era in favor of a largely Latinx migrant workforce (Fussell 2007; Lipsitz 2011).

Race, Unions, and Worker Organizing

“Off with their heads!” someone from the crowd shouted. Cheers and laughs ensued. A racially diverse crowd had gathered in the backyard of the NOWCRJ headquarters to celebrate STAND with Dignity's efforts in pushing for a local company to win an important airport deal from the New Orleans Aviation Board that would include provisions to hire local workers of color (McClendon 2014). In congratulating the hard work of the volunteers, a former city councilman had just jokingly issued a warning about the fate of elites in eighteenth century France who had not addressed the needs of the peasants. As an organizer with the Vietnamese community got up to speak, a STAND organizer handed out fans that people immediately began to use while slapping at their legs in a futile attempt to prevent mosquito bites. It was an August evening in 2014 and the weather remained hot and humid even after sunset. I made my way to the chairs set up for the short awards ceremony that was about to take place and sat next to a tall,

slender Black man with brown-rimmed glasses that barely covered large, bright eyes. A woman sitting in front of him was teasing him about eating cake in front of her while she was unable to have any because of her diabetes. He responded, “Now is that my problem?” and they both laughed. We began to discuss his dietary restrictions and he asked me what I was doing there. After I explained my research topic, he introduced himself as Charlie and began to recount his experience as a carpenter in the New Orleans building trades.



Photo 4.2: STAND Celebration in NOWCRJ Backyard. Photo by Author, 2014.

Born in 1950, Charlie had only joined the carpenters’ union after Katrina. He told me an abbreviated version of his Katrina story, of flooding, fleeing, and return. This was unsurprising, as the specter of Katrina haunts many person-to-person interactions in New Orleans. At one point, he leaned in and asked me if the Bush administration had made a deal with “South American” countries to let in workers to do jobs like roadwork and infrastructure in addition to rebuilding residential homes. As I stammered a response, he began to tell me the history of Black-owned businesses in New Orleans. He spoke of how

many of the businesses of Chalmette, a town to the east of New Orleans and seat of St. Bernard Parish, used to be Black-owned until people were moved to the Lower Ninth Ward before Katrina.⁸⁶ Charlie also recounted how North Claiborne Avenue had had a bustling Black-centered economy until Interstate 10 was built and cut off African Americans from their livelihoods.⁸⁷ Here Charlie made clear links between phenomena of institutionalized racism and structural deprivation: the displacement of African Americans after Katrina, the importation of Latinx labor, and the entrepreneurial history of African-American residents that had suffered due to Jim Crow-era discrimination and segregationist urban policies.

I asked him about his experiences as a construction worker on worksites in the city. He recounted a time when a white man on a worksite called him the racist moniker, Bojangles but Charlie just ignored him. “After all,” he stated with a laugh, “that’s not my name.” I asked how he viewed race relations in the carpenters’ union and he said they were bad, stating: “In the South, a lot of things are the same. It’s not like in California or the North. I have friends who work there and that shit don’t fly there.” Like the advocate Natalie, Charlie pointed to the regional differences, though as a racialized worker and New Orleans native who had returned.

Throughout the twentieth century, New Orleans was the site of simultaneously relatively progressive, biracial unionism and racially exclusionary union practices

⁸⁶ As a WWNO article points out, Fazendeville was one such community in Chalmette; a place that was “once part of a sugar plantation worked by enslaved people.” The residents of Fazendeville were forced to relocate westward to the Lower Ninth Ward and were compensated at rates lower than the market value of their houses in the 1960s. In the aftermath of Katrina, the Lower Ninth Ward was one of the worst hit neighborhoods and has struggled to recover since (Abrams 2015).

⁸⁷ Known as “The Monster” by many, Interstate 10 was built in the 1960s over a predominantly Black neighborhood filled with Black-owned businesses. As a local resident of the time stated, “There were people protesting the bridge being built in this neighborhood, but it was just the minority. This is white versus black, black versus white. And in the South, if you’re black, you’re not gonna win. So this is something white folks want, that’s what they got” (Kaplan-Levenson 2016).

(Arnesen 1991, 2014). In his landmark study of race and labor amongst dockworkers in New Orleans, Eric Arnesen (1991) describes segregated white and black unions that, due to practical concerns, worked together to establish uniform rules and equal wages. This union was a “highly circumscribed, imperfect solidarity, largely born of pragmatism, not idealism,” and whites retained leadership positions, excluding blacks in the process (Arnesen 2014, 19).⁸⁸ Similarly, in the streetcar union local, Division 194 of the AFL (American Federation of Labor) in 1918, biracial unionism existed uneasily as white supremacy dictated white leadership roles for unionists while subverting prior practices that had excluded black workers from Southern unions (Mizell-Nelson 2014, 69, 71). The local unions were not always the most progressive institutions, either. During the mid-twentieth century while under the Jim Crow laws of the time, black and white jazz musicians working on a self-proclaimed meritocratic system formed allegiances that were in fact hampered by segregated union Locals, with white union Locals strongly opposing integration of clubs and other musical venues, which were all closed shops (Manley 2014, 133, 135).

Racially exclusionary practices are also reflected in today’s stratified construction industry in which informally authorized migrants enter into less safe, lower wage jobs while union workers tend to work on large-scale construction jobs such as hospitals, schools, and other industrial and residential complexes. As the earlier vignette detailing my experience at a building trades meeting highlights, upper management remains largely white, older, and male. As someone who was able to return, rebuild, and find

⁸⁸ At the same time, Arnesen (2014, 18) points out that “New Orleans whites could be as vicious as their counterparts in the rest of the new South; they rioted, lynched, segregated, and otherwise excluded African Americans.”

work in the building trades, Charlie's story is far from typical for many African-Americans who lived in more flood-prone areas and were less likely to be given access to their flooded homes afterwards or have sought opportunities elsewhere (Adams 2013; Gladstone and Préau 2008, 148; Trujillo-Pagan 2012).⁸⁹ In addition, the reversal of white flight out of the city has occurred after Katrina, displacing poorer residents living within the city limits (Gladstone and Préau 2008, 141). As Gladstone and Préau (2008, 145-146) found in their historical, block-by-block analysis of census results from 1970 to 2000 of neighborhoods both within and surrounding the tourist areas, increasing reliance on tourism as income-generating can be causally linked to increasing rents and gentrifying neighborhoods in particular areas of the city.

Through the media and public figures, racialization of the post-Katrina workers occurred in ways that "heightened strong public anxiety about racial tensions in the city and scapegoated new Latino migrants, conflating them with profiteers who were outsiders and 'alien invaders' in the city" (Trujillo-Pagan 2012, 61).⁹⁰ Just as post-Katrina displacement occurred along lines of class and race, so were the labor markets of rebuilding similarly stratified. This post-disaster restructuring of the labor markets highlights how "new dimensions of exclusion are layered upon old, the politics of the working-class experiences obstacles that complicate even further the issues of

⁸⁹ Beyond the construction industry, Katrina-related displacement affected professionals in all local industries. As I heard from a non-profit worker and an academic – both from the area – as they were struggling to return and rebuild, transplants (also migrants, arguably) from other parts of the country were flocking to the city to find jobs that had been or could have been filled by locals. As the non-profit executive stated wryly, "There was lots of partying, a type of work hard, play hard mentality. Entrepreneurs, voluntourism type people. There was just so much work that it was easy to find something to do. It was like a post-conflict land."

⁹⁰ Mayor Ray Nagin, who was mayor of New Orleans during Katrina, infamously declared in a speech on Martin Luther King Jr. Day 2006, that New Orleans "will be chocolate at the end of the day. This city will be a majority African-American city" (Grimm 2014). This was meant to reassure many displaced New Orleanians, though he apologized later for the remarks. In another speech in 2005, this time to city business elites, he asked, "How do I make sure New Orleans is not overrun with Mexican workers?" Both Black and Latinx advocacy groups decried his comments as unnecessarily divisive (Martinez 2005).

consciousness, organization, and resistance that make up class formation” (Schneider and Jayaraman 2014, 232). Beyond the widespread devastation caused to life, limb, and property, the Bush administration took immediate action after the levees broke by changing federal statutes and enforcement mechanisms that had benefitted workers. Among these changes included suspension of the Davis-Bacon Act. Dating back to 1931, this law requires federal contractors to pay “prevailing wages”⁹¹ on projects that are partially or fully funded by public moneys (Murga 2014, 211; Schneider and Jayaraman 2014, 236). Although the act was eventually reinstated months later on November 8, 2005, previously signed contracts were grandfathered in, thus depriving workers who signed earlier of receiving the prevailing wage (Murga 2014, 212). In addition, the Bush cabinet temporarily halted OSHA requirements in New Orleans, terminated requirements that employers keep records on paid wages or check work eligibility, ended affirmative action requirements on federal contracts, and suspended the open bidding process for public contracts for nearly a year (Delp, Podolsky, and Aguilar 2009; Schneider and Jayaraman 2014, 236).

Besides construction, many undocumented Honduran migrants – particularly women – work in hospitality. The restaurant industry in New Orleans and more broadly in the U.S. is also characterized by a lack of paid sick days, paid vacation days, benefits, promotions, and the ability to set regular working hours as well as more dangerous working conditions from working in “back-of-the-house” positions, reserved mainly for mostly African-American and Latinx workers with “front-of-the-house” positions often

⁹¹ “Prevailing wage” refers to federal and state laws that “mandate minimum wages based upon the median wage for specific occupations working on public or publicly funded projects in the local labour market” (Fine 2013, 826).

given to US-born, white workers (Schneider and Jayaraman 2014, 234, 241-244).⁹² As Susan, a local organizer with the SEIU (Service Employees International Union), informed me, anti-unionism is rife within the New Orleans tourism industry and even with worker centers such as ROC (Restaurant Opportunities Center) organizing and marching with thousands of workers, only one major hotel, Hyatt, had unionized in the pre-Katrina period. After Katrina, it reopened with completely non-union staff and did not even hire its own employees, instead relying on short-term job placement agencies.

Prior to the 2008 financial crisis, New Orleans like other US locales, witnessed a construction boom, though the housing sector would grow by 158 percent in 2006 as a direct result of Katrina flooding. As the “third largest private sector industry” today, the building trades has retained 31,200 workers from the immediate post-Katrina moment of 34,185 (Schneider and Jayaraman 2014, 239). In contrast to the restaurant sector, where racial hierarchies between white and Black workers characterize worksites, in construction the most substantial stratification falls along ethnicity and immigrant status.⁹³

In the absence of federal and state support and a recovery process that was monetized for private industry at the expense of everyday residents of New Orleans (Adams 2013; Johnson 2011; Trujillo-Pagan 2012), other sources of support have stepped

⁹² The following sobering numbers highlight the dire earnings for low-wage restaurant workers in New Orleans: “in 2001, private sector annual earnings averaged \$37,469 but only \$15,435 in restaurants; and by 2008, private sector earnings had increased to \$44,272 a year while wages in the restaurant industry increased to only \$16,870” (Schneider and Jayaraman 2014, 241).

⁹³ In a research study spanning 2006 to 2009 in New Orleans, Schneider and Jayaraman (2014, 247) found that undocumented workers only marginally improved rates of health coverage from 9.4 percent to 10.7 percent. Though other workers fared better, their access to health insurance dropped from 59.4 percent in 2006 to 50.7 percent in 2009. When it comes to wages, the average in 2006 of \$10.88 for undocumented workers and \$16.35 for documented workers only slightly increased in 2009, with the amounts of \$11.16 and \$17.30, respectively (Schneider and Jayaraman 2014, 252). Being paid less than promised, poor treatment by employer, not being paid for work performed, and issues with payment all increased significantly from 2006 to 2009 (Schneider and Jayaraman 2014, 253).

in to aid workers in a post-Katrina landscape of widespread exploitation. Non-profit advocacy groups, faith-based organizations, and charities in New Orleans have exploded in the post-Katrina era (Adams 2013) and remain part of the structures that support low-wage workers. Yet as Schneider and Jayaraman (2014, 231) point out, portrayals of a changed city obscure the key role a low-wage workforce played in keeping city functional:

Most portrayals of New Orleans tell a story of Katrina washing away the low-wage and low-productivity population of the city to allow a boom in cosmopolitan sectors such as non-profits, education, and medical research, evidenced by an influx of individuals with high levels of human capital, concomitant increases in average income, and a rising percentage of residents with college degrees (Schneider and Jayaraman 2014, 231).

Discourses that whitewash the long-term effects of displacement, worker vulnerability, and widespread devastation contribute to misunderstanding surrounding the working conditions that allow and have allowed historically the city to build, rebuild, and thrive. A closer examination of the construction industry reveals just how “the sociodemographic characteristics of workers building and rebuilding the city shift only when social and market forces combine to make one group less expensive and more flexible than the other” (Fussell 2007, 846). These are the shifts that not only forced out many workers like Charlie, but encouraged organizations such as the *Congreso* or STAND with Dignity to form in the first place.

(Sub)contracting in a Stratified Construction Labor Market

Throughout my ethnographic visits, I witnessed how New Orleans shifted from a post-disaster city with pockets of continued devastation, rebuilding, and newly renovated houses to a site of ongoing new construction. I saw buildings I recognized as hollowed out earlier become newly constructed edifices in working-class neighborhoods such as

New Orleans East to more middle-class areas such as Mid-City. Signs dotting the greater New Orleans area, with companies advertising plumbing, carpentry, house lifting, and other services gradually decreased over time.



Photo 4.3: Post-Katrina Signage. Photo by author, 2011.



Photo 4.4: Abandoned House Across from Construction Site. Photo by author, 2014.

What sorts of inequalities have structured the rebuilding and building industries and how do they affect how Honduran workers experience work injury and wage theft as undocumented workers? As construction continues to be a robust industry in the city, understanding its structure and the layers of (sub)contracting that provide it with labor and capital helps to understand the inequalities that shape experiences of not just workers but the advocates who assist them.

As numerous contractors noted to me, construction – particularly on large-scale projects – unfolds piecemeal with a sophisticated set of skills required with each step in the building process. If a labor dispute arises (as it often does) the entire project can grind to a halt. The federal government, therefore, often relies on project-labor agreements to set the parameters of an “agreed-upon resolution mechanism” to establish labor costs at the beginning and to prevent waste (White House 2015). Whether in such large-scale projects or smaller residential projects, contracting becomes a useful means by which to ensure a particular skill is met, but often ensures a volatile employment situation for workers (Applebaum 1981; Blim 1990). This is in addition to other factors that make construction an often-precarious endeavor, including weather and the flexible nature of the projects (Applebaum 1981, 35, 115). In a wide-ranging survey and qualitative study, the Texas-based advocacy group Workers Defense Project (2013, ii), found that dangerous worksites, low wages, wage theft and no overtime, lack of benefits, no workers’ compensation (important for workers with no health insurance), misclassification, and lack of access to training and upward mobility in employment largely characterize the Texas construction industry. Testimonies from workers I spoke with who had worked in both states echoed similar experiences in Louisiana, with much of the legal infrastructure such as “right-to-work” laws similar between the two states.

Yet application of such a broad overview of a state-wide industry to another can miss how local labor markets may be stratified, as “every locality in the United States has its own construction industry” (Applebaum 1981, 116). Because of New Orleans’ status as a politically progressive city, a section of the industry – the one that builds predominantly large-scale, federally funded projects – remains unionized. At the same

time, small-scale residential building in New Orleans comprised of “small firms and working bosses” (Applebaum 1981, 61) is the industry within which many Honduran migrants work.

Talking with union officials also revealed views on working conditions and undocumented migrants that complicate any notion of a broad-based worker solidarity movement. I met Rob, the white man who introduced me at a building trades meeting, early in my fieldwork through an interlocutor active in the labor movement in New Orleans. Rob is in upper management for the AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Council in the greater New Orleans region. In the various settings I’ve seen him – the Mid-City office of the union, public hearings, the union hall in suburban Metairie, an AFT (American Federation of Teachers) protest in support of Jefferson Parish teachers, a busy diner on Canal St. – he was nearly always dressed in a polo shirt or a short-sleeved dress shirt with a tie. Generous with his time and gregarious with a pronounced local Yat accent,⁹⁴ the fifty-something Rob could seamlessly switch between telling me stories about his family’s union background and recounting the minutest of details regarding the union’s latest struggle, whether local, such as an effort to win a bid on the New Orleans airport construction or far-flung, as with the recall election of conservative Republican, Wisconsin governor Scott Walker in 2012.

“I’m just kicking ass for the working class!” was a common way Rob ended our conversations, with a twinkle in his eye and a playful smile on his face. He guided me

⁹⁴A “Yat” accent refers to certain dialectal patterns among certain New Orleanians, supposedly rooted in the New Orleans greeting “Where y’at?” and typically found among “white, working-class New Orleanians, with roots in historic French, Italian, Irish, and German immigrant groups that settled along the riverfront” (Carmichael and Dajko 2016, 234). Yet, as Carmichael and Dajko (2016, 253) point out, pre-Katrina white residents have staked their belongingness to New Orleans through this dialect, which indexes authenticity and often erases linguistic contribution of Black New Orleanians. Since Katrina, “Yat-isms” have been commodified through phrases printed on t-shirts, mugs, and other memorabilia in tourist sections of the city (Carmichael and Dajko 2016, 253).

through how the construction industry is structured; or, rather, how the *commercial* construction industry is structured. As Rob states it, there are six thousand unionized workers in the building trades in New Orleans and forty to fifty percent of large, commercial and non-commercial construction projects such as schools, hospitals, transportation hubs, and hotels in New Orleans “go union,” according to Rob. However, “go union” is itself a complicated phrase. Through subcontracting, most of these projects consist of a partly unionized and partially non-unionized workforce, with, say, plumbing unionizing fully while the rest of the trades remain non-unionized.⁹⁵

In 2016 the annual mean income of the construction industry was \$43,410 in the New Orleans metropolitan area. Considering that New Orleans’ median income in 2015 was \$37,146 (Guzman 2017), this is an amount that elevates the construction worker into the upper rungs of an ever-shrinking middle class in a city with high rates of income inequality. In New Orleans, as in many other locations in the U.S., furthermore, a union job comes with higher pay (often the prevailing wage), expanded benefits, and heightened safety implementation (Workers Defense Project 2013).

Additionally, according to Rob, the union provides supplementary insurance for family health insurance, while the employer contributes \$3.96 per hour as well as contributions towards ten-hour and thirty-hour safety training sessions for which the union has a full-time employee on staff. Finally, construction projects over \$20 million require project labor agreements,⁹⁶ thus the terms and conditions for pay and benefits are established before shovel hits dirt.

⁹⁵ This is what happened with the \$1 billion casino, Harrah’s, built in the city’s downtown in 1999.

⁹⁶ The federal government defines a “project labor agreement” as a “pre-hire collective bargaining agreement with one or more labor organizations that establishes the terms and conditions of employment for a specific construction project” (White House 2015).

While this infrastructure of protections and training scaffolds commercial, large-scale construction sites, the residential housing market by and large lacks such protective measures. Not only do the construction projects themselves reflect stratification by union and non-union labor but so do the crafts or jobs themselves. Roughly one-third of all painters in New Orleans are undocumented, according to a union painter involved in management that I spoke with, though this number may even be higher in considering the large and largely unregulated residential construction industry. According to him, ninety-five percent of unionized painters in New Orleans, for instance, are documented. Being direct trades and thus not subject to licensing requirements to work in Louisiana, carpentry and insulation feature an undocumented rate of fifty percent. Electricians, plumbers, and engineers, on the other hand, do require licenses (State of Louisiana 2016) and thus have fewer undocumented workers on the rolls.

My conversations with Rob also revealed tensions that scholars on unionization have highlighted between union workers in the U.S. and migrant workers, documented and undocumented (Ngai 2004; Roediger 2005). While professing a solidarity with all working class peoples and compassion for immigrants coming to this country, Rob nonetheless often revealed his critical view of Latinxs taking many of the jobs after Katrina. I was sitting in his office on a day in July, 2011 when Susan, the SEIU organizer, stopped by and chatted with us. They recounted their Katrina stories. Rob's concerned grappling with seven feet of water and later watching his elderly father stubbornly rebuild his own house, develop asthma, and eventually die four years later, mucus seeping out of his eyes. Susan told of how a family friend needed workers for his house and before accepting the job the day labor workers waiting in front of Home Depot

banded together to negotiate two hundred dollars for the day, a rate most likely below the local market rate. “And you know, good for them!” she said, applauding their impromptu worker organizing. Rob interjected, “Nooooo. Not good for them!” The moment, seemingly light-hearted, in fact revealed a deeper tension running throughout the construction industry beyond the post-Katrina era.



Photo 4.5: (Sub)contractors and Workers in the French Quarter. Photo by author, 2013.

The mostly undocumented workforce that arrived in the wake of the 2005 hurricane did not just perform much of the immediate clean-up and rebuilding, but has reshaped the contours of the built landscape and the industry that sustains it. Susan also reminded us of how her constituents – mainly low-wage, African-American workers – not only lost their homes and became displaced but returned to find their jobs gone as well. While in the post-Katrina context, many Latinx migrant workers are branded as “illegal,” in the US today union participation rates among US-born Latinxs or permanent residents is actually higher than it is among non-migrant whites (Murga 2014, 213). Additionally, construction as an industry has its own history of broader racial bias in

hiring skilled laborers of color in general, regardless of legal status (Applebaum 1981, 26).

In addition to discussing demographic changes in the labor market, Rob often voiced his displeasure with migrants avoiding paying taxes (on sub-contractors: “A lot of them post-Katrina would just disappear. Many of these work with illegals who don’t pay taxes.”). Rob’s statements about taxes reflect a common sentiment within the public discourse about undocumented workers “fleecing” the public coffers in the form of welfare and health care and not paying into the system through taxes. In my research I found that rather than clear-cut differences between documented and undocumented residents in terms of tax burdens, Latinx migrants as workers often have particular requirements to the tax system. The taxes that they do pay often contradict a law enforcement regime that considers them as in the country illegally. The issue of taxes reveals how migrants may be informally authorized in some ways and undocumented in others. These bureaucratic gaps are meaningful in the ways in which they structure inequalities within US labor markets and create added burdens on undocumented workers.

I met Óscar at a free session on home ownership open to migrant workers and organized by a local Latinx non-profit in October, 2014. Originally an accountant from Colombia, he arrived in New Orleans as a refugee in 2008. At this session he was volunteering his time to explain the US tax code and duties and responsibilities of workers in the U.S. After chatting he invited me to the labor-contracting firm, Skilled Labor Contracting, where he worked as an accountant. Owned by a former worker-turned-contractor, a Honduran man in his forties, the firm serves contractors who need to

find workers for particular tasks to be completed on worksites, most of which are commercial or large-scale residential projects like apartment complexes.

As Óscar patiently guided me through the actuarial science behind large construction projects and the intricacies of general liability insurance and workers' compensation, I asked him about undocumented workers and tax requirements. His reply: "the only thing the IRS tells you is that if you work, you have to pay tax." The "substantial presence test," as the IRS refers to it is a measure with which the IRS can assess whether or not a person is a resident for tax purposes – a span of roughly three years – regardless of legal status (Internal Revenue Service 2017). But, as he pointed out, the substantial presence test contradicts sharply with an undocumented person's immigration status: "ICE says that if you have not adjusted your status, you can not work!" In other words, while the IRS considers you a resident who can pay taxes like any other lawful resident, ICE does not. Thus, rather than shirking tax-paying duties, many undocumented migrants are not only paying into the system through sales taxes, but are also contributing to a Social Security trust fund they may never eventually receive benefits from if they are unable to regularize their status.

The IRS assigns an ITIN number (individual taxpayer identification number) meant for those who pass the substantial presence test and must pay taxes but lack a Social Security number, i.e. informally authorized immigrants. Óscar explained the process from the perspective of the contractors:

Look, these people – these large companies, began to see that there was an opportunity to, for example, work with people who didn't have Social Security number ... So, you are a contractor and I come to work with you and I don't have documents. Then, to give a simple example, during the whole year you received \$1,000 from a homeowner and you said to me, "Óscar, let's go work, come help me, and I'll give you \$500." At the end of the year, the IRS wants to know that I received \$500 because surely the homeowner that paid me also reported me, but I do not have a way to prove to the IRS that the homeowner had given me \$500 because I had no tax ID number.

So, what does that mean? That you as the contractor were going to pay the taxes of both, about \$1,000, and I was going to go to my house with \$500 without paying a cent. So, the contractors and business owners said, “No, we can not continue to do that. We are going to use a tax ID number instead.” So, if you want to work, you have to bring your tax ID number. I can’t put you on payroll, because if I put you on payroll, I have to deduct federal, Social Security, Medicare, and state taxes; but when I send the record to Social Security, they immediately say to me, “No, that number does not exist.”

This excerpt highlights the shifted burden undocumented migrants carry in navigating a two-tiered system that ensures employers access to cheaper labor without penalty. Here the ITIN functions as a means for undocumented migrants to pay taxes into a system while not being afforded the protections offered by Social Security. Migrants can be taxpayers, but not legal residents. Again, as Goldstein and Alonso-Bejarano (2017, 3) argue, illegality here is not only a “social condition” that exacerbates migrant vulnerability, but also serves as a form of labor discipline, keeping workers compliant and in the shadows in ways that benefit capital. Óscar himself immediately pointed out that this puts an added onus on the worker to have his or her tax situation in order and thus the reason why he volunteers his time to help workers understand the tax obligations they may have.

Within the world of construction, such burdens are further complicated by the industry’s structures. From the perspective of a federal investigator examining workplace discrimination for the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission), playing catch-up with the intricate levels of subcontracting is difficult. As the EEOC investigator Tom stated to me in an interview in July 2014:

You have LLCs⁹⁷ and companies within LCCs within companies. So, it’s all disjointed legally and there are separate legal liabilities. And it’s so hard to go through all that from an investigatory point of view while they’re doing this to people and you’re trying to get them to stop. And we’re

⁹⁷ “LLC” stands for “limited liability company.” LLCs are privately-held firms that are generally characterized by sole or dual proprietorship and a fixed sum at which they can be sued by outside parties, usually an amount close to the value of the individual owner(s) (Geu 1991). This type of firm is often preferable for small-scale business owners like (sub)contractors.

talking about janitorial companies that clean office buildings. They have trailer parks and mobile homes where they bring people from Puerto Rico, Latin America, Dominican Republic, South America ... and Asia too. And they're living in trailers with bed bugs and bed bites. They'll respond to complaints and fumigate then and then bring a new set of workers in and don't even bother giving them running water or electricity. Workers have to go to a gas station down the road to clean themselves.

Here Tom directly ties the jumbled nature of subcontracting to the egregious workplace violations that ensue, often with documented workers who are brought by labor contracting firms as guestworkers. This knowledge is widespread among the federal investigators, non-profit organizers, and workers themselves who labor within contexts of widespread impunity. Tom went on to explain:

'I own a house, I want it fixed so I call Johnny. Johnny drives by Home Depot to pick up some guys. He's the contractor. As long as the person who's working for Johnny can go work for somebody else while he's working for Johnny and can make up their own hours they're independent. The moment Johnny's telling them, "You have to be here at eight o'clock, you have to leave at five, you can't work for anybody else, and this is how I want you to do the job." At that moment that person is an employee. Or, as training for a wage claim clinic that I volunteered at taught me, "If you owe people money, we can't help you."

Tom's statements highlight how the burden of seeking workplace justice is not only borne on the backs of workers but also the advocates who seek to help them. In this regard, the very complicated nature of the building industry – particularly in the small-scale residential industry – structures the inequalities that characterize workers' lives and the lives of those who attempt to redress worksite wrongs.

Underfunded Advocacy and Bureaucratic Enforcement

Located mere blocks from the green and lush Audubon Park, the Wage Claim Clinic was housed in a new and heavily air-conditioned building belonging to Loyola University. As the clinic organizer, Natalie was effusive and energetic, often spending the clinic evenings cycling amongst her office, small classrooms where worker interviews were held, and the larger conference room where federal agencies such as the Department

of Labor's Wage and Hour Division, the Department of Labor's OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration), NLRB (National Labor Relations Board), and the EEOC (Equal Opportunity Employment Commission) presented their organizational mission, took questions and concerns from workers, and potentially opened up investigations. These sessions covered topics such as wage and overtime violations, outright wage theft through failure to pay for work performed, worker misclassification, safety and equipment requirements, and proper training.

The clinic's main aim, however, was to recover wages stolen from workers by employers and had been formed under the auspices of Loyola University's Workplace Justice Project, itself founded in the wake of Hurricane Katrina as a counter to the worker exploitation and rampant wage theft of the rebuilding and post-rebuilding eras.⁹⁸ As part of my fieldwork, I volunteered at the clinic and observed how federal agency investigators, lawyers, and volunteers collaborated to guide workers through the long, arduous, and expensive process of reclaiming wages owed by contractors and subcontractors. As the clinic sought to measure, narrativize, and make legally legible incidences of wage theft in addressing worksite inequalities, lawyers grappled with translating the complexities of worker experience into an actionable righting of wrongs and workers in turn bore a burden of effort in reclaiming stolen wages.

At this time of the evening most offices were closed but Natalie's was always brightly lit with people milling inside and outside of her door, chatting, and munching on snacks provided for those volunteering their time to do intake of new workers, write

⁹⁸ Formed through a number of Catholic organizations and Loyola University, the project seeks to "build resources and enforces low-wage workers' rights, cultivating legal and economic opportunities which uphold and respect their dignity" (Workplace Justice Project 2017).

demand letters, and follow up with previously interviewed workers. The office wall featured a large whiteboard dedicated to scheduling worker interviews weeks in advance. Yet another whiteboard with a Paolo Freire quotation from “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” rested against the wall. A former organizer in the New York City area with worker and immigrant rights organizations, Natalie had originally come to New Orleans in the wake of Katrina to work on a project to end juvenile life sentencing.⁹⁹ Later continuing work on various aspects of judicial reform, she also worked as a public defender in civil court.

The process for getting back pay for workers started through an initial interview and then the creation of a paper trail through written demand. If and when employers contacted the clinic, they generally did so through their attorneys. At times contractors called or wrote the clinic directly in an effort to send a check but often they just disappeared, either moving away or ignoring letters, hoping that the case would be dropped. Indeed, the clinic lawyers were often unable to track down subcontractors, contractors, or homeowners. On this particular evening, Natalie distributed the tasks to the volunteers for the evening and we made our way to our respective locations. As I approached the conference room, the smell of perfume wafted out the door. The representative from the Department of Labor, Laura, was animatedly drawing an equation on the white board. Her long black hair straightened, Laura was dressed in a crisp blue button-down shirt and vest with houndstooth slacks and Oxford shoes. She spoke in Spanish with a slight US English lilt and breezed through an explanation of overtime in Spanish. Of the workers, there was a woman in her forties with dyed black hair wearing a t-shirt with the Statue of Liberty on it and a man wearing glasses with a long-sleeved

⁹⁹ As Natalie informed me in an interview in 2014, eight years after the legislation was written to end such sentencing practices, the measure had yet to pass the Louisiana legislature. As of fall of 2017, it still has yet to pass.

white t-shirt under his black t-shirt. There were two other men who appeared to be in their twenties – one wearing a dress shirt and gelled, slicked back hair while the other had on a red polo shirt. A gifted presenter, Laura asked rhetorical questions in an attempt to elicit worker responses in Spanish:

Laura: You are working more than what? How many hours is it again? Forty? Are you working more than forty hours? Then you receive overtime.

Woman worker repeats: Overtime.

Laura: Lots of money ... And so you all are working seven days, you know that people are working seven days for ten or twelve hours ... people keep working and don't want to say anything. And when does anyone have time to go speak with anyone when you are working so hard?

Woman worker: Yes, because at the job here, I worked seven days and rested two days. After working seven days I rested five.

Laura: And how much are you paid for a week's work?

Woman worker: They don't pay by week. They pay every two weeks.

Laura: And she – the boss – is saying, "I'm not going to pay you overtime for more than eighty hours?" Aha! This is important!

Laura went on to detail the importance of the Fair Labor Standards Act, which established forty hours in a week as the threshold above which overtime pay initiates. The workers listened intently and in response to Laura's reminder to keep records of all hours worked, the woman worker pointed out that she had kept hours. The next fifteen minutes involved figuring out the intricacies of overtime, with workers reporting their irregular and complex schedules and Laura attempting to work through these hours on the white board. Although the woman worker asked about overtime to her boss in her housekeeping job, the boss had refused to pay her. From there she segued into how she was expected to drop her lunch break if her boss called her to come to clean. Laura emphasized the importance of keeping lunch breaks and work time separate in order to keep total work hours clear. As Laura listed laws for overtime and record keeping,

workers continued to draw connections between practices such as withheld wages, lack of overtime, unpredictable work hours, and working conditions.

According to Natalie, the clinic organizer, roughly eighty percent of the workers that the clinic served were in the construction industry. At the beginning, in the aftermath of Katrina, the clinic opened to serve reconstruction workers who were experiencing widespread exploitation. Relying on word of mouth because publicizing the clinic too widely would lead to an overload that clinic organizers would be incapable of handling, the clinic nonetheless attracted interest and workers from other sectors experiencing wage theft began attending. One November evening in 2014, while waiting to be buzzed in, I sat in the clinic lobby and began chatting with a woman sitting near me. Because she was a native speaker of English and a woman, I betrayed my prejudices by asking if she was a volunteer or lawyer there to help out at the clinic. She laughed and responded that in fact she was a “stripper,” in her terminology. After being cheated out of wages by her boss, she came to the clinic to see if she could get help. If the bartenders at her club can get overtime as employees, as she stated, why can’t she? Why was she considered to be an independent contractor?

Regardless of the industry, low-wage workers in Louisiana are subject to highly exploitative conditions. “Right-to-work” laws make it exceedingly difficult to organize unions and there is no state minimum wage, no requirement for bosses to pay into worker’s compensation, and no state Department of Labor. Instead, there are fourteen investigators from the federal Department of Labor for all of Louisiana, thus leading to a reliance on an agency already greatly hindered due to nation-wide underfunding and gutted investigatory powers. Funding is tight, with little to no governmental funding for

organizations or legal services for low-wage earners and non-profit support is uncertain. As Tom, the investigator with the EEOC put it to me in regards to underfunding, “No, no, I’m living it! I’m living it! The New Orleans office is supposed to have thirty-two investigators, two supervisors, and an outreach person. And it has ten investigators, one manager, and one director. This is the EEOC for all of Louisiana. I mean, *what?! It’s not even a third funded!*” The judicial system is so underfunded that litigants have to pay fees exorbitant for working class people in the area. Non-profit legal aid provider Southeast Louisiana Legal Services has lost a quarter of staff over the past decade and receives no state funding, thus relying on private grants and some federal funds, the latter of which the Trump administration has planned on cutting in its proposed federal budget (Rainey 2017a).

As Natalie stated to me, work, housing, education, unionization, and the judicial system are all linked. Systemic deprivation and under-enforcement in one arena reverberates throughout the other:

Well, with respect to labor, the standard here is so low. The things that employers think they can, and do, get away with is astounding. There were a few workers that we had right when I started that are from New York and they were just flabbergasted about the wage theft. They were like, “This would have never happened there.” They said, “I’ve never been union but I would never have an employer pull something like this there” ... And that’s just across the board. That’s labor, housing. Working people just don’t have really any rights [chuckles]. It’s really sad and then ... on top of even the rights that you do have, there’s no enforcement. We have a really broken system. There’s no access to the courts. It costs four hundred dollars to file a wage claim ... There is very low union membership ... Even in the union – they broke the teachers’ union here. There used to be one. Now there are charter schools ... I don’t know.

For any workers’ rights that do exist, enforcement is so lacking as to make legal structures meant to protect workers nearly powerless. Though New Orleans and Louisiana have not been immune to decreasing governmental support in the era of systemic neoliberal austerity, in many ways there has been no retraction, merely a further

entrenchment of precarity. For many of the lawyers and workers at the clinic and federal employees, the experience of measuring and acting against disparities was Sisyphean.

During the Bush administration, actions taken by the Department of Labor nationally between 2001 and 2007 diminished by a third (Schneider and Jayaraman 2014, 237). In that same period of time, the Wage and Hours Division's "enforcement hours" throughout the US decreased by roughly 100,000 and the number of closed cases decreased to 30,467 from 38,051 (Schneider and Jayaraman 2014, 237). Katrina played a large role in worsening these conditions. In fact, the suspension of the Wage and Hour division in 2005 in post-Katrina areas, "allowed many post-hurricane violations to delay beyond the two-year statute of limitations on Wage and Hour jurisdiction claims, making it impossible to pick them up again even after the division reopened" (Schneider and Jayaraman 2014, 237). This undermining of the federal agencies has had repercussions that continue to echo throughout the worksites of New Orleans today.

At an earlier session on a warm October evening in 2014, I sat in a large conference room at the wage claim clinic, with an OSHA representative¹⁰⁰ and a translator on one side and on the other a small group of young to middle-aged Honduran men. Wearing t-shirts and baseball caps adorned with the ubiquitous New Orleans iconography of the fleur-de-lis and the Saints football logo, several workers opened folders and notebooks in front of them to take notes.

Worker: There's a question I have that I'm not completely clear on. At what point does OSHA cover you? Lots of people work for subcontractors that have nothing to do with the larger company. That's where most of the accidents occur because those subcontracted people are not trained, are not given the protection material that they need. So they go and pick up a day laborer

¹⁰⁰ 'Nationally, the most common causes of deaths in construction, called the "Fatal Four," are falls, electrocutions, being struck by an object, and being caught in or between something. OSHA estimates that these four hazards cause nearly sixty percent of construction worker fatalities. Falls alone accounted for thirty-five percent of construction deaths in 2011 (Workers Defense Project 2013, 9).

or a guy in front of Home Depot and those workers do the work and get hurt. Does OSHA cover that?

OSHA representative: Yes. What OSHA would have to do is figure out who is directing that person's work for the day.

Worker: Well, there's a guy that goes to get a group of guys like day laborers and brings them over to work. That's the supervisor of a different company. Then there's the other guy who tells them what they're going to do when they get to the worksite.

OSHA representative: Whoever that person is on the worksite, his company is responsible for making sure those workers are safe. It's a trick actually to try to make it look like the guy who picked them up is really the boss when it's not the case. But still, we protect every worker. We just have to figure out the legality issues. It's important to remember that for OSHA discrimination, you have thirty days to report it. After thirty days, you can't get help. The reason is that that's the way the law is written ... Let's say for example that they want you to go on the roof and there's no protection. You can ask for protection, you have the right. If they say no, *don't* leave the site. If you quit, we can't help you. Always ask for other work first. Give them time to get the equipment. If that doesn't work, wait and let them fire you. If you walk away, we can't help. If you walk away, they'll just say, "Well, he quit!" And always take notes.

As the OSHA rep explained in English how workers could assert their safety rights through documentation and careful measurement of dates and worksite actions, the translator attempted to capture the details just right. Later, a worker – speaking Spanish – moved the conversation to the topic of wages, unpaid overtime, and insurance:

Worker: A lot of the contractors don't pay overtime.

OSHA representative: You should come back when the wage-and-hour person from the Department of Labor is here. The overtime issues, insurance for injuries, those things are going to be under Louisiana Wage and Hour. They come here once a month. Any other questions?

Another worker – again speaking Spanish – punctuated the ongoing conversation between multiple individuals by speaking up slowly and measuredly:

Who regulates the subcontractors? Because the subcontractors pay the same, whether or not you're a welder or a carpenter or a roofer or a painter or whatever. They don't care about the skill set when they pay and assign jobs. When you get to a site they just tell everyone to do whatever, you know. They're not keeping in line with the specialty of each worker.

OSHA representative: Unfortunately, no one regulates the subcontractors. You can try to get into a union maybe ...

The workers here highlighted the range of skills, material conditions, and layers of subcontracting that characterize their worksites. The suggestions made by the OSHA official to return to the clinic when another federal agency will be presenting (a place

already difficult to access via public transportation) or join a union (a highly unlikely prospect) or get oneself fired on an already dangerous worksite, illustrate how the burden for workers in contributing their money, time, and labor in the search for workplace justice further entrenches relations of inequality. While my observations indicated that the bureaucrats are passionate about the work they do, they too labor – at times knowingly – under the constraints of a system that privileges the interests of capital over labor and retrenches costs for contractors hiring undocumented workers.

Out of ten EEOC employees for the entire state of Louisiana, Tom was the only Spanish-speaking investigator. Fluent in both Spanish and English and a certified court interpreter, he was helping out at a session hosted by the Honduran consulate on migrant worker rights in October 2014 when we began chatting. We later met for an interview over breakfast at a popular diner on St. Charles Avenue overlooking the “neutral ground,” or the grassy area that divides an avenue or boulevard in the city.¹⁰¹ Tom told me about working in various places in the country and starting a Public Defenders office in New Orleans after Katrina. Tom was simultaneously measured with his words and exceedingly open about his experiences working in various regions of the U.S. and the culture shock he experienced when starting to work in Louisiana. At times, he would express his surprise with a laugh and a long stare to emphasize his incredulousness. He drew parallels between his native Dominican Republic and Louisiana and what he viewed as the pride, independence, skepticism towards outsiders, and a degree of political corruption that requires insider knowledge in order to “get things done.”

¹⁰¹ A New Orleans neologism, the “neutral ground” refers to nineteenth century ethnic divisions between Creole New Orleanians and the Anglo-American transplants who lived on opposite sides of what is today Canal Street.

Prior to Tom's EEOC appointment he was at the Department of Labor. I asked him how his experience was working there. He replied that it was a "rough gig." He worked on human trafficking cases, which were "emotionally difficult" and hard to fight:

And we're talking about the crawfish farms here in Louisiana. We're talking about those brought over here with a workers' visa. They would be locked up in trailers with chains and padlocks. Taken out at two o'clock in the morning to do what they do on a crawfish farm. Their passports are taken away. A lot of the time they're using restroom facilities by utilizing buckets in corners and this include females. And this is the United States ... This is not supposed to be happening here! And I'm talking about a case that only closed this year. I started some of these cases several years ago and they're closing now. It takes a lot because they have the best lawyers.

Here Tom was referring to the circumstances of guestworkers who are in the country legally, though with few rights due to the power of employers sponsoring their stay.¹⁰² Rather than a small, privately funded NGO like the Wage Claim Clinic, Tom was at the time working for a federal agency that still struggled to match the financial prowess of large firms hiring these workers. Though they do eventually win cases, the numbers of violations that occur on a widespread level dwarfs the enforcement capabilities of even the highest federal bureaucracy meant to support US workers.

During an interview with Natalie, I asked her if she enjoyed her work at the clinic. Echoing Tom's sentiment, she responded with the following:

Yeah. I think that it can be frustrating because we're the last line. We are the last recourse. We are the last stop. If there's no ability to sue your employer in court then there's nothing else to do because the abuse has already occurred. There's no preventative anything. There are no protections in the first place. And then once it's already occurred, what do you do? I think this happens so often here because there's a culture of it. Employers fully understand that they can exploit people ... Who's going to do anything about it? Who is protecting the workers? We don't even have a state Department of Labor. It's federal ... I think it's about enforcement. It's about the practical end of how do you actually insure these protections? I think that relying on this court system is just-- it's not happening. I think there's a different shift that has to occur.

¹⁰² Marco, an organizer with the National Guestworkers' Alliance under the NOWCRJ umbrella, noted to me that some informally authorized individuals reported feeling freer than guestworkers, who, though "legally" working in the U.S., nonetheless migrate under strictly regulated conditions, are limited in their mobility, and also work under exploitative conditions. This echoes scholarly findings on the vulnerability of guestworkers (Griffith 2013).

With Tom and Natalie, as with other advocates, the frustration and amazement at the lack of worker protections is tempered by a devotion and passion for their work and a genuine fondness for New Orleans. Both Tom and Natalie also pointed to local “culture” as playing a role, while also articulating a political economy perspective on who gets what and why, a recognition of the inequalities (lack of funding and enforcement) that shape what is possible for support, and an abiding view that outside forces – largely federal – will have to intervene to enforce the laws that are supposed to protect workers. Natalie’s point about prevention highlights how working on a post-hoc basis only exacerbates the struggle to right the wrongs of unscrupulous employers.

Conclusion: Showing Up and Showing Up Again

On another evening session at the wage claim clinic in October, 2014, a fellow volunteer and I interviewed three Latinx workers to ascertain the status of their wage claim. Promising them \$6,000 split three ways over a few weeks, the contractor then disappeared after most of the renovation on the luxury French Quarter house was completed. We spent much of the three-hour session clarifying the status of the workers – were they independent contractors and therefore exempt from overtime or worker’s compensation, or employees and therefore subject to protections? Was one of the workers the boss of the other two or did he merely find the job for them? Determining these findings involved careful questioning as to who bought the tools, who paid whom, and who provided safety equipment with multiple forms. After much back-and-forth, with all parties getting frustrated at various intervals, we finally established that they were not independent contractors, though their boss had tried to make it appear so. At one point,

the man I interviewed, Luis, turned to me with a wry smile and stated that he had previously had no problems with his boss but was now forced to go through this process. “All would be fine if the contractor would just pay us what we’re owed,” he said, shaking his head. The burden of reclaiming wages fell on Luis and his frustration at that fact was palpable. Luis’ experience represents a small sliver of the daily struggles informally authorized Honduran migrant workers face on the worksite and in the city more broadly.

After the clinic one night in fall of 2014, Natalie and I discussed the long process through which the clinic helps workers reclaim their wages and how woefully inadequate litigation possibilities are:

Natalie: Once a week we do new intake and then follow up but the purpose of the clinic is to assess the claim, get as much information that we can about what is going on with that worker at that worksite. And then once we've met with them a few times, make a determination with them whether or not it makes sense to actually litigate. That decision - there's a million factors that go into it. I'm exaggerating. There's probably two dozen factors that go into it but it's still a lot. [chuckles wryly]

Me: It feels like a million?

Natalie: It feels like a million. I think the biggest one is a person's desire, and really ability, to be able to follow the claim through because the legal process can take a year or two years depending on the claim. It's like, “Do I have time to do this?” It's so much more work on top of the work that people are already doing, already taking care of families, already working ... So, I think sometimes people are just like, “It’s just not worth it. I'm not going to put any more money into this.”

Like Luis and labor advocates, Natalie here recognized the systemic and unjust nature of the legal process to reclaim wages. At the same time, the very embodied act of showing up and showing up again at the clinic pointed to workers’ desire to be recognized for the labor they have provided. Certainly, the legally actionable paper trail to address worksite inequalities could only emerge through a laborious dance of documenting that which was not previously documented, of drawing upon mathematical formulas establishing wages and overtime owed, and of mounds of paperwork further abstracting the material relations of labor and capital. But, it also emerged through

individuals attesting to their experiences, their assertions of dignity, and the meaningful though painstakingly slow collective action that ensued.

After leaving the field I followed up with Natalie via email in spring of 2015, only to learn that the clinic had closed due to lack of funding. It may be possible to quantify how much back wages the clinic was able to help workers get back. But also important is how, taken as a whole, the collective efforts of advocates and workers alike in this clinic constituted one of many instances throughout history in which workers in New Orleans labored under conditions of precarity and structural inequalities while asserting a struggle for dignity and just compensation.

Chapter 5
Facing Insecurity from Honduras to New Orleans

The white, mostly middle-aged Catholic parishioners watched Fernanda intently in silence as she gathered herself to begin telling her story. At first declining to speak, Fernanda, a grandmother in her fifties from Honduras and post-Katrina migrant to New Orleans, changed her mind and started recounting by simply stating: “I lost my son.” We were sitting in a large, crowded auditorium of a Mid-City church in August of 2014 attending a Catholic teach-in on “The Crisis of Migrant Children and Its Causes.” After short lectures and personal testimonies from adult and child migrants from Central America, I acted as one of many mediators as we divided into small groups. This teach-in was meant to be a safe space for child and adult migrants to bear witness to their experiences as survivors of crime and state-sanctioned impunity in their home countries while fellow parishioners listened. As Fernanda tearfully recounted how she had witnessed the brutal murder several years earlier of her son in Honduras by gang members and how she and her family had then fled to the U.S. in 2007, I leaned over to hug her while her friend, Rosa, a Guatemalan woman in her fifties sitting on her other side, looked off into the distance. Although I had previously interviewed Fernanda for my research, spent time with her at the weekly English classes, CAE, that I volunteered at, and even attended her daughter’s baby shower, she had never talked about witnessing her son’s murder.

In the spring and summer of 2014, stories of unaccompanied children from the Northern Triangle of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador crossing the U.S.-Mexico

border dominated US news headlines.¹⁰³ As I spoke with many Honduran migrants about their workaday lives and the precariousness of their jobs, they revealed their concern with these minors, and then their own experiences of violence and instability back home. Many of these children slowly become more visible in the sites in which I found myself throughout the summer of 2014. While teaching at CAE, so many children of adult students started attending that the organizers had to find more volunteers to teach. Similarly, at the immigration court where I observed cases on the docket throughout that summer and fall, the already enormous backlog for adult deportation cases was pushed further back to make room for child migrant cases. Also in the fall, schoolteachers reported to me an influx of Central American children to underfunded schools already struggling with integrating English-language learners who had arrived earlier in the post-Katrina era.

Far from an isolated “crisis” as it was framed within the public discourse, the plight of the emigrating child is indelibly linked to the adult migrant worker grappling with the push factors of poverty and personal insecurity encouraging emigration from Honduras and pull factors of potential work in the U.S. boosting in-migration. The continued strength of these push-pull factors (Brettell 2008)¹⁰⁴ is highlighted by how Central American migration has steadily increased over the past twenty years, even as entering the U.S. has grown more difficult and perilous. Stories like Fernanda’s – while revealing the lived experiences of personal suffering and resilience – are not unusual as I

¹⁰³ Such headlines include “Obama in Political Bind over Unaccompanied Immigrant Minors” (Scherer 2014), “Young Migrants Tax System” (Meckler and Althaus 2014), and “57,000 Reasons Immigration Overhaul May Be Stalled for Now” (Davis and Shear 2014).

¹⁰⁴ Highlighting the very real structural conditions that give rise to migration does not mean ignoring how the highly subjective forms of “human volition” actually contribute to the choice to emigrate, as critiques of the push-pull argument point out (Reichman 2011, 18).

found in speaking to other Hondurans, yet rarely are articulated within the US public and popular media.

In the public imaginary today, “crisis” refers primarily to a seemingly porous (though anything but) border between the United States and Mexico and the presence of “illegal immigrants” within the legal borders of the United States, seeking to displace native-born Americans from their jobs, or, in this case, children relying on public institutions like schools and hospitals. The “child migrant crisis” reflects a national anxiety over in-migration by the foreign “Other,” a xenophobic and nativist sentiment that has deep historical roots in US society (Chávez 2001, 2008; Jung 2006; Ngai 2004; Pope and Garrett 2012). “Crisis” was a term that immigration officials and conservative politicians and thinkers used from the 1970s on to describe immigration in general, with Mexican immigration a particular source of concern (Massey and Pren 2012, 7). Xenophobic public sentiment towards Central American migration today is arguably an extension of that paranoia, with all Latinx migrants seen as a potent “threat” (Chávez 2008).

Yet, as Janet Roitman (2013) argues, such crisis narratives structure and delimit what publics construe to be possible and “normal.” The term “crisis” has come to stand in for a historical “moment of truth” upon which political decisions are based and to ensure teleologies of what has been (the past) and what should be (the future) (Roitman 2013, 3-4; cf. Cabot 2015). While foreclosing particular public understandings of how historical relations have influenced the seemingly contingent present (Roitman 2013), “crisis” can in fact produce opportunities for critical interventions by individuals bearing witness to societal injustice and ongoing insecurity. In settings such as the Catholic teach-in

highlighted above, the child migrant “issue” proved to be an ethnographic catalyst for opening up a broader conversation regarding the life cycle¹⁰⁵ of these migrants: i.e. personal insecurity in Honduras, experiences of crime and law enforcement interactions in New Orleans, and the ever-present risk of deportation for Honduran migrants. The act of migrating and working in New Orleans is itself an intervention into the crisis worlds that had animated Fernanda’s and her family’s lives, not to mention those of many other migrants.

The work the term “crisis” does, then, is to open up particular questions while foreclosing others and allowing particular actionable truths while excluding others (Roitman 2013, 2-3). Similarly, what does thinking about the migration of unaccompanied minors as a momentary crisis make possible? Questions of *if* such migrations are new, *why* they are occurring, and *how* they are formed by historical, structural, and transnational forces become foreclosed. Viewing the unaccompanied minor surge as singular, sudden, and *sui generis* limits understanding as to how such migrations are part of larger migratory waves that are cyclical and deeply rooted in histories of empire, as I examine in this dissertation. Such a perspective also circumscribes understanding of how poverty and insecurity in Honduras and the experience of working and living while informally authorized in the U.S. inform how migrants negotiate high-risk, day-to-day living in both places.

¹⁰⁵ In the anthropology of migration, many scholars took a “life course or household life cycle” approach to understanding how migration has allowed peasant families in many societies to survive above basic subsistence levels (Brettell 2008, 101; see Gmelch 1980, 1992 for return migration; see Douglass 1974, Iszaevich 1974, and Kertzer 1984 for European historical anthropology perspectives). Early on anthropologists such as those in the Manchester School recognized that migration is not always a unidirectional path to the hostland but often circular, seasonal, or recurrent (Gluckman 1961, 1971; Mitchell 1969a, 1969b; Werbner 1984). As a further qualification of theories of circular migration, Honduran migrants are arguably connected from home to host society and potentially back to home society through a transnational chain of insecurity.

In discussions with me, migrants made sense of these interventions through seemingly contradictory dichotomies that they articulated, such as productivity and poverty; safety and danger; mobility (both physical and social) and stasis; and comfort and struggle. In so doing, they were rationalizing a complex spectrum of risk that they must grapple with in navigating the structural inequalities of dangerous and underpaid worksites, the potential for victimization by criminals, and the ever-present risk of deportation. Long viewed as a city with a high crime rate (Dimanche and Lepetic 1999; Gotham 2002), interviewees recognized in New Orleans such risks but relativized that danger through comparison to Honduras. For many, the ability to stay busy through work, make money for oneself and family, and prove their dedication and belonging to New Orleans through their post-Katrina labor has made this ongoing insecurity worth it. The initial intervention of simply leaving to move towards greater mobility, productivity, and safety is itself a way of stating, “I exist,” “I survive,” and as Fernanda would say, “I live.” In this regard, migration is itself an assertion of existence and the right to that existence, even under conditions of institutionalized insecurity.¹⁰⁶

“Es Duro Venirse Uno” (“It’s Hard for One to Arrive”)

Natalia was on a bus in Guatemala migrating northward in 2005 when she was robbed. When the men boarded the bus and demanded money, she protested that she didn’t have any. One of the robbers forced his hands into her hair and down her pants to check. “I was shaking so hard and my heart was beating so fast,” she told me in Spanish, placing her hand over her chest. For Natalia, a Honduran woman in her forties, the

¹⁰⁶ Gilberto Rosas helpfully brought up the notion of migration as a political assertion of existence while serving as a discussant on the “Subjects of Equality and Deservedness B” panel at the Society for Anthropology of North America (SANA) 2015 Annual Conference.

experience of getting to the U.S. from San Pedro Sula, fraught with risk and danger, was a story she decidedly wanted to tell. We were nearing the end of her interview in June, 2014, when the topic of her journey came up. As we discussed her work life, she dutifully answered questions but it was when I asked her why she left Honduras that she perked up and grabbed my arm, suddenly engaged. Natalia, her elementary-aged daughter, Bethany, and I had been sitting in a McDonald's on Canal Street, which cuts through Mid-City and eventually divides the French Quarter from the Central Business District. Located amidst a series of run-down fast food establishments, this McDonald's had been refurbished and was bustling with people getting off work, parents with children, and teenagers in school uniforms accessing the free Wi-Fi on their smart phones. Bethany and I had hamburgers while Natalia nursed a coffee and told her story.

Natalia's story echoed those of many Hondurans who had migrated in the post-Katrina era. In addition to personal insecurity and lack of economic opportunity, witnessing first-hand the material effects of remittances¹⁰⁷ encouraged her and many other Hondurans to save up money to pay a *coyote* to guide them northward.¹⁰⁸ As in many cases in migration, the actual decision to leave was a mix of economic, political, social, and highly personal reasons. Natalia also relied on a *coyote* and, like many others, utilized a heterogeneous array of transportation such as cars and buses until the final arduous walk over the border, always on foot and always characterized by severe

¹⁰⁷ See Reichman (2011) on the influence of remittances on Honduran villagers in encouraging northward migration.

¹⁰⁸ Many of the migrants I spoke with were working- to middle-class in Honduras and either saved or borrowed money from family already in the U.S. to hire a *coyote*, which ranged from \$3000-6000, figures that match other findings on Honduran migrants (Sladkova 2013, 90). Generally, poorer residents are not able to afford a *coyote* to migrate, with many attempting the trip on their own. Research on US-Mexico border-crossing migrants found that Hondurans were most likely to travel without a *coyote* or family and friends (Hagan 2008, 76 in Sladkova 2013, 95). Among other Central American groups, Hondurans are particularly vulnerable as many have a lower socio-economic status and lower age than other nationalities (Sladkova 2013, 95).

deprivation.¹⁰⁹ The migratory journey is itself rife with socio-economic inequalities and stratified access to mobility and comfort for most Central Americans (Sladkova 2013).

As one interlocutor, Ariel, described it to me in Spanish, the northward journey revealed a complex, transnational industry of smugglers that:

look very polite, well dressed in a suit and tie ... They are people, traffickers of humans and drugs that have controlled all of Mexico. They have a well-organized operation, everything, everything, pure military army! It's an industry. It looks like an army, because sometimes they wear army uniforms. But they have weapons, and they traffic drugs and people.

Within the political economy of human smuggling, migrants are the products whose movement is key to transforming into eventual laborers within the borders of the U.S. In the words of Indra, the post-Katrina reconstruction worker turned housecleaner in her late twenties, “We are like ... how you say ... like merchandise. And we suffer a lot of extortion.” Not unlike Armirio’s usage of the phrase “work like donkeys” or the day laborer’s term “commodities” to highlight the dehumanization of migrants in the labor markets of New Orleans, Indra’s evocative phrasing of migrants as “merchandise” reflects how northward-migrating people constitute part of a larger economy of human smuggling, the drug and arms trade, and the broader political economy that springs up around such trade (Sladkova 2013, 85). Indra’s mention of extortion also rang true with many migrants I spoke with in their descriptions of the difficult and insecure conditions of travel. The experiences of Hondurans migrating through Mexico involve close brushes with violence such as harassment, robbery, rape, and murder; physically arduous conditions; lots and lots of uncertainty, waiting, and boredom; and at times, conversely, a multitude of kind and generous people along the way who aided in their well-being and mobility.

¹⁰⁹ For more on the journey northward and border crossing, see Kovic 2008, De Leon 2015, Hagan 2008, and Sladkova 2013.

Throughout the 2000s until now, federal investments on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border into border guards, fence construction, and new forms of aircraft and technologies increased greatly, thereby heightening migrant risk in crossing ever more perilous geographies (De Leon 2015; Sladkova 2013). Indra's experience migrating northward reflected this. She told me in English:

In Mexico we went in a big truck with like eighty people standing up, no one can pee, no one can eat for fourteen hours. Like a can of sardines. Horrible. Passing controls for the police. Nobody can see you ... We walk six nights. Six nights! Walk at night, too hot in the day. On the third day, we had no more water. Because we are women the men share the water with us. We found a small pond for cows. There were maggots in it but we had to drink it. If you don't drink, you die. Splinters in the leg. Horrible ... On the last day I was very weak and dizzy; no more energy. Some people want to stay in the desert. They can't walk anymore, they don't care. But thank God I made it.

This evocative retelling echoed across other migrant accounts as well: acute memories of the sensory conditions, interjected tales of acts of kindness by local Mexicans, religious gratitude,¹¹⁰ and the seeming denouement of the final crossing of the border, always across a river. With the exception of a few individuals, most migrants were eager to recount their journeys to New Orleans. Having survived the ordeal was something they emphasized. In their recounting, these personal crises constituted a means through which migrants could frame suffering as key to their presence in New Orleans.

For some, upon looking back the journey constituted an adventure, harrowing though it might have been. One such example of that was Ariel, the interlocutor who described his experiences with the smuggling economy in Mexico. A Honduran in his late twenties, Ariel worked as an assistant to Juan, the car repair shop owner in Metairie. Upon first meeting him, Juan jokingly introduced him to me as Nigerian due to his dark skin. With an easy smile and friendly demeanor, Ariel and I became friends during my

¹¹⁰ Similarly, many migrants articulated a faith in God as ensuring their safety, a sentiment other researchers have found in the Latinx migratory experience (Campos-Delgado 2017; Hagan 2008).

fieldwork stay. I would also often ferry him back and forth to ESL classes on Sunday mornings during which we would chat about life back in Honduras, his family, and the women in his life. In a formal interview, Ariel told me about family turmoil and protracted insecurity in Tegucigalpa and his experiences in subsequently emigrating. Having only arrived in New Orleans in mid-2013 after staying in other parts of the U.S., for Ariel leaving Honduras for the U.S. was a spur-of-the-moment decision in 2009. In the post-coup era, many schools and places of work had closed. He had just had a fight with his mother and decided to emigrate when his aunt, whose husband lived in New Orleans, mentioned the possibility of leaving. He agreed as a joke but then his cousin told him the next day to get ready.

The decision to emigrate is generally grounded in the needs and decisions of households that rely to varying degrees on kinship networks (Fernandez-Kelly 1990, Freidenberg, Imperiale, and Skovron 1988, Hirsch 1999, Lamphere 1987; Lomnitz 1977; Massey et al. 1993; Werbner 1990). Yet, Ariel's impromptu decision to leave reflects the complexity of decisions to emigrate, with "affective, sexual, and emotional dimensions" often playing an important role in decisions to migrate rather than a strict "costs and benefits" consideration (Mai and King 2009, 297). Particularly with young men, boredom and desire for adventure emerge as reasons for emigrating in their post-hoc retelling. As Wilmer, a Honduran contractor in his thirties reflected on his decision to leave, "Yes, it was very hard, but it depends on how you look back on it. If you think about it as an adventure, then you can believe it's fun. In principle, you don't see it as an adventure at the time ... it's an adventure because I'm looking back." For many young men in

Honduras, additionally, migrating is “the thing to do” at that youthful phase of their lives (Reichman 2011, 19).¹¹¹

Ariel told me the story of how he fell in with a large criminal syndicate in Mexico while migrating northward. He befriended a man in Guatemala whom he later learned had worked for the gang when, in Mexico, upon being threatened by kidnappers posing as police officers, his friend was able to defuse the situation with a short conversation. From then on he began working for the cartel as a cook and later enforcer. He told me he felt coerced into the work and did it in order to survive and make his way to the U.S. (“At first I was scared because they joked a lot, they were joking very ugly with me: they were going to sell my organs and all that ... And I wanted to escape from there, to go from there in the night without anyone noticing.”). At the same time, Ariel noted that:

God always took care of me. I was with the most bad people, but they treated me with respect and affection, I can say that no one ever disrespected me, I never saw anything bad, I did look at bad things, but to me, nobody ever acted to want to hurt me or anything. But it was dangerous, because they have many enemies. At that time that I was in Mexico, they had other enemies, like other drug cartels.

At this point he began to see the reality of kidnapping, torture, and murder of migrants coming from Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Colombia who refused to comply or tell the truth about the *coyotes* that were getting them to the U.S. But he got along well with the boss. He openly acknowledged inflicting violence on others such as covering their mouths or turning the volume up on music so that others would not hear screams while they were physically abused while stating vehemently that he had never hurt women or children or murdered anyone. He shook his head and softly thanked God that he had

¹¹¹ For more on migration as a “rite of passage,” see Massey et al. 1993.

arrived in New Orleans safely and left behind violence inflicted upon him and its perpetration by him.¹¹²

Throughout his interview, Ariel engaged in a process of intellectual bargaining: he carried a gun, but did not use it. He witnessed horrific violence against men, but never rape, as it was not allowed within the syndicate, which had military-like rules of order. He was not afraid anymore like he was in Honduras because people treated him with respect since he walked around with a bulletproof vest, sported a walkie-talkie, and rode on a motorcycle. But he was so traumatized by the experience that he woke up with night terrors for a year afterwards. Such bargaining is arguably a way of coping with being subject to and actively participating in acts of violence. Ariel made sense of his embeddedness within the regional political economy of extortion and human smuggling as an element of making the northward journey successfully. Now he lived, to paraphrase his words, a life of good morals, hard work, and tranquility.

The liminal space in which individuals live under contexts of societal violence, moving between shock at seemingly chaotic and random violence and acceptance of such quotidian potentialities is part and parcel of what Taussig (1992, 4) terms a “chronic state of emergency.” In many ways, Hondurans were a part of a similar “nervous system” (Taussig 1992), existing within thresholds of shock and survival in the context of criminal gangs and state indifference. Accounts of everyday life in Honduras by my research interlocutors echoed numerous other ethnographic accounts of society-wide, often state-sanctioned violence leading to a deep and ongoing sense of vulnerability and

¹¹² My interaction with Ariel reflects the potential for transference and counter-transference (Robben 1996). While I tried to stay neutral in my reactions and questions to Ariel on this topic, undoubtedly I lent sympathy in attempting to make him feel at ease in confiding his experiences as a victimizer (and victim). Significantly, violence possesses “structuring and enframing effects of its own” in which enactors and victims of violence alike create their own teleologies and rationalizations of their situation (Feldman 1991, 226-227), not to mention researchers listening to such accounts of violence.

anxiety (Caple James 2010; Feldman 1991; Green 1994; Menjívar and Walsh 2017).

While migrants leave for a combination of structural and personal reasons and undergo an unimaginably difficult journey, stepping beyond the thresholds of shock and survival is arguably an assertion of the right to stay alive.

“Es duro venirse uno” (“It’s hard for one to arrive”), Natalia told me as we left the McDonalds that day to an overcast sky and windy street. In other words, the journey northward is difficult, dangerous, and expensive. We walked towards the intersection of North Broad Street and Canal Street. A busy and commercial area, on one corner of the intersection there are small restaurants – Vietnamese and Honduran – located side-by-side while on the opposite corner sits a run-down Family Dollar. Natalia ran a small daycare out of the shotgun house she and her husband shared with her sister’s family. She cared for the children of fellow Central Americans who had to work odd hours in construction and hospitality. Because she had to return home to meet some arriving children, we continued our interview while walking. This was when she began also telling me about living in Honduras. While living in San Pedro Sula, she was also robbed, twice. As she told these stories, she playfully covered Bethany’s ears while Bethany clung to her.

We stopped at the lights and Natalia recounted her experience of being held up at gunpoint at a similar intersection in Honduras. She went on to state how it is much safer in New Orleans but then stopped herself and stated that New Orleans can be dangerous, too. As we passed the Family Dollar, Natalia pointed to a deserted parking lot behind it and matter-of-factly described how she was robbed there early one weekday evening around seven o’clock. Bethany piped up, stating in Spanish, “No, Mama, it was eight

o'clock!" We walked by some young African-American men, they nodded and said "hola" and we did the same back. I waved at the *lonchera* workers that were permanently parked near the intersection. She told me about initially settling in Arizona until leaving out of fears sparked by the policies of Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio. As I found out later speaking with her brother and his wife, the whole family had fled Arizona for Louisiana because of laws such as SB 1070 passed in 2010 that created the most stringent immigration enforcement in the country (Gomberg-Muñoz and Nussbaum-Barberena 2011, 370). Many unauthorized migrants chose to migrate to more permissive states rather than return to their country of origin (Leerkes, Leach, and Bachmeier 2012, 124), including states like Louisiana.



Photo 5.1: Lonchera Workers in Mid-City. Photo by author, 2014.

Natalia's story also highlights how crisis situations are linked in a continuum of insecurity from leaving the crime and impunity of Honduras to the aggressive law enforcement of Arizona to finally New Orleans, a city of both bounded opportunity and personal insecurity. As the border has been successfully internalized by increased enforcement by ICE and its deputized local sheriffs and police departments (Coleman and

Stuesse 2016; Leerkes, Leach, and Bachmeier 2012), Natalia's experience shows how making it to the U.S. does not guarantee immediate relief. Internal migration – in her case from Arizona to Louisiana – also constituted a means of mediating multiple forms of insecurity. Natalia's oscillation between viewing New Orleans as both safe and dangerous points to the bargaining migrants engage in in searching for “tranquility,” in the words of Ariel. In the New Orleans context, beyond the law enforcement risks, as informally authorized migrants many Hondurans are vulnerable also to criminals who racially encode them as “illegal” and therefore a more suitable victim, both on and off the worksite.

Urban Mobility and Fear

At the time we spoke, Karla was a single, thirtysomething Honduran woman who had previously worked in post-Katrina reconstruction and was now working in housekeeping in a large hotel chain. She lived with her sister and both of their respective children in a shotgun house in Mid-City. Active in *Congreso* organizing, she agreed to talk to me after a contact who volunteered with the group vouched for me.¹¹³ While initially reticent, she gradually opened up, explaining in a 2014 interview in Spanish how dangerous Honduras is, only to then pivot to criminality in New Orleans too:

Karla: Lately in Honduras the police are on the side of criminals and instead of helping the community, well, no one is safe because you do not know what day they will come to the door of your house only to kill your family because they wanted to kill. They do not need a reason for that, they just do it. So, it's a way to frighten people, I think that's why they do it ... Yes, every week there is a story in our community about a person affected by the violence of crime there. And the people here say that New Orleans has a lot of crime, but ... It has a lot, but not so much compared to our countries. Because the police are not corrupt here, right? They have to investigate crimes. There it is different. But yes, New Orleans is complicated. Every day there are dead.

¹¹³ Since its founding soon after Katrina, the NOWCRJ has experienced a flurry of interest from activists, researchers, and media outlets, thus understandably leading to a suspicion of outsiders seeking to gain access to organizers and constituents. I witnessed the same suspicion from some members, but over time became a familiar face to many at their events.

Me: You mean there are a lot of murders in New Orleans?

Karla: Yes, in New Orleans. It looks a lot like Honduras. Ironically, it is not us Latinos that commit all this crime in New Orleans [laughs]. So, it's not us coming here to do what's done there, here. We have fled crime in Honduras and we have come to a city where there is a lot of crime. [laughs, shaking head]

While Karla starts by noting the impunity that Honduran law enforcement could wield against citizens and how it contrasted to the police in New Orleans, she countered that view by pointing to the “complicated” nature of the city’s violent crime problem and what, in her words, is the ironic nature of fleeing a dangerous place where “her people” are the perpetrators to a place where they are not. While some Latinx are undoubtedly involved in crime, for the most part, as migrants living undocumented within what Ferreti (2017, 91) calls the “quiet anonymity of social marginalization,” they try to avoid interactions with law enforcement as much as possible. Fear of being victims of crime and being treated as criminals by law enforcement shows the status of the migrant “*at risk*” and the migrant “*as risk*” (Marrujo 2003, 19), a form of double embodied threat in which migrants are not only made into deportable subjects (De Genova 2002; De Genova and Peutz 2010) but also “robbable” subjects. Similarly, Goldstein and Alonso-Bejarano (2017, 1) point out that, “United States immigration law and its enforcement thus produce an ingenious contradiction, in which the very people who are supposed to be the cause of national insecurity are themselves rendered among the most insecure people in national space.” The double bind of crime there and crime here that Karla articulated are also linkages in a transnational chain of insecurity that follows and encircles migrants.

María, the former reconstruction worker and current *lonchera* vendor, recounted feeling “a part of New Orleans,” in her words, where “God has blessed” her “with family and work.” While pointing out that there are many reasons why people emigrate, she

stated, “In our country there is a lot of poverty, a lot of crime. Nobody with money is just going to leave their home, you understand?” For many migrants, like María here, thoughtful reflection on the opportunities individuals have found in New Orleans, regardless of the risk in migrating and living and working while informally authorized, often went further into a critique of the structural violence of poverty. As scholars of structural violence have pointed out, inequalities within political and economic systems deprive individuals of the resources that would ensure their health and livelihoods. These structures are in turn reproduced by many of those same individuals, thus helping to maintain systems of dominance (Auyero and Swistun 2009; Farmer 2004; Menjívar and Walsh 2017). María went on to echo such sentiments:

Because there, for a person my age, thirty years old and unemployed – you are just a machine and that’s it. And then if you have no means to start a business, people – I mean, it’s not an excuse to steal or to kill people for money. But today one of the reasons that crime exists is this: the necessity. Many people act that way because there are so many limitations on what jobs they can do. It’s not like here.

Like many others, María made socially legible the link between structural violence and overt violence that has led to her emigration. Without the multiple social, political, and economic practices under capitalism that sustain inequality and force, i.e. “systemic” violence, it is impossible to understand these seemingly arbitrary outbursts of overt, or “subjective,” violence (Žižek 2008, 9-10). For many migrants I spoke with, the ability to work and the availability of work becomes the key factor in breaking that cycle of systemic violence, while remaining at risk for the subjective violence.

Forms of such subjective violence include crime. Many residents revealed instances of personal crime such as muggings, residential theft, and equipment theft from worksites. Natalia’s earlier recounting of being mugged in New Orleans as almost an afterthought is one such example. How does one explain this seeming contradiction of a

dangerous Honduras and seemingly safer New Orleans when so many migrants have been victims of crime in New Orleans? Concern with crime is etched into the social fabric of New Orleans. Spanning the gamut from murder to petty thefts, local media outlets cover crime with sensationalist headlines sporting undertones of racial panic. Honduran migrants articulated crime as one of many injustices that they must accept upon a spectrum of risk.¹¹⁴

My very first interaction with a New Orleans resident when I arrived for predissertation research in summer 2011 was a dire warning from a local white bohemian artist in the gentrifying Marigny to “be careful! People will shoot you for a dollar in New Orleans.” My time in Marigny turned out to be perfectly calm, with no untoward experiences. In another instance, while attending a local neighborhood meeting with the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) in spring 2014, I witnessed numerous Black residents discussing their struggles with crime in the equally gentrifying Bywater neighborhood. One middle-aged African-American woman complained about quality of life issues such as trash strewn across her property, but also the proliferation of drugs and aggressive behavior by youths “back from Texas.” She was referring to individuals who had evacuated in the wake of Katrina and settled in Texas, only to return. As I was leaving this meeting, a white police officer jogged after me and asked if I was interested in living in the neighborhood. He noted that it really is safe, and to not be afraid, thus assuming that I was fearful, perhaps because I was the only white attendant in the meeting. Yet another incident occurred closer to home, literally down the street from the house I rented with my family for most of my extended ethnographic stay in 2013-2014

¹¹⁴ To what degree individuals are managing my impressions of their levels of fear is not clear. However, nearly all migrants acknowledged crime as a concern in New Orleans, thus matching the concern of other residents in the city.

in the Uptown neighborhood of Hollygrove, a historically African-American, working class area.

The scene one block down from my residence that I stepped out to that Sunday morning was chaotic. Yellow police tape cordoned off the area. As I shielded my eyes from the bright sun and tried to walk over, my elderly neighbor Ellas, an eighty-five year old African-American man who owned two properties next to one another, drove by in his large Cadillac. Being more than six feet tall, he was stooped over on the driver's side. He slowed down when he saw me and called out, "Hey, baby girl!" I greeted him and asked what happened. He responded that someone had been shot and killed. As I expressed my shock and sadness, he stated, "Some people just don't value human life" in regards to the shooter. I later learned that a man had been shot by a police officer (Freund 2014; Martin 2014). Upon returning home, my parents, who were visiting at the time, asked what had happened. I lied and stated that there was a parade passing by that day (not unheard of in New Orleans) in order to protect them from the anxiety I had started feeling.

For weeks after, I felt my heart beat faster as I left my home with my newborn son in my arms. My cheeks would flush if someone drove by quickly or if I heard a pop that sounded perhaps like gunfire. I had caught a contagious wave of fear. Soon after, I began frequenting a morbid "murder map" of the *Times Picayune's* online site nola.com.¹¹⁵ I found myself checking every couple of days at the state of killings in the city and seeing how close they were to where I was living. Like many New Orleans residents, even as I came to learn the contours and rhythms of my neighborhood, a constant feeling of

¹¹⁵ The literal title of the page is "New Orleans Murder Map 2017":
http://www.nola.com/crime/index.ssf/page/new_orleans_murders.html, accessed November 1, 2017.

apprehension crept behind me. These fearful emotions were not tempered by learning that the victim, Keith Atkinson, was shot by a police officer. Relations between the NOPD and the city's African-American and Latinx communities have long been fraught. Law enforcement is one source of fear among more than just the informally authorized. Early in preliminary fieldwork in June of 2011, one of my interlocutors in New Orleans described a wide-ranging survey he had conducted for the non-profit organization he worked for. He asked me point blank, "What was the one thing all New Orleanians agree on regardless of race, gender, class, age, or national background?" "What?" I asked. "Mistrust of the police" he replied.¹¹⁶



Photo 5.2: Candle for Protection from the Police in a Mid-City Botanica. Photo by author, 2014.

¹¹⁶ While mistrust of the NOPD is rampant in New Orleans regardless of race, African Americans are at a much higher risk of apprehension, detention, and police violence, both in New Orleans and nationally (Alexander 2010).



Photo 5.3: Candle to Bring *Trabajo* (Work) in a Mid-City Botanica. Photo by author, 2014.

For Honduran migrants, mistrust of the police is further compounded by the fear of law enforcement either working with or complying with ICE. Additionally, migrants desire the ability to go to the police when they are a victim of crime but are afraid to in case they are asked about their legal status. This is one reason many police departments in large cities desire “sanctuary city” status, which refers to urban areas where local police do not inquire about an individual’s legal status and do not work with federal law enforcement on those issues (Gomberg-Muñoz and Nussbaum-Barberena 2011, 370). If migrants trust that they will not be asked about their authorization to be in the country, they are more likely to go to the police when they are victims of or witness to a crime. As Alejandra, a young Latinx community organizer told me, a survey she conducted on behalf of her organization to assess the needs of undocumented Latinx migrants in Mid-City revealed security as the number one issue for the three hundred residents she surveyed, half of whom were Honduran.¹¹⁷ Migrants reported that police officers were angry when they called or spoke with them in Spanish, that there were not enough

¹¹⁷ Ninety percent reported that safety was the single biggest issue, though Alejandra did not know if that was in relation to vulnerability to police or criminals. After safety came health, and then education.

Spanish-speaking officers to cover the needs of a rapidly expanding population, and that the lack of patrolling officers in majority Latinx neighborhoods decreased feelings of safety. Alejandra noted that while the issue of racial tension arose in her survey, politics ensured that it did not make it into the report. In her words, “The African-American and Latino community are pinpointed against each other completely in the neighborhoods that they’re sharing.” The city’s Health Department was uncomfortable with this finding and asked her to take it out. According to Alejandra, the politics involved made verbalizing targeting by law enforcement and what migrants viewed as vulnerability to “*morenitos*” unpalatable (“*morenitos*” is the diminutive form of “*morenos*,” which refers to African-Americans).

As I highlighted in Chapters 3 and 4, worksite dangers and vulnerability to detainment and deportation constitute high-risk conditions that migrants must navigate in New Orleans. In her conversation with me, Karla explicitly linked the forms of worksite discrimination and dangers from law enforcement:

Me: Why did you leave Honduras?

Karla: To search for a better future. Over there, there are no opportunities. [pause] Here there are not so many opportunities, either! [laughs] Nor is this country welcoming us ... Here we suffer from discrimination, we suffer from many things ... even from *La Migra* that chases us everywhere, from the raids they do.¹¹⁸

Karla pointed to racial discrimination as affecting the range of opportunities available to Honduran migrants in New Orleans and the raids – often occurring on worksites not to mention Latin American grocers, day labor sites, and apartment complexes – that keep migrants in an ongoing state of insecurity and fear.¹¹⁹ The connections she drew echo her

¹¹⁸ *La Migra* generally refers to ICE or Border Patrol.

¹¹⁹ See Goldstein and Alonso-Bejarano 2017 for more on raids.

joking sentiment highlighted earlier in which Honduran migrants are largely trying to avoid crimes in New Orleans rather than commit them.

Starting with federal policy and legislative changes in the 1990s and then increasing after 9/11, internal immigration enforcement has become a quotidian reality, with programs such as §287(g) and Secure Communities allowing local law enforcement officials to work with ICE in checking the immigrant status of individuals (Coleman and Stuesse 2016, 513; Orrenius and Zavodny 2015, 9-10).¹²⁰ As Coleman and Stuesse (2016, 531) point out, “These programs re-made police officers and sheriffs, primarily, into front-line immigration officers, and have turned county jails – local, short-term lock-ups designed to hold non-serious convicts as well as individuals awaiting trial – into an important node in the federal immigration control web.”

While the federal government nominally dictates immigration policy, states have increasingly implemented their own statutes and practices to make life for informally authorized persons more difficult (Goldstein and Alonso-Bejarano 2017, 7; Rodriguez and Monreal 2017), with a particular concentration in the US South, including Louisiana (Leerkes, Leach, and Bachmeier 2012).¹²¹ While the Obama administration in the second term (2012-2016) tried to undo many of the practices enacted under Secure Communities (Orrenius and Zavodny 2015, 9-10), my ethnographic findings suggest that New Orleans

¹²⁰ Interestingly, rather than argue that the border has been internalized, Coleman and Stuesse (2016, 537) instead hold that the fleeting, unplanned, and difficult to pinpoint nature of traffic stops, for instance, not only contrast with the marked and clear existence of a border wall but also make internal enforcement of Secure Communities an even greater insecurity for migrants because of the inability to ascertain when and where a stop might happen.

¹²¹ On an international level, the US federal government has made deals with Mexico and other countries to “externalize their border controls. The Transit Control Regimes are one facet of such externalization. Backing by co-bordering and security agreements, the transit state’s territory becomes a border-zone for irregular migrants en route to destination states. Border and migration controls are being outsourced and border clusters are being created” (Popescu 2012 in Campos-Delgado 2017, 1).

law enforcement has continued to cooperate with DHS to varying degrees. Similarly, Coleman and Stuesse 2016, 531 point out:

immigration enforcement in the U.S. has become a general law enforcement problem, and not just something contemplated by security specialists in the most hallowed halls of statecraft and then carried out by a dedicated, executive-level enforcement body focused exclusively on policing alienage at the territorial margins of the state. In practice, this means that immigration control is now the concern of a multitude of street-level security practitioners – sheriffs and police – who until recently were prohibited from engaging in policing of this nature.

Raids, roadblocks, and traffic stops featured in the experiences of Honduran migrants with whom I spoke. Daily alerts sent out by advocacy groups utilizing word-of-mouth to warn against particular intersections or highway passes served to warn migrants about dangerous zones to avoid. Assessing how migrant actually interface with the state via local and federal law enforcement is difficult. First, experiences vary based on parish. Metairie and Kenner, popular suburbs to live in for many informally authorized Latinx migrants and falling within the boundaries of Jefferson Parish, has the highest number of deportations in the country (Rainey 2017b). The degree to which Orleans Parish law enforcement works with ICE is more difficult to ascertain, with the Sheriff's office in recent years supposedly not running names through the DHS database (Rainey 2017b). Similar to findings in a supposedly sanctuary city status-holding Chicago (Gomberg-Muñoz and Nussbaum-Barberena 2011, 370), ICE continues to operate in greater New Orleans, though to varying degrees based on local law enforcement practices.

Many migrants described brushes with ICE officers or local law enforcement officers threatening potential ICE involvement.¹²² Yet for the most part, migrants were successful at staying in the shadows and making a calculated comparison of safety, thus

¹²² One story in particular stood out. An informally authorized Brazilian woman who was a friend of mine and cleaned houses in New Orleans recounted to me in 2014 of having an ICE agent as a client. Though aware of her status, he reassured her that if she were ever detained, showing officials his number would protect her. She has since formalized her legal status, without ever having to rely on his help.

banking on the idea Ariel stated that, “here if you look for trouble, you can find it, unlike in Honduras where trouble finds you.”¹²³ For Ariel, New Orleans was a safe space in which he could, literally, walk down the street without fear, stating, “When I first came here and was walking down the street, if a white truck drove by, I would instinctively tense up and feel the need to protect myself. I was scared.” As he went on to explain, gangs drove around in white trucks back in Tegucigalpa, targeting individuals. Ariel often boasted at his lack of fear of ICE and his comfort in driving, even though he did not have a driver’s license.¹²⁴ The very ability to be physically mobile in the urban space of New Orleans was, for Ariel and others, a direct contrast to the institutionalized insecurity and fear in Honduras.

Ariel’s recounting of the white trucks in Tegucigalpa echoes Indra’s story of driving without documentation being her Achilles heel and Pastor Delgado’s experiences with migrants as “walking ATMs” highlighted in Chapter 3. These accounts illustrate how embodied vulnerabilities exist upon a continuum of risk and insecurity, starting from Honduras and continuing to daily life in New Orleans, whether as potential victims of criminals or law enforcement. On the one hand, New Orleans offers a degree of security, comfort, and enjoyment of the fruits of their labor. On the other hand, the racialized ascriptions of “illegality” to Latinx migrants made clear in the “walking ATMs” phrase that increases their vulnerability in public spaces make the city a potentially dangerous setting. The sharp irony is that the very police force upon which migrants rely when they become victims of a crime are the very people who have the power to aid in initiating a

¹²³ Of course, I was not able to talk to migrants who had been arrested, detained, and possibly deported and thus were not able to stay in the shadows successfully.

¹²⁴ To what degree Ariel and others state their lack of fear due to a desire to appear fearless, I cannot know. But the fact that many assert their comfort is notable.

process of deportation by working with ICE. Again, the migrant *as* risk and migrant *at* risk intersect at their embodied and racialized presence in the city. In other words, it is difficult to “differentiate between who is responsible for one’s protection and who may be one’s potential victimizers” (Vigneswaran 2014, 476).

Racial encoding has real-world consequences in terms of how being Latinx in an environment in which racial categories of Black and white often inform beliefs as to who is “legal” and who is not. An organizer with guestworkers, Marco, wryly recounted to me the story of three undocumented migrants – one from Russia, one from sub-Saharan Africa, and one from Central America – all of whom worked together as valets at an upscale, chain hotel on Canal Street. Only the Latinx, however, was targeted by ICE because the other two were racially coded as “white American” and “Black American,” respectively. Like the undocumented migrants of African descent in Israel, for this Latinx worker in New Orleans, the “evidence for his arrest” was “written on his body, literally on his skin” (Willen 2007, 18).

Leaving: Voluntary and Involuntary Return

Sitting in the court gallery,¹²⁵ I could barely see the young girl sitting on the other side of the bar facing the judge. I made out the top of her head though she otherwise disappeared into the chair. The judge asked her age. The girl’s aunt replied in Spanish, “*Seis*.” The court translator translated for the judge: “Six.” After a series of questions and directives, the judge matter-of-factly, though gently, reminded the girl and her aunt about the repercussions of not appearing in court for her next hearing. She also advised

¹²⁵ Much of this section is taken from a post I published for the Border Criminologies blog (Daser 2014).

them on their right to obtain a lawyer and her clerk provided them with a document detailing low-cost lawyers in the area. As the little girl and her aunt left the gallery I caught a glimpse of her. She was dressed in a yellow shirt and matching yellow ribbons holding together tightly wound pigtails. I smiled at her and she broke into a broad, toothy grin. What had her journey been like? Perhaps she had left her family, traveled with someone she knew but was not close to, underwent detainment in one of the freezing cold lock-ups at the border, and came to the New Orleans area to reunite with kin. She – like the dozens of cases I heard that day and next – was given until January 2015 for her next hearing concerning her status.

The girl's case was heard in New Orleans' Immigration Court in late September 2014. I was attending proceedings relating to the unaccompanied child migrant surge from the Northern Triangle countries of Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Housed on the twenty-fourth floor of an office building downtown, the court's location on a nondescript floor that it shares with a maritime company seemed to bely the gravity of the issues in the docket. These hearings showcase the difficulty of discussing "legal" and "illegal" or "documented" or "undocumented" migrants. Rather, these individuals existed in a gray zone in which they were following the assigned dates for court appointments, often obtaining counsel, and compiling and submitting the proper paperwork and documentation meant to formalize their status in the U.S. and avoid deportation. Yet, I quickly came to see that rather than walking in with applications and out with decisions, most migrants were given court dates in the future and therefore, protracted uncertainty as to their status. They remain "undocumented" workers not able to work legally and deportable but have the support of the court in staying for the present moment.

Like the chronic underfunding of labor enforcement highlighted in Chapter 4, lack of resources and large caseloads characterize the state of immigration courts throughout the U.S. (Ryo 2016, 146). The same substitute judge I had observed had again been flown in from New Jersey to temporarily replace a retiring judge, who had left during the budget cuts enacted during the federal budget sequester of 2013. Having only one judge slowed the entire process down and as she attempted to hear cases quickly, I started to hear follow-up dates six months, one year, and at times two years into the future. Underfunding of bureaucracies nonetheless tasked with the enormous project of deporting millions can stretch out the timeline of insecurity. As of 2017, almost 600,000 immigration cases across the US remain open and awaiting rulings, many courts are giving dates stretching into 2020 for hearings, and approximately forty percent of judges are of retirement age (Garvin 2017).

Of the hundreds of cases I observed, the only times I witnessed an order of deportation was when someone failed to show, and that was rare enough to count on one hand. Most migrants had legal representation, and those lawyers often received stays to petition the court for the right to remain. The judge I observed mitigated the enormous backlog by presiding over cases quickly and methodically. As I walked in on a different day in October 2014, the same judge along with a court interpreter and defendant were engaged in a hearing:

Judge: She looks...

Interpreter [to defendant sitting next to her]: You look so young!

Judge: This is your first time here. Would you like a lawyer?

Defendant: Yes. [softly]

Judge: On November 23, 2015 you will need to present yourself with a lawyer. Well, you have a lot of time to find yourself a lawyer! Isn't it so embarrassing? It's so far into the future; it makes a mockery of the system.

Interpreter: We need, like, four judges. I'm sure they're grateful.

Judge: Oh, I'm sure.

The interpreter's implication (which she did not translate into Spanish for the defendant) was that individuals would prefer to extend the uncertainty surrounding their ability to stay in the U.S., something that other findings have, in contrast, shown to be stressful and materially exhausting (Hasselberg 2016; Willen 2007). Explicit in the judge's commentary is the forceful critique of the type of bureaucratic under-funding that can push a follow-up hearing one year into the future.

Regardless of these time extensions, the behaviors of the migrants betrayed a studied preparedness. As Susan Bibler Coutin (2003, 64) points out in her study of deportation hearings, "suspension hearings measure applicants' lives against particular legal criteria" in ways that are gendered, classed, and racialized and "imbued with power relation(s)." Similarly, as I saw in the immigration court in New Orleans, deservingness was a category that individuals sought to include themselves within by pointing to their family ties in the local area, their hiring of a lawyer, learning English, being enrolled in school, starting a business (a legal act even if one does not have working papers), and provisions of the correct documents (not an easy feat considering the complexity of immigration law and the expenses involved in hiring a lawyer). Because immigration cases are civil rather than criminal in terms of legal standing, there is no right to counsel for migrants, which is ironic considering how immigration law enforcement today utilizes practices like detention and deportation as quasi-criminal proceedings (Pope and Garrett 2012, 178).

This criminalization of migrants came into stark relief when I walked in on an October 2014 morning to see Dave, the tall, friendly security guard patting down the body of an older Latinx man whose jeans were clearly covering the bulge of an ankle bracelet. The small lobby was full of working-age migrants and children and was quiet for the most part as people stared ahead clutching a file or folder related to their case. As defendants and lawyers passed through security, Dave loudly though politely asked everyone to shut off their phones. As a familiar face and PhD student, I was easily allowed inside, though I too had to pass through the metal detector and have my bag searched like everyone. Inside the equally small court, the atmosphere was decidedly more talkative. Conversations amongst the judge, interpreter, court recorder, defense attorneys, and prosecutors ranged from the weather to local festivals, while the migrants mostly sat quietly or murmured to one another in the roughly dozen wooden benches set up, six on one side, six on the other. The following conversation was typical, with the judge often commenting on her New Jersey roots and explorations of New Orleans:

Judge: So, you're going to Voodoo Fest?

Prosecutor: Yes. I'm going all three days!

Judge: I'm going Sunday.

Prosecutor: Oh, that's the best day!

Judge: I thought so, that's why I got a ticket for then.

Though surprising in a hearing that could decide a potentially life-altering deportation order, such banal conversations lubricated the grind of case after case after case. The heart-wrenching stories of the closed-door asylum cases that Dave told me drove judges and lawyers alike to tears were unlike the conversations and reactions in the deportation hearings that I observed. Some defendants dozed off while others sneaked

secret looks at their phone. The judge remained unfailingly polite and professional, and often apologized to defendants for extending their cases so far into the future. What did distinguish the courtroom were the numbers of children. From toddlers to teenagers, I soon saw that most were not just attending an elder's case, but were defendants themselves.

By occupying the same space, answering to the same judge, and requiring much of the same degree of preparedness and paperwork, and barring slightly softer treatment towards the children, they and the adult migrants filing in and out of the courtroom were equals within an immigration system that views individuals without formal authorization as potential criminals (and depending on the outcome of asylum procedures, victims). As Susan J. Terrio (2015) points out, the notion of a "child" migrant is itself problematic due to the ways the immigration enforcement complex molds the child as agents that present a national security threat while guardians, other governmental agencies, and custodial organizations approach these migrants through the lens of integration into the host society. Not having legal representation is one of the most significant barriers to remaining in the United States when informally authorized (Ryo 2016), as numerous lawyers informed me. But lawyers cost money and one needs time off work or school to attend hearings. Because New Orleans is the regional immigration court, the majority of defendants were from outside of New Orleans, with many often arriving from Mississippi, Alabama, and other parts of Louisiana. Those able to hire lawyers or have advocates from the various non-profits in New Orleans attend court with them benefitted from the assistance.¹²⁶ For those without lawyers, the situation is more dire.

¹²⁶ In my observations in the court, I often saw advocates that I knew from various organizations come in and assist migrants in explaining their case to the court.

“They’re getting screwed by the *coyotes* and then they’re getting screwed by legal services here!” exclaimed an organizer with Catholic Charities to a crowd of non-profit workers, teachers, lawyers, medical staff, and clergy hastily gathered in early fall of 2014 to address the influx of child migrants. The energy of the room and the furious note taking and participation of the crowd indicated that the “crisis” of the child migrants had decidedly arrived. I was observing the meeting in a cramped, air-conditioned room of a local Episcopal church. While the number of unaccompanied minors reaching New Orleans to reunite with family and close relations had already been increasing before the “crisis” hit news headlines, the widespread public attention also served as a mobilizer of action for non-profits and local and federal governmental services, already working under long-term, crisis conditions of underfunding.

As one of the states with the highest relative number of incoming unaccompanied children, Louisiana has one of the weakest infrastructures to aid these populations.¹²⁷ In spring of 2014 one immigration lawyer stated to me that ninety percent of the children did not have lawyers, adding “If life is difficult for the average New Orleanian, imagine how it is for someone who does not speak the language, who is undocumented.” Just as the underfunding of federal labor oversight affects the inequalities on worksites in New Orleans, as I highlighted in Chapter 4, so does the underfunding of legal services negatively affect the insecurity felt by migrants who lack formal authorization.

Issues of detention also reflect the inequalities faced by undocumented migrants.

On a stormy day in March, 2014, I attended a law conference on immigration at Loyola

¹²⁷ The Office of Refugee Resettlement (2017), falling under the US Department of Health and Human Services, lists the official numbers of “unaccompanied alien children” released to sponsors (i.e. family members if possible). From October 2013-September 2017, 4,251 minors had been united with sponsors. The Data Center (Perry 2016) estimates that the Latinx child population (up to twenty years old) grew by twenty percent between 2010 and 2015. This does not indicate what percentage of those numbers are unaccompanied minors, but does indicate a significant increase.

University.¹²⁸ The large auditorium was full of people – young and old, white and Black, men and women – and the panel featured a variety of non-profit advocates and immigration law professors. As the panelists spoke about their respective areas of expertise – detention, domestic violence, housing needs, and judicial representation – the issue of lack of funding repeatedly arose, as did the pressures on lawyers from the lack of lawyers, particularly in the area of asylum applications, U and T visas (for abuse and human trafficking cases, respectively), the child migrants, applications for naturalization, and removal cases (deportation). These cases are winnable, in the words of one immigration lawyer, but there are not enough lawyers.

One Loyola law professor described the difficulties facing the legal system in Louisiana. In earlier years, there were very few unaccompanied minors at the border. In just 2014 that number had ballooned to seventy thousand, he said.¹²⁹ I heard someone audibly gasp behind me. She went on to tell the story of her youngest client, who was six. He was swept up in a raid and arrested with his mother in Texas. The judge turned to him and said, “But we treated you well, didn’t we?” and he replied, “I was very sad.” That shut the judge up. The same Loyola law professor talked about the deteriorating conditions for detained migrants. In the early 2000s there was a law library, good food, English lessons for prisoners, and “decent conditions.” Now, “it is a pig-sty,” in her words. They relocated the jail to a rural area far from New Orleans and then after Katrina to another location. She and her clinic have been unable to accomplish much in these new locations. Detainees are spread out around Louisianan towns such as Jena (population of

¹²⁸ Loyola University is a Catholic university and the Catholic community in New Orleans more broadly has been active in advocating against anti-immigrant measures in Louisiana. The Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops worked to beat fourteen anti-immigrant measures in the state legislature in the early 2010s, as I learned at this conference.

¹²⁹ That figure was largely correct (Hirschfeld and Shear 2014).

3,435 (five hours away from New Orleans), Waterproof (590; 4.5 hours away), and Basile (1,812; 3.5 hours away). Importantly, the vast majority of detainees are arrested outside of New Orleans. This was borne out by my own observations in immigration court, where people rarely had their residence in New Orleans proper.

You could hear the rain pounding on the roof and at one point a transformer exploded nearby, causing the power to go out for fifteen minutes. When the lights came back on, a lively debate took place between the crowd and the panelists. A seasoned immigration lawyer in the audience noted the barriers to representation: the complex and draconian nature of immigration law, a complicated regulatory structure, and the need for mentorship for interested lawyers in a context where the number of detainees increases every year as the deportation regime deports more and more people. This ongoing structural crisis – whether in federal labor enforcement or public legal services – presents another form of protracted insecurity in migrant lives. These conditions may worsen as acting ICE Director Tom Homan stated in October of 2017 that the agency would start more aggressively targeting workplaces, a practice the Obama administration deprioritized, going on to say, “When we find you at a worksite, we’re no longer going to turn our heads ... We’ll go after the employer who knowingly hires an illegal alien ... but we’re always going to arrest a person who is here illegally. That is our job.” (Kopan 2017).

Yet, the insecurities inherent in the risk of detention and deportation live on even in individuals choosing to return home to Honduras. Ethnographically capturing absence is difficult, though many migrants recounted to me stories of friends or family returning to Honduras due to illness or work injury that incapacitated them to the point of being

unable to work. Others migrated to other parts of the U.S. Some returned because they had saved enough to buy a house or land back home while others returned to care for family. Carmen fell into the latter category. On a Sunday morning in October 2014 at CAE, one of the class regulars, Rosa, came to me and asked if I would help collect money from CAE students for her friend who wanted to book a ticket to return to El Salvador. Carmen was Salvadoran and had come over the border many years earlier but needed to return because her husband – who had worked in post-Katrina reconstruction and had returned home several years after due to illness – needed caretaking. Carmen and I met at the aforementioned McDonald's in Mid-City and tried to book her ticket. This process was all new for her. She had never used the Internet to book travel. In fact, she had never flown on an airplane before. I attempted to explain to her the logistics of boarding a flight, though I seemed unable to allay her fears. She showed me the brand new passport that she had gotten from the Salvadorian consulate. As I booked her a ticket Carmen was intense, often on the verge of tears, and seemed anxious to leave.

After booking the flight I gave her the hundreds of dollars that we had collected for her. As her eyes welled up with tears, we hugged and parted ways. Later that evening, Rosa called me in a mild panic. She informed me that the flight was arriving to San Salvador at night. I paused, trying to understand what the issue was. As she went on to explain, Carmen could not make the trip home from the airport to her village after dusk. It was too dangerous and she ran the risk of becoming a victim of theft or worse. What had seemed to me an innocuous arrival time of late evening was in fact a dangerous prospect for her. Rosa asked if I would drive Carmen to her friend's house in Metairie to rebook the ticket together. I agreed and picked her up the following day.

Carmen was a petite woman with dyed black hair. Instead of her work uniform, that day she had applied makeup and was wearing dark jeans and a chic black shirt with embroidered flowers. As we drove over she told me about her and her husband's struggles in New Orleans and their happiness in helping their granddaughter study orthodontics back in El Salvador. While happy to return, she would have to work there also, cooking and selling food as a vendor instead of the cleaning she did in New Orleans. When I asked if she had other children, she paused and said that she had a son but that he had been killed. He had been in a gang but she preferred to think that he had not killed anyone. "Ah, Deniz, my life is like a *telenovela*,"¹³⁰ she told me in Spanish. Her husband had had a stroke in New Orleans and remained in the city for six months in treatment until he was flown back to El Salvador for his daughter to care for him. She worked day and night, including Mardi Gras, cleaning the "filthy streets." She noted that it was a fun time for partiers, but not those who clean up after them.

Later, at her friend Selma's house, we crowded around the desktop computer and attempted to get a refund and rebook the flight with another airline. The entire endeavor took several hours. During one break from the rebooking we sat with sodas and Selma animatedly told me in English about Carmen's husband, growing increasingly upset and finally standing and exclaiming, "We called Governor Bobby Jindal's office when he became sick and no one could help him because he was undocumented. He stayed during the Katrina! He could have left and he stayed! He went with his boat and saved fourteen people! And you say no one can help him now?! No one helped us!" Carmen stared quietly at her soda.

¹³⁰ "*Telenovela*" is Spanish for "soap opera."

Eventually, Carmen was able to return home safely, as I learned from her friends at the English class. Yet, her evocation of a *telenovela* life reflected the protracted state of crisis that spurred her initial emigration, compounded a difficult and lonely work life in New Orleans, and caused complications even with a seemingly simple flight home. Personal violence, structural violence, exploitative labor markets, and precarious legal status combined in a common thread throughout Carmen's life. Her story is not unusual yet presents the complications of any story of intentional return.

Conclusion: Bearing Witness to Crisis

For Fernanda, a month-long trek through Mexico and over the US border ended with deportation and a re-entry with the aid of yet another *coyote*. Fellow migrants died along the journey. After arriving in New Orleans in 2007 to reunite with her husband, Fernanda anxiously awaited the arrival of her two daughters, one in her late teens, the other in her early twenties, both traveling alone, one of whom arrived pregnant. They live under the threat of potential detainment and Fernanda struggles with discrimination and wage theft at her housekeeping job at a major hotel chain in downtown New Orleans. Her story – beyond the unimaginably painful rupture of experience (i.e. loss of her son) and its repercussions for the survivors (i.e. having to flee) – highlights how the linkages between historical deprivation in Honduras, the difficult journey to the U.S., the needs of labor markets in New Orleans, and the deportation regime are all interdependent in a shared, extended state of crisis. I found that many Honduran migrants explicitly tied personal insecurity and societal violence to poverty and lack of economic opportunity in what they depict as their beautiful and resourceful country. They articulated how the

structural violence of poverty leads to such forms of insecurity. While acknowledging the difficulty of the American “dream,” migrants nonetheless seized the ability to work as an opportunity to leverage risk in their favor.

In late spring, 2014, I sat with Fernanda in her house. A flat-screen TV wedged between a makeshift bed and several packets of bottled water in the living room broadcast the news in Spanish while she and I chatted. Her husband, children, and grandchildren came in and out of the room as we conducted a formal interview, meant to explore her work experiences in New Orleans. Yet, she, like Natalia, lit up when asked about her migration to the United States. Echoing so many others in stating the difficulties she faced, she nonetheless narrated her experiences traveling from Tegucigalpa to New Orleans like a practiced storyteller, with the attendant moments of drama, pathos, and humor. She recounted her travel by various means of transport, the Mexican families who sheltered her, and her final trek through the desert and over the border, i.e. the only current means of crossing the US-Mexico border without “papers.”

At one point in the desert landscape, huddled around a fire, she comforted a twenty-five year-old woman who could no longer keep going, telling me:

That night the younger woman turned to me and said, “I’m losing my mind.” I responded, “No, you aren’t. Tell me the names of your two children.” And the younger woman told me their names. So I comforted her by saying, “You haven’t gone crazy because you know your children’s names.” Soon after the woman died, but until the end she knew the names of her children.”

Nodding matter-of-factly after telling me the story, she punctuated the somber mood by moving on to her travel in southwestern United States, laughingly informing me that at the time she thought, “All of America is one big desert!”

This recounted experience of sadness interrupted by a moment of levity reflects the wide continuum of interconnected moments of crisis, be they historical, structural, or

deeply personal. Returning to Roitman's (2013) query as to what the discourse of "crisis" makes possible or forecloses, people who migrate – be they minors or adults – do so for reasons that are embedded in transnational histories of empire and economic expansion as well as in contemporary legal and fiscal regimes. The historical banana trade that I detailed in Chapter 2 has created linkages of capital between the two places that continue to reverberate in the network-mediated migration that encourages settlement in the area. Post-Katrina rebuilding has served as a pull factor in not only bringing in migrant workers but also aiding in their decision to stay, often with the hope of bringing their children. The federal deportation regime, assisted by local law enforcement creates a climate of fear for many migrants, whether young or old. And yet, beyond historicizing and contextualizing crisis, Fernanda's tearful account at the church teach-in reveals that it can also provide an opportunity to bear witness to the individual stories that animate the very human act of migration. As we have seen here, migrants innovatively traverse crisis-like conditions in multiple social contexts, including emigration, urban crime and law enforcement, dangerous worksites, and courtrooms. How Honduran migrants navigate opportunity and risk as workers in the "bridge" city of New Orleans highlight how the very acts of leaving, working, and surviving are interventions into everyday conditions of crisis.

For Fernanda, life in New Orleans has included not just the reunification of her immediate family but a relatively settled existence in a single-family home in the Mid-City district of New Orleans. During a conversation with her in spring of 2014, I asked her if she was happy in New Orleans. She replied that she was, stating emphatically in Spanish, "*Al menos aquí nosotros vivimos. No somos ricos, pero se vive más diferente*

que en Honduras ... Es mejor.” “At least we *live* here. We’re not rich, but one can live differently than in Honduras ... It’s better.” She, like many others working in the low-wage sectors of hospitality, construction, and landscaping, has experienced wage theft, racial discrimination, work-related injury, and the threat of deportation. But, quite importantly, she has also survived.

Chapter 6
Forging Belonging through Language Learning and Political Protest

Under the conditions of precarious work and other entrenched insecurities that I have detailed in earlier chapters, Honduran migrants both reflected upon and sought refuge from such inequalities in multiple non-work spaces. Throughout my fieldwork, I found myself in a range of sites, from observing at advocacy groups that utilize organizing and protest to assert the right to stay in the city, such as the *Congreso*, to volunteering at Coffee and English (CAE), where the mostly undocumented Latinx migrants sought to improve their English skills. While these spaces served as mechanisms through which migrants could forge deeper civic belonging, I found that, perhaps just as importantly, the social connections they made in such places countered the insecurities of day-to-day life and loneliness caused by geographical distance from loved ones.

CAE was started several years earlier by Christine, an immigration researcher at Loyola University who has long been active in Catholic services and migrant outreach in the greater New Orleans area.¹³¹ The aim of CAE, which takes place at a local Catholic church, St. Paul's, is to serve the needs of post-Katrina Latinx workers seeking improved language skills and to forge closer connections between local English language-dominant and Spanish language-dominant Catholic parishioners.¹³² I came to know many of my research informants by attending CAE starting in 2014 and through such networks

¹³¹ I met Christine in pre-dissertation trips to New Orleans and she quickly became one of my closest interlocutors. Throughout my research stays in New Orleans, she introduced me to numerous Hondurans and guided me through the complex non-profit world serving the needs of local Latinxs.

¹³² The name of the church was changed to protect the identities of congregants. The majority of Spanish-speaking parishioners are Central American, with mostly Honduran and fewer Nicaraguans, Salvadorans, and Guatemalans. The same was true of CAE. In my time there, the vast majority of students were Central American, with some Mexicans and South Americans and very few non-Latinxs.

became familiar with the non-work social lives of individuals, via invitations to baby showers, birthday parties, and picnics. Throughout my research starting in predissertation trips to the field in 2011, I was an occasional visitor to *Congreso* meetings, organized protests, and celebrations. Both CAE and the *Congreso* operated in parallel, serving different constituencies and highlighting the heterogeneity of the Central American community in New Orleans, particularly in the post-Katrina era. Similarly, I only knew a few individuals who were active participants in both CAE and *Congreso*, the latter serving a much larger population of Latinx workers.

The Congreso operates under the larger umbrella group of the NOWCRJ, which was formed in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, when undocumented migrant workers experienced widespread exploitation in the clean-up and subsequent rebuilding and Black workers were shut out of the process. Significantly, NOWCRJ was formed with the express intent of forming bridges across racial and ethnic lines in a common struggle to preserve human dignity against systemic racial discrimination. As an advocacy group, the *Congreso* is radically democratic, publicly ubiquitous, and strategically loud. Run by its constituent migrant members, its presence is well-known from the sidewalks outside of ICE offices in the city's business district to the halls of Louisiana's state legislature to national journalists seeking comment on recent developments in federal immigration policy. In contrast, as a religiously infused language course, CAE is smaller in scale, quieter, and intently focused on providing a safe space for migrants to congregate outside of work and family duties.

Though they diverge in purpose and constituency, I focus on these two sites because analyzing both addresses the following questions: What forms of belonging have

Honduran migrants forged in New Orleans? How have these sites of sociality been transformative for migrants who are often far from close family and friends? These “inhabitable spaces of welcome” in a host society that otherwise makes them feel less than welcome (Willen 2007, 23) provide migrants with an existential grounding and an affective connection not only to fellow migrants but also to the city itself.

I draw upon the concepts of “conviviality” and “insurgent citizenship” (Holston 2009) for CAE and *Congreso*, respectively, not because elements of each don’t exist in the other, but because they showcase how social connections are forged in various ways. These two sites are infused not just with community formation through formal actions such as English lessons and protests, but also through the intensely social moments of informal engagement that serve as important anchors for Honduran migrants whose labor is so central to their presence in New Orleans. Through formal organizational aims and informal social interactions in the *Congreso*, for instance, migrants assert their civic belonging as New Orleans residents, mainly through identifying publicly as reconstruction workers through protest and advocacy. It is also in the quiet, face-to-face moments of CAE that migrants find belonging and make sense of their labor in rebuilding the city.

Maintaining Sociality from Afar: Remittances and Loneliness in the City

In autumn, 2014, I began giving my neighbor, Armirio, a ride to and from St. Paul for CAE on Sundays. He had expressed interest in attending the course in order to improve his English skills. On one Sunday morning in early November, 2014, I asked him how his family was doing in Mexico. His wife and son, he told me matter-of-factly,

had just been robbed the day before. I froze while unlocking the car door, looking at him with disbelief over the hood. He nodded back. As we drove to St. Paul's, he detailed the story she recounted to him over the phone: they were robbed while leaving their house by neighbors who stole electronic equipment, that his wife was very sad, and that their residency in Nuevo Laredo near the Mexico-US border is dangerous due to gang activity. From there he segued into telling me more about how his thirteen-year-old son was excited about learning tae-kwondo. I thought of the sheer normalcy of a young teenaged son, pursuing martial arts training and buying electronic goods with the money his father sent him, while at the same time dodging gangs. Armirio's hope, like many, was to bring his family to the U.S. as soon as possible.

One link in the transnational chain of insecurity that Armirio and other Honduran migrants exist within comes in the form of (often) bad news from home. Also like Armirio, every single migrant I asked reported sending money home. Yet, the very money he has earned through his labor in rebuilding New Orleans is what partially opens his family up to added vulnerability to crime. While the majority of migrants I spoke with had at least an extended family member in the greater New Orleans area (Armirio, for instance, lived with his cousins), there remained many whose close family members – i.e. spouses, children, parents, and siblings – remained in Honduras. Most often children, parents, and younger siblings attending school were the recipients of remittances. Though supporting self and kin is often an important causal factor in spurring migration to the New Orleans area, as Armirio's story highlights, the stresses of the migratory journey, insecurities of life in New Orleans, and economic deprivation and crime back home

further complicate the mundane problems that characterize any family, such as issues over money, jealousy, and inter-generational tensions.

Cohen (2011, 104) defines remittances as the “economic transfers that follow unidirectional paths from a mobile worker to her or his sending household, community, and country.” Other anthropological works on remittances examine how sending support helps in maintaining the sending migrant’s social standing back home, particularly in the case of a woman’s standing in her home society (Mahler and Pessar 2006), fosters social connectivity and moral personhood for those unable to return easily (Chávez 1992; Colton 1993; McKay 2007), promotes transnational political activism (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1995, 57), ensures future benefits for a migrant’s eventual return (Cliggett 2003; Dalakoglou 2010; Ghannam 1998; Reichman 2011), and sometimes eventually causes migrants under severe economic deprivation to drop out within a politics of “disconnection” (Worby 2010).

Remittances can also constitute an exchange relationship with particular structuring practices and rules of “mutual obligation” (Cliggett 2003, 549, see Mauss 1990) that can strengthen or weaken family bonds. As Cliggett (2003, 545) points out, “the bonds of migrants and their social networks are a complex social arena where families, individuals, and communities struggle with modern desires, ambiguous sentiments, strategic rationality, and personal attachments.” In the case of Honduras, Reichman (2011) found that in the migrant-sending, rural coffee-producing village he studied, both benefits and tensions characterized the practice, with gratefulness alternating with resentment and lamentations concerning the economic precariousness of the home village. Similarly, for the Honduran migrants I spoke with, tension-filled issues

varied from supporting a rebellious and recalcitrant younger sister's schooling, building a house on a property contested by various family members, and, in Indra's words from Chapter 3, the dangers of sending nearly all one's money home instead of making a life for oneself within the confines of US consumer society, only to go home and find that "nothing is left!"

In the past several decades of neoliberal restructuring of economies, while global trade and flows of capital have grown (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001; Harvey 1990, 2005; Lazar 2012; Massey 2005; Stiglitz 2002; Thompson and Smith 2009), state-based investments in migrant-sending nation-states have decreased (Cohen 2011; Glick Schiller 2009; Pine 2008). These exacerbated global inequalities have led to a growing dependence on migrant remittances. While remittances can improve to a certain extent the economic situation of individuals in sending states, they often worsen inequalities in sending societies (Isotalo 2009, 76), particularly in the context of a country like Honduras, where structural adjustment programs via the World Bank and IMF have promoted the maquiladora industry and export-oriented agriculture and worsened poverty through national indebtedness (Pine 2008, 19). When the Honduran president in September 2017 in his address to the United Nations General Assembly called migrants from Honduras working abroad "new martyrs and new heroes" for their sacrifice working "tirelessly under tough conditions" (Grafton 2017), he was also referring to the effects of a *de facto* labor-exporting policy (Rodriguez 2010) that has provided large source of revenue for the country.¹³³ Currently, approximately twenty percent of households in Honduras receive monetary support from overseas, while nearly a third of Hondurans

¹³³ Remittances from the U.S. to Honduras in 2003 numbered \$883 million, while in 2010 it had increased to more than \$2.6 billion. (Ratha, Mohapatra, and Silwal 2011). These are official numbers and do not reflect the informal ways that migrants may send money to their home country (Cohen 2011, 104).

have kin or close family friends living overseas who can aid in their own potential migration (Sladkova 2013, 87). Honduras is a “remittance republic” (Pine 2008, 5).



Photo 6.1: Kenner Latinx Food Market. Note the long-distance calling plan and the t-shirt in back featuring the capture of Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán, former head of the Sinaloa Cartel and captured in 2014. Photo by author, 2014.



Photo 6.2: Money Transfer Services in Kenner. Photo by author, 2014.

For Mario – whose back injury (Chapter 3) made it impossible for him to work – the dream of building a house on land owned by his family was a topic he often related to me before class started in CAE. Saving up money for a house or to build a house was a common theme among many migrants with whom I spoke. By sending money to support

construction on a house, migrants like Mario are arguably also reconstituting kin relations and affective ties to their home society (Dalakoglou 2010, 763). As a “dynamic material form,” the house and its construction become central in the study of migrants’ transnational relationship with family and home (Dalakoglou 2010, 762). The irony of building houses in New Orleans in order to ensure the construction of a house in Honduras is not lost.

Furthermore, while nearly all the migrants I spoke with sent some form of remittances back to their home country, it has become harder in recent years to do so, largely because conditions back home have worsened. When I spoke with Tom, the EEOC employee working on workplace discrimination issues, about changes he had seen while volunteering at the post-Katrina wage claim clinic for several years, he pointed to how heightened gang activity and interpersonal violence back in Honduras had changed the nature of migrant remittances:

They’re not sending money anymore because it’s just not worth it. Before you would hear them talk constantly, “I gotta rush to Western Union to send money back home.” Now it’s not safe enough to do so. Now it’s better... rather than sending money to help families back home, they want them to come here. That’s the change I’ve observed primarily. That it’s just not worth it.¹³⁴

Continuing, he pointed to dreams of return to Honduras deferred, later reoriented towards settlement in New Orleans, and an attempt by migrants to bring their family to the city:

They used to dream of going back and they called it “*el rancho*.” Which is just a small farm or small parcel of home to call home. That’s not their dream anymore. Their dream now is to make it here and stay here and hide from the police, not be bothered by the police. And bring their family. A lot of times, I speak to people who live here and gone back to Honduras ten times, eleven times, fourteen times, over the border. And being caught by the Feds and sent back and they still come back.

¹³⁴ It is important to point out that there is also a life cycle to remittance behavior. As migrants find work and settle in a new context, the amount of money flowing back tends to increase over a five-year period, after which amounts often stay the same but also can decrease as families reunite, new families are formed, or ties grow more tenuous (Cohen 2011, 105).

Like Armirio, many of the migrants Tom interacted with had begun foregoing return. Settling in New Orleans has been arguably a strategy of survival, as the prospect of making money and returning to Honduras has waned. As time has passed, according to Pastor Delgado, the difference between Latinx workers who stayed in the area after the post-Katrina reconstruction era and those who left for other parts of the U.S. often came down to family:

Those that stayed were able to find a good job, a better job. Also, those surrounded by family were more likely to stay because they are a little bit stronger with those ties. Those who are single ... they are flexible and they are very open to move. They say, "Hey, in Mississippi, they are hiring people. They pay one dollar more there." Then they will move. But those who have more of a community, they will stay.

Indeed, as the post-Katrina clean-up and rebuilding phase gradually ended, many Central American and Mexican day laborers moved on to new regions and opportunities. As numerous interlocutors such as migrants themselves and advocates such as Pastor Delgado told me, many stayed in the area to continue working in construction or start subcontracting firms, often seeking to bring family to New Orleans.

This effort to reunite family in New Orleans does not always occur without tensions. For the aforementioned Indra, living in the U.S. has been bittersweet due to conflicts with her sister, who lives in a different state. Recounting her own arduous journey through Mexico and crossing the U.S.-Mexico border by foot in 2009, it was in the description of a romantic betrayal by Indra's younger sister, for whom Indra had worked in a factory in South Carolina to raise money to bring from Honduras, that brought her to tears, stating, "It was the hardest thing I've ever faced. Much harder than leaving Honduras and coming here." Like the complex exchange relations that Cliggett (2003) highlighted, Indra felt betrayed by a sister whose journey she had funded by working under difficult conditions. Though undocumented, Indra has now created a

settled life for herself in New Orleans with a long-term partner who is a New Orleans native. She has her own apartment and a Persian cat that she dotes over and is a much-requested housekeeper who carefully selects her clients. Yet, the drama with her sister and, more recently, losing her beloved father from afar without being able to travel home for the funeral due to her undocumented status compounded her feelings of loneliness in the city.¹³⁵

Loneliness is often a strong incentive to form new familial bonds in the new city, particularly when work is so taxing and “off” hours so few. Tom recounted to me the experiences of many male construction workers and the families they form in the U.S.:

Tom: A lot of times they don’t get legally married but they’ll have women that they live with here and call “wives.” And then those common law wives leave them over money problems and there are children involved ... so, you have people who are working hard and their families over there are breaking up when they get here and they get new families and financial hardships break up those new families.

Me: Is their legal status a barrier to getting married or do they refrain from doing so because they are already married in another country?

Tom: No, I think it’s not important to them. I think their cultural perspective is living together and calling her “my wife” – it’s good enough. They don’t culturally see the stamp of approval of a church or the state is my observation. They’re more focused on work, on having food in the house, on having their beer on Friday and Saturdays. They’re in that survival mode.

Here sustenance includes not just the requisite food, water, labor, and shelter, but also romantic and family relations that attempt to replicate what migrants may have already had in their home society. What Tom points to as a cultural practice of forming second families on one’s own terms could instead be thought of as a means through which individuals make family in ways that are simultaneously familiar and accessible under

¹³⁵ I learned of Indra’s loss of her father from the smartphone messaging app, Whatsapp, a medium I use to keep up with several interlocutors. After leaving the field in late 2014, I saw that she changed her picture to her father and upon asking about it, she informed me that he had recently died. For those who cannot return home for visits, such mobile technologies play a key role in maintaining social ties.

conditions of protracted insecurity. Inevitably, such stresses of irregular work and undocumented status lead to tensions within family relations as well.

As a woman ethnographer studying construction workers who are often men, the degree to which people were willing to open up on this topic is difficult to ascertain. Yet, by asking what men's marital status or romantic situation was, I came to see a large population of individuals who were unmarried, particularly those under the age of thirty. To what degree was the influx of overwhelmingly young, male Latinx workers in the post-Katrina period an example of how a society "demanded their labour but turned its back on their personality, dignity and sexuality" (Mai and King 2009, 296), thus constituting a situation in which deprivation became more than just economic or material? In the absence of family networks and sustainable love interests, work and social communities like CAE and *Congreso* have arguably filled the space to a certain degree.

For many migrants, such uncertainty and loneliness as well as the stresses of hard work contributed to problems with substance abuse (Pine 2008). As Alejandra, the community organizer working with Central Americans pointed out, a survey of mostly Honduran Mid-City residents found substance abuse a major concern of migrants. On yet another visit to the NOWCRJ's offices on a warm, humid evening in September, 2014, I chatted with Marco, an organizer from Bolivia who worked with local guestworkers. With a staccato cadence in accented English, he rapidly filled me in on his earlier experiences as a former construction worker himself and those of fellow Latinx men workers, stating,

Alcoholism is a problem with workers from all over – Brazil, Honduras, Mexico, Dominican

Republic, etc. Workers drink because they miss their families. Even I went through a phase where drinking was so important. Also, people have second families. People are unable to see their families for years at a time so they form new ones here.

He summarized substance abuse and second families as being some of the struggles male workers in particular face in addition to the inequalities of the worksite and threat of deportation. Marco was one of those guestworkers who became energized through his contact with the NOWCRJ and eventually started working there, thus finding an outlet for his loneliness. While in my fieldwork the topic of second families did not explicitly come up while speaking directly with workers, the stresses of geographic distance, financial hardship, family resentments, and alcohol abuse were persistent themes.

All of these pressures were exacerbated in the aftermath of Katrina. When an empty, disaster-struck city was bereft of social centers and institutions to absorb a huge population of in-coming workers, churches were among the first centers to open up and offer social connections. In Pastor Delgado's analysis, church as a social institution became a stand-in for family for many post-Katrina Latinx migrants who lived with fellow migrants in tight housing conditions and spent little money on social outings:

Churches also became very important. They became the new family for people, from the sociological point of view. Churches become part of something they'd left behind in Honduras or Nicaragua. A faith community became more real than other people. When you have family, you don't think about it. When you don't have a family, you're alone. The church became that.

CAE and *Congreso* provided social spaces of belonging that not only filled a space left by faraway kin, but arguably aided in further cementing belonging in New Orleans. As I found, many migrants active in these spaces were neither the "hurricane chasers" (Fussell 2007) looking for post-disaster temporary work nor were they completely settled with a family. Some, like Armirio, had family abroad, while others, like Mario, had planned to start a family, only to defer such goals in favor of working to save enough money to support family back home and eventually return to build on his land. For these "in-

between” migrants – neither highly mobile nor settled with the comfort of legal status or deep family ties – the social space of CAE, for instance, has been a key component of making home in New Orleans.

Conviviality and Friendship

I began volunteering at CAE as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher in March, 2014. On my first day there, I entered a cafeteria located at the back of the church compound. The large room was flanked with windows that allowed a steady stream of sunlight to fill the space. Fluorescent lights further illuminated the long tables and folding chairs slowly filling up with people. The air-conditioning was running and the air was thick with the smell of freshly brewed coffee. The cafeteria was part of a larger complex of St. Paul’s. Located in Mid-City right near Canal Street, St. Paul’s is an easy destination for many Latinx migrants who live nearby or rely on the streetcar.

After Spanish-language mass ended at 10:00 a.m., a short period of drinking coffee and chatting was followed by an English class of approximately two hours. Coffee, I would soon find out, was a structuring element of CAE. Two ever-brewing coffee machines bookended the donuts, fruit, and ever-changing supply of sweet and salty snacks placed on a table by the entrance, through which a steady stream of parishioners came in and out. As I waited for Christine to arrive and introduce me to the group, I began chatting with a young girl of five or six wearing a pink dress and sporting a long ponytail. As she told me about herself, I asked if her mother, who had come in with her, was attending the English class. She replied, “No, she just likes to come here for the free coffee.” I chuckled in response as she ran off with a cookie in her hand.

My interaction with the young girl stayed with me over the ten months that I spent volunteering at the course because it highlighted how, more than just a language learning class, CAE was a communal hub, a respite from what was for most migrants a six-day workweek. While some migrants I knew outside CAE preferred activities such as playing sports, fishing, going out at night, drinking beers on the porch, having picnics with family, or just relaxing with the TV on, for the workers attending mass and CAE¹³⁶ on Sundays, the course served as a social cushion against which they could rest before starting the workweek. The term *convivo* or *convivencia*, meaning “conviviality” or “coexistence,” came up several time in conversations with students about why they enjoy CAE. Not quite friendship but more than a passing acquaintance – a form of “stranger intimacy” – the frequent use of the term *convivo* by migrants revealed how they perceived of the all-encompassing nature of work that can leave them bereft of the sociality needed to sustain meaningful life. The existence of Honduran restaurants, grocers, social clubs, bars, weekly football matches, and an often loose family network didn’t completely fill what is the social void. For many, discussing issues such as politics and family and providing emotional support amidst the daily insecurities of life was key.

Conviviality can be thought of as intersubjective interactions in which people become “who they are through such relationships with others” (Nyamnjoh 2015, 11). Also a type of “collective subjectivity,” such webs of relations allow individuals to navigate social change and political transformations (Callahan 2012). The “tools of conviviality” that Ivan Illich (1973) asserted as a normative good could allow humans living under increasingly mechanical forms of production to live ethically as individuals

¹³⁶ There were a small number of migrants who attended the English class but not mass, though the majority attended both.

through creative interdependence with others, nature, and their immediate environment.

Within the context of urban life, individuals:

learn to meander through the spatial and conceptual intricacies of everyday life in the city, accommodating one another socially, economically and otherwise, as the surest way of survival, getting by and aspiring for the good life. It is in this sense that conviviality is a frontier disposition par excellence, enabling social actors to delicately negotiate, navigate and balance the real or potential tensions, eruptions, outrage and violence of the various identity margins they straddle with conversations of unity in diversity (Nyamnjoh 2015, 13).

This “frontier disposition” is another way to state how individuals handle deep insecurity and uncertainty in contexts of violence through the management of difference (Vigneswaran 2014). Rather than the mechanical forms of production that Illich was concerned with, for Honduran migrants in New Orleans, it is the condition of protracted insecurity that makes such connection important. Conviviality, then, provides mechanisms for coping with uncertainty (Overing and Passes 2000). By recognizing the incompleteness of emotional connections in New Orleans and the necessary relatedness to quasi-strangers in the context of CAE, it becomes a way in which politics, personal tragedy and celebration alike, and belongingness to New Orleans is negotiated.

Pedro, a twentysomething university graduate and paramedic-turned-construction worker from Nicaragua told me the following in Spanish in reference to CAE on a Sunday in November of 2014:

Apart from this *convivo* with many people, I have many friends here and I get to leave my work routine. It is something different from what I do every day ... Yeah, I work six days. And with the same people. So, one needs to talk to other people because otherwise you have no social life, only work.

The loose structure of the weekly lesson at CAE ensured the ability to socialize with different people, as the small groups often changed from Sunday to Sunday, depending on which volunteers and students showed up and the latter’s approximate English

language level.¹³⁷ While permanent teachers like Christine and Angela led groups of English language-learning adults, volunteers – mostly rotating college students from local universities like Tulane, Loyola, Xavier, and University of New Orleans – also worked with groups. The atmosphere was informal and Christine often began the class – small white board in hand – with a short, collective discussion on topics ranging from New Orleans-specific events such as Mardi Gras, Jazz Fest, or Saints football, to short introductions of new students and teachers, to the national politics of immigration reform. I sat many times observing but also participating in the process.



Photo 6.3: CAE Group Discussion. Photo by author, 2014.

Politics in general was a constant topic of conversation interspersed throughout the two hours of CAE. Such topics included the state of the incoming child migrants, immigration reform, and the deportations ongoing under Obama’s presidency. In the

¹³⁷ When it came to students, there was a core group of “regulars” who attended nearly every week. Those who attended irregularly often did so because of having to work or being unable to arrange childcare, in addition to those who lost interest or were unhappy with the loose structure of the course.

summer of 2014 Republican Representative Eric Cantor's election loss in June 2014 and Andrew McCarthy's potential for replacing him for speaker of the House of Representatives was a cause for cautious optimism for many migrants who thought that within a sea of immigration hawks in the Republican Party, McCarthy might push for some form of immigration reform. At this point and into the summer of 2014, immigration reform in Congress was still a possibility, with migrants voicing their hope for a path to "legalization." Many thought that President Obama, though in charge of increased deportations, would try to do his best for undocumented migrants. Antonio, a Guatemalan in his early thirties, often asked my views on politics and expressed his interest in what non-Latinx, US Americans thought. I was one of the few English-speaking people he spoke with on a regular basis and he would often approach me before class and ask about any recent political event from the week. One Sunday in mid-July, Antonio asked me my thoughts on child migrants crossing the border. From there he brought up the topic of partisan politics during which he asked my party affiliation. As he critiqued the politics of Republicans in Congress, other migrants listened intently, joining in to ask him questions. Though not political action, this seemingly off-the-cuff and informal discussion shows how conviviality in spaces such as CAE open up possibilities for new political imaginaries.

Beyond the informal moments of political engagement, the first fifteen minutes of CAE – though short – was an opportunity for Christine to discuss various issues of importance to the mostly informally authorized migrants. Palm Sunday and Tax Day in 2014, for instance, fell on April 15. That day Christine spent the fifteen-minute window discussing the meaning of Palm Sunday for Catholics and the events of Easter coming up.

From there she segued into a discussion of taxes, stating the importance of paying taxes even when you're undocumented; that, in the event of immigration reform and amnesty, the possibility to pay back taxes would arise. As she went over the process of signing names as proof of residency on documentation, students listened and took notes. Such serious topics of discussion were interspersed with moments of levity. On one day in October 2014 I was leading the discussion in the first fifteen minutes because of Christine's absence. I brought up the Halloween season with the class and asked if anyone was dressing in costumes. Ronaldo, a self-proclaimed class clown, piped up amusedly from the back, "No! We migrants are too busy working!" Everyone laughed. Though stated with humor, Ronaldo's sentiment pointed to the differing experiences of Latinx migrants relatively new to a city in which work often characterizes daily life and celebration (particularly one so central to New Orleans) remains as of yet foreign.

Like Antonio, for migrants who work with fellow Spanish-speaking Latinxs, the *convivo* at CAE was often the only opportunity they had to spend extended time with English-language speakers. Some migrants did work with English speakers but found themselves either communicating in Spanish or utilizing very specific, work-related English. More surprisingly for me, migrants also expressed how CAE has allowed them to meet fellow Latinxs from other countries in Central America, South America, and North America, or in the case of Hondurans, other Hondurans. As I found in my research, there were no formal hometown associations in New Orleans to help connect Hondurans arriving in the city integrate into the local markets for labor or housing, in contrast to other ethnic- or nationality-based communities in the area such as the Vietnamese, who benefitted from formal assistance from the US government as refugees settled in mostly

in the Versailles neighborhood of East New Orleans in the 1970s and 1980s (Bankston and Zhou 1996; Ravitz 2012; Zhou and Bankston 1994).

Though Hondurans have been migrating to New Orleans for nearly a century, intergenerational differences that divide by social class and labor market have hindered closer networks between these various waves of migrants (Sluyter et al. 2015). As I detailed in Chapter 2, for Hondurans who arrived in the 1950s such as Sal, or 1970s, such as Julio, conditions of their departure (i.e. often belonging to a higher socio-economic class and an easier time obtaining visas for travel) and arrival (i.e. time to learn English, attend school, and climb up the socio-economic ladder) have meant that their experiences vary greatly from the huge wave of Hondurans who arrived after Katrina, who were largely undocumented and often working in construction. During my time at CAE, I did witness a rare inter-generational interaction in the form of a short ceremony and photo-op one morning before class. Several older, middle- and upper-middle class individuals of Honduran descent belonging to a local Lion's Club donated English-Spanish, Spanish-English dictionaries to the CAE students. As Christine informed me later, these older, richer Hondurans who spoke fluent English and held citizenship lived in the suburbs and even attended different churches. These intergenerational differences are also spatially dispersed. Many older Honduran immigrants followed the "white flight" migration (Euraque 2004) from the city into the suburbs of Metairie and Kenner.

Yet, the lack of formal organizations does not mean that Honduran migrants were not networking and providing support for one another. I saw Hondurans organizing informally for more recently arrived migrants, including financial support, assistance in procuring housing, finding jobs, and enrolling children in school, often at CAE and

Congreso meetings. Migrants were providing emotional support as well. CAE also served as an outlet for expressing sadness and the effects of violence both in Central America and New Orleans. Throughout my time at CAE, stories of losing a close family member punctuated the relative stability of Sunday morning class while other more passing mentions of friends and acquaintances lost to violence became relatively mundane.

One morning in June 2014 during the pre-class discussion, Christine announced that the teenaged son of two of our students, a bubbly couple from Honduras, had been killed. Everyone sat quietly, with no audible or visual reactions. The following Sunday, after signing a sympathy card, we gathered for a moment of silence and prayer. The mother – who was present – teared up as a fellow student held her close. Class quietly resumed afterwards. It was the third death I had learned of at CAE since beginning three months earlier. On my very first day attending in March 2014, I met Rosa, a Guatemalan woman and CAE regular who had just that week lost her nephew who months earlier had fallen into a coma after a seemingly random violent attack outside of a bar in New Orleans.

As I quickly found out in my time volunteering there, the daily insecurities and vulnerabilities that infuse the lives of many of the undocumented migrants from Central America also shaped the social textures of CAE. On one Sunday morning in summer 2014, after having separated into groups roughly organized by language knowledge level, I began going over some basic vocabulary with the beginner's group Christine assigned me to. There was a man in his fifties from Nicaragua and a Honduran man in his twenties, both of whom had arrived within the past month. We went over numbers, how to provide phone numbers and addresses, and basic greetings. All of a sudden, the fire

alarm went off but as we quickly realized, there was no fire. I witnessed the majority of students hurriedly leave. Class was essentially disbanded after that, although when I encouraged my two students to leave if they wished to, they demurred. They explained that people might be worried about the authorities but expressed their own lack of concern. Later, Angela informed me that whenever an alarm is pulled the authorities are automatically summoned. The fire department means an official state presence and therefore, perhaps, the police. It turned out that one of the student's young sons had pulled it as a joke, much to the chagrin of the church's nuns.

The relative safety of CAE – a space in which individuals openly discussed their and others' undocumented status – was pierced in that moment and served as a stark reminder that even the private space of a church did not guarantee protection from authorities. Chatting about politics, learning about the perspectives of non-Latinxs and fellow Latinxs, and providing emotional support for fellow parishioners coping with the insecurities and losses that accompany migrant life abroad are some of the ways that the space of CAE has opened up opportunities for sociality. Yet, when I asked migrants why they came to CAE, they all answered with a bemused smile, “To learn English, of course!”

Learning English, Finding Belonging

“What is Sherwin Williams?” Edén asked me one October morning at CAE. Initially I didn't understand what the young Guatemalan and recent arrival to New Orleans had asked. I asked him to repeat and when he did I replied that it was a brand of paint. He explained that he kept hearing the phrase in his job as a construction worker

and wondered what it was. He also asked me with a grin if Winn-Dixie had an actual meaning and I replied that as far as I knew, it was just the name of a supermarket chain. As someone who spoke Spanish as a third language after his native Mam and second language Chuj – both indigenous Mayan languages spoken partially in Guatemala – Edén expressed a keen interest in learning English even though he mainly found himself in Spanish-speaking environments, including work, home, and even grocery shopping, preferring the local Latin American grocery chain, *Ideal Market*, to the aforementioned Winn-Dixie.

Edén's questions reflected the particular work environments he found himself in. As I found in volunteering at CAE, work life and the quotidian insecurities subtly crept into conversations. While many of the volunteer teachers attempted to identify the specific needs migrants had for their English use, we still mainly worked from textbooks that divided chapters according to grammatical level and subject-specific vocabulary. Studying from these books revealed much about workers' daily lives. On the same day I worked with Edén and other migrants from the Northern Triangle, we tackled the chapter entitled, "Places in Town." Using the template of a small town gridded into intersecting streets, the chapter showed sites of a stereotypical US village, such as a grocery store, bakery, police station, fire station, restaurant, park, butcher, and so forth. When I asked them about what restaurant they liked, it became apparent that the men didn't frequent many restaurants, though one worker mentioned a woman who came to sell food at the construction sites. They laughed when discussing their bachelor cooking habits and we moved on to discussing the difference between a "bookstore" and "library."

The groups themselves were stratified by not just language level but also by social class. Many of the students regularly working with the volunteer, Angela, skipped the fifteen-minute community talk Christine would hold, preferring instead to start immediately with their own group. Located spatially further away from the other classes, their level was supposedly more advanced. As Christine once mentioned to me, many of those migrants were from a higher socio-economic class in their home countries and saw themselves as more proficient in English, even when they weren't.

In Angela's group, like others, migrants' everyday lives and the politics of the broader society were topics of discussion that inevitably entered the lesson. On one Sunday in October 2014, I spent time observing Angela and her advanced group. Angela was sitting at the head of a long folding table. Six of her students were on either side of her and watched her intently as she wrote on a small white board with markers, asking them questions using the verb "get." With the exception of one student, everyone was writing in their journals. I listened over the loud hum of the air-conditioner at a table nearby. Angela wrote the phrase "get over something" and explained in Spanish that it is a change of state like "*enojarse*" ("become angry"). She gave the example of someone loving you and then leaving you, stating, "It can take a while to *get over* someone." Heads nodded knowingly. She then wrote the phrasal verb, "to get by" and said, "It's hard to get by in America if you don't speak English or have papers." Heads nodded again. She went on:

Angela: Do you know what minimum wage is? It's when the money you make at work is *muy minimo*. The lowest you can make.

Student [shaking her head]: It's not enough.

Angela: Congress is talking about the minimum wage these days. Republicans don't want it.

Student: But the people need the food stamps.

Angela: *Él no está bien*, but he's getting by.

The topic of minimum wage segueing into food stamps integrated seamlessly into the lesson on phrasal verbs. Moving over to Christine's group that day, I overheard Christine model the question form, "How long have you lived ...?" by asking the university student in training for volunteering, "How long have you lived in the U.S.?"

Student volunteer: My whole life.

Migrant students then interjected their own number of years:

Hector: Sixteen years.

Rosa: Twenty years, too much! [Everyone laughs]

Antonio: Five years, seven months.

Christine: Wow. Very precise. Five years, seven months, four weeks, five hours. [Everyone laughs.]

Rosa's self-deprecating humor and the joking around Antonio's precise recollection of his US residency reveals how migrants cope with the realities of their settlement in New Orleans, with some approaching the topic with humor and others with specificity in memory. The conversation soon moved on to work:

Christine: What work do you do?

Abril: Clean houses.

Violeta: Clean houses.

Christine: How many hours a day?

Violeta: Seven o'clock to six. Eleven hours.

Christine: Oh, that's a long day. But you both are very fit. [The ladies laugh.]

Antonio: I paint. Every day except Sunday.

Christine: What music do you listen to while working?

Abril: I like relaxing music when I get home after a long day at work.

Violeta: It depends on my mood. When I clean the house I listen to relaxing music. I like the Beatles.

Antonio- I listen to Adele and rock on my earphones!

[Christine croons in a low voice and everyone laughs.]

Christine: Hey! I love Tony Bennett!

Here Christine is seemingly downplaying their hard work, yet, for the students participating in the lesson, this form of banter with her was typical. One's labor is an easy topic of conversation because it is so ubiquitous and is such a consistent component of life. While English is not directly necessary for the work that many do, like Edén and the students discussed above, most migrants expressed a keen desire to learn English and had a specific set of language skills needed in relation to their area of work in ways that countered the informal nature of the course. Yet, besides the affective attachments to fellow students and teachers and the utilitarian purposes of improving everyday language use, respondents revealed a complex set of further reasons that they attend CAE.

Violeta, a sixty year-old Nicaraguan, originally worked as a teacher in her home country. She dressed elegantly for mass in silk-like blouses and kitten heels and always embraced me with a kiss when she saw me on Sundays, her perfume wafting over me. Violeta sought to improve her English by attending every single Sunday. Though she has been able to, in her words, "prepare her daughter" back home for an economic future by providing funds to ensure her attendance at school, she told me how difficult it was for her as an "educated" (i.e. university-educated) person to work as a housekeeper in the U.S. While older migrants were often supporting children back home, many of the younger migrants who were not married and did not have children were supporting other family back home, particularly younger siblings who needed funds to attend higher education, something they often did not have the opportunity to do themselves.

Upon asking Violeta why she attends, she told me the following in Spanish, “I come here because I need to know English for communication in my work, communication with others. And it is necessary because I do not know if the laws will change. I currently do not have my papers, and it may be that in the future I will become a citizen- that is my wish.” In the words of Violeta and echoed by other CAE attendants, “all undocumented immigrants should be trying to learn English.” This sentiment is practical and moral in nature, as migrants viewed learning English as not just an important investment in cementing civic integration into the U.S. but also as a moral imperative for people living in a country where English is the dominant language. Just as the *Congreso* fights for the right of migrants who rebuilt the city post-Katrina to stay, individuals I spoke with in CAE asserted the responsibility to learn English as gaining access not only to formal citizenship rights but also the type of belonging in society that is achieved also through cultural adaptation.

For many Latinx migrants, learning English was also a way to extend an educational philosophy instilled in them in childhood and reflective of their social class in their home country, if not their actual economic class. In the words of Violeta again:

Everything you learn in life is a way of overcoming. I'll tell you an experience. We lived in Nicaragua, we grew up on a farm. My parents had only the farm and had no house in the city. And when we moved to the town, my mom could not buy us a home so we lived with relatives. We made faces about it and weren't happy to live with others but we did so until I finished my high school and my mom bought a house. But now that I'm older, I think it's fine that my mom did that for us to know what things cost and what one has to assess to move oneself forward and to overcome ... My father was not interested much. But he was a responsible man and always had what we needed. But my mom was always inclined to education, education, education. Then we were well educated even though my mom worked in the field.

As she went on to explain, attending CAE regularly was a “natural” outcome of a philosophy instilled in her by her mother at a young age. For Violeta and many of the migrants I spoke with who grew up in cities but had parents or grandparents who hailed

from rural areas, migration – both internal and transnational – has long been a strategy deployed within the family to maintain upward mobility under conditions of social inequality, alongside prioritizing education.

For others CAE has been a force for social solidarity. Aldo, a fiftysomething gas station attendant from Nicaragua, described how CAE has been an opportunity to forge unity, telling me in Spanish, “My experience is that I am learning. First of all, the teachers here are helping me and I am very grateful because here there is unity and solidarity, with Americans and Latinos. There is no discrimination, above all. I am very grateful to God, there is no discrimination here, we are all united.” Aldo was one of the few CAE members who also regularly attended *Congreso* meetings. Having experienced discrimination on worksites he had been on, these social outlets were, for him, largely free of worry that treatment of him would be biased.

Joanna, a Paraguayan in her early forties, described in Spanish to me how CAE is both a space for working out social and linguistic practices as well as the socialization that is constitutive of that process:

I sincerely like the group although not all the people from before still attend. But Miss Angela, Cecilia, Rosie, I like the whole group. We are always learning new things and I have the opportunity to ask Miss Angela my doubts, my questions, how this is done, how to say this, what is the right way. Coffee and English is an open door to that. The whole week I work out new things, words, or situations in my mind, and then I ask. And I like this idea of coming to drink coffee, sit down, talk to people. I really come for the group, the *convivencia*, sincerely, yes.

Joanna started with the format of the course and the possibilities for improving English. But quite seamlessly she segued into the socializing aspect. Separating the utilitarian aspects of the course from the affective connections forged does not fully reflect the conviviality that allows these migrant participants (and arguably the volunteer teachers

who are transformed by the process) to fill in the social gaps in their lives through tempered interactions on politics, personal tragedy, language learning, and humor.

Joanna then switched to English: “*Pero* is very frustration. I don't know if you understand me. It is very frustration. In my country I have degree and here is the clean the house. *Entonces*, I've been here for three years and no yet speak correctly.” Like Violeta, Joanna had finished higher education in her country of origin only to find herself as a housekeeper in New Orleans, entering empty houses whose occupants were at work and cleaning alone, quietly. She attended other English classes in addition to CAE and one day aspired to attend Delgado Community College and earn a nursing degree. Like Violeta, Joanna reflected upon the dualistic tensions of work’s lonely burdens and aspiring to betterment, though in this case in regards to her linguistic skills and improved economic future. Her statement reminds us that regardless of the strength of the conviviality fostered through face-to-face interactions at CAE, vulnerabilities undocumented migrants face working in the shadows and under threat of law enforcement inevitably remain a constant thread of everyday life.

Non-Citizen Citizens: Asserting the Right to Stay through Protest

I stood nervously in front of the repurposed Creole cottage that served as NOWCRJ’s headquarters near downtown. Having only arrived in New Orleans a couple weeks earlier in June 2011 for my initial pre-dissertation trip, today’s meeting was one of the first that I had scheduled with a potential interlocutor. My nervousness arose not only from the jitters of being new in the field and all the attendant adjustments that accompany that stage of research, but also because of the warnings from many New Orleanians that

the post-Katrina reconstruction effort – which at that point was winding down – and the attention paid to it by journalists and academics alike, was leading to widespread Katrina fatigue.¹³⁸ A contact had put me in touch with Yolanda, a *Congreso* organizer. After finally ringing the doorbell, I was led by an administrative assistant across a creaky wooden floorboard into a small lobby. Eventually Yolanda rushed in, apologized for being late, and led me to another room, shutting the door for privacy. Though friendly, she remained guarded, noting the heightened interest academics, journalists, and activists had shown the organization's work. Furthermore, the majority of *Congreso*'s constituents were informally authorized and therefore vulnerable to federal law enforcement, thus increasing suspicion of outsiders.

“We don't work on changing people's legal status or right to remain, but on maintaining the dignity of their lives while working here,” Yolanda stated emphatically though stoically. As I nodded in response, a call came in from El Salvador. Yolanda apologized for answering her cell phone, saying that because it was from a pay phone it wasn't possible to see the return number, otherwise she would have ignored the call. It rang once more in our conversation but she couldn't hear the person on the other line. Even from our short conversation it became clear that her advocacy stretched transnationally. As I found during my time attending *Congreso* events from 2011 on, “dignity”¹³⁹ remained an important discourse for workers and their allies in asserting the

¹³⁸ Although I encountered initial skepticism by many academics, advocates, and native New Orleanians (much less so from migrants themselves), by showing up and showing up again as an ethnographer, that skepticism gave way to trust. Short-term researchers on Katrina have been numerous in number, less so long-term researchers such as anthropologists and other ethnographers.

¹³⁹ Social and political theorists from Weber to Marx to Arendt have long been concerned with how to maintain dignity within human labor under the historical and cultural development of capitalism, shifting modes of production, or totalitarian political regimes, respectively. More recently in the early twenty-first century and in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent European austerity, worker protest movements have invoked dignity as a way to assert political claims on a neoliberal state seeking to

right to be treated fairly in what became an increasingly securitized urban space. As deportations increased under the Obama administration from 2008 on, I saw how the initial statement by Yolanda to me about preserving the dignity of working people shifted towards including anti-deportation actions also. Protests in front of ICE offices downtown, letter writing campaigns, and intensive political lobbying against anti-immigrant legislation became an ever-more integral part of *Congreso*'s mission. The right to remain in the wake of post-Katrina rebuilding became a key discourse in the *Congreso*'s public presence.

That day in the NOWCRJ office, Yolanda invited me to a barbeque on Saturday being held to celebrate beating back an Arizona-style immigration law in Louisiana. Yolanda was in her element at the barbeque. After greeting me and giving me peck on my cheek, she encouraged me to get some food from the hot buffet. She then picked up a small child with a laugh and rushed around to different people, checking in on the proceedings and speaking intermittently on the phone again. The tension of my first meeting was broken by the warm energy I felt on that Saturday as family and friends mingled. Organizers spoke with the crowd and cheers went up at the recent political win. Alongside the clear political dimension of the meeting, I witnessed how community building at the *Congreso* occurred through discourses of keeping families together and by organizing *through* family. Many of the campaigns waged on behalf of undocumented migrants detained by ICE and set to be deported centered not just around being a reconstruction worker who helped to rebuild the city, but also around their family status,

undo worker protections [see Castañeda (2012) on the role of dignity in the *Indignados* of Spain protesting austerity in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis]. *Congreso*'s sister organization under the NOWCRJ's umbrella, STAND with Dignity, organizes Black workers in pushing for well-paid jobs with stability and benefits.

including having family in the New Orleans area, having a steady job and being a contributing member to society, not unlike the discourses migrants put forth in the immigration court proceedings I observed.¹⁴⁰

This initial introduction to a *Congreso* social gathering was an accurate precursor to the protests, weekly meetings, and collective celebrations that I subsequently attended. Later in my fieldwork, I drove to one of those weekly *Congreso* on a Wednesday evening in September 2014. I noticed a stunningly orange full moon as I parked on a darkened street in the Seventh Ward neighborhood, just over the canal from the Lower Ninth Ward. I saw lights on in the near distance at the school auditorium where the *Congreso* had moved its meetings to after the earlier space quickly became unable to accommodate the steadily growing numbers of people attending. As I approached on foot, I heard music and the din of people congregating and chatting. A teenager skated by on his skateboard. Approximately two dozen people clustered around the entrance. Women selling tortillas and *baleadas* called out their products for sale.

As I entered the school gym I saw an African-American security guard sitting in the corridor connecting to the auditorium. She looked at her smart phone as kids ran by playing and giggling. Inside the spacious auditorium several children were playing basketball with a volleyball near the entrance. Further along towards the stage more than one hundred people – many families – were sitting in folding chairs, facing the stage where a microphone was set up. Murmuring conversation bubbled up as I approached and took a seat towards the back. People checked their phones intermittently. Eventually an

¹⁴⁰ This approach has continued. In May of 2017, with the support of the *Congreso*, children rallied at ICE offices in New Orleans in support of parents in detention, holding up signs stating “No more family separation” and “Stop the raids and deportations” (Nobles III, 2017).

organizer took the microphone and started speaking to the crowd about recent developments on deportation cases. There was chanting of messages of solidarity, such “*sin papeles, sin miedo*” (“no papers, no fear”).



Photo 6.4: *Congreso* Meeting, September, 2014. Photo by author.

The energy was palpable. The air was thick with warmth and the sounds of the participants echoed off of the rafters located high above our heads. The crowd was united in its periodic applause, rhythmic chants, and focused attention. Amidst this “collective effervescence” (Durkheim 2001), I too clapped but I felt like an observer rather than a participant. Many of the people around me – regulars to these meetings – had over time built up a localized structure of feeling unique to the group and its constituent members. Though not a form of religious worship as Durkheim put forth in his theory of religion, the organizational form of the *Congreso* constitutes a form of political praxis itself in which social transformation occurs through collective action (Bonilla 2011). What do the mostly informally authorized Latinx workers transform themselves into through this

process? Through organizing and protest within a radically democratic structure, these migrants arguably become non-citizen citizens, audibly acknowledging their undocumented status without fear, yet also asserting their belonging by utilizing a discourse of the centrality of their labor in saving the post-disaster city.

As immigration enforcement tightened in the post-9/11 era a growing undocumented worker movement sprung up, from the 2006 pro-immigration reform protests that drew out millions of protestors nationwide, to more localized protest movements, in Chicago, Arizona, California, and the South (Gomberg-Muñoz and Nussbaum-Barberena 2011; Stuesse 2010; Zolniski 2006). Migrants in New Orleans are not only asserting a “right to the city” in which they as residents can transform the city through their democratic participation in urban life (Harvey 2014; Lefebvre 1995), but are asserting a “right to the city they have already transformed” through their past labor in rebuilding. They are skipping over the official status of citizen that is generally recognized as full membership in the space of the nation state into a form of citizenship that is based on dignity, family ties, and past labor and sacrifice, i.e. the right to remain in peace.

In the classical liberal perspective, citizenship is thought of as a legal mechanism through which members of a nation-state can make claims upon the state (Bosniak 2000; Lazar 2012; Sassen 2006). Political theorists such as Hannah Arendt have argued for a civic model of citizenship in which normative practices of conscious participation in the political realm is necessary for a healthy society. Anthropological approaches, on the other hand, examine how “states make citizens under various citizenship regimes” ...

“and also how citizens make themselves as political subjects” (Lazar 2012, 341). Holston (2009, 257) defines urban citizenship as follows:

When urban residence is the basis of mobilization; when the agenda of mobilization is about “rights to the city”; when the city is the primary political community of comparison for these developments; and when residents legitimate this agenda of rights and participatory practices on the basis of their contributions to the city itself.

While not part of the global urban periphery that Holston (2009) refers to in discussing the poor in Brazilian cities, in fact the *Congreso* mobilization fits in with these criteria. Instead of arguing for redistributive justice, however, Latinx migrants organizing in New Orleans are largely arguing for the right to exist in the city free of law enforcement harassment. The *Congreso* is drawing on a sophisticated strategy of activating powerful discourses and drawing upon organizational capacity to fight for rights in ways that go beyond mere protest and into the realm of on-the-ground struggles over fundamental notions of citizenship (Holston 2009, 246). It is precisely the inequalities of worksites that I have detailed in Chapters 3 and 4 and the forms of insecurity that I examined in Chapter 5 that Honduran migrants through the *Congreso* have leveraged in order to assert belonging in decidedly non-work spaces.

That evening at the gymnasium as I chatted with several workers, they told me how the *Congreso* had helped them in the past with specific issues such as family members set to be deported and finding assistance in a wage theft case. They also enjoyed coming to support the organization and see friends and acquaintances. More importantly, their participation in this organizing has, in their words both to me and publicly at protests and media interviews, transformed them into more self-confident, proud, and unafraid individuals. The organization itself is actually run by its constituent members. While there are formal organizers that are employees of the non-profit,

reconstruction workers themselves – often wearing the *Congreso*’s signature black t-shirt – lead protest marches and speak at weekly meetings. The *Congreso*’s widespread success is apparent in its institutionalized presence in the New Orleans non-profit world, capable of effecting change in city and even state governance, and preventing deportations through regular protests and letter writing campaigns. While assisting also with wage theft issues and finding legal aid for its members, it really distinguishes itself through a model of promoting agency and training for its constituents, who then go on to become leaders in the organization themselves (Murga 2014, 216).

Starting with only fifteen to twenty workers at meetings in 2008 (Murga 2014, 227), numbers grew larger in 2011 and 2012 when I first began attending their meetings and protests. In 2014 when I was conducting long-term research, the count had grown to several hundred participants weekly and the organization had grown into a power player in New Orleans politics. If a right is a “kind of social relation that distributes various sorts of powers and liabilities between people” (Holston 2009, 247) and “citizen power establishes the liability of others to it” (Holston 2009, 252), then by petitioning for the right to dignity and existing in the space of New Orleans and gaining some measure of success, then the *Congreso* has clearly established a presence in the city by making local state actors liable to them, including convincing the Orleans Parish sheriff to stop working with ICE on routine traffic stops and non-criminal cases.

I witnessed the member-leader dynamic one evening at the NOWCRJ headquarters. Held in the same room I had spoken with Yolanda nearly three years earlier, the room had been emptied of its large table and in its place chairs had been arranged in a large circle. The meeting started late on this August 2014 evening, because

the electricity had been out for a short while. As we entered the room I was immediately struck by numerous workers' center posters hung up on the walls, which were painted Carolina blue. People had already started sitting down – twenty to twenty-five men and women plus children – under the overhead light spotlighting the middle of the circle. There was a heavily-used whiteboard in the corner that became a central tool in the evening's meeting.

Having attended many non-profit meetings in the city on issues related to migration, labor, and post-Katrina reconstruction issues, the worker-leaders here were particularly energized, passionate, and enthusiastic about verbally participating. People raised their hands and spoke in turn, testifying to the abuse at the hands of ICE and the difficulties of gaining the respect of New Orleans residents after they have worked to rebuild the city. These testimonies slowly built up the energy of the collective and we eventually split into groups and wrote a dialogue for a video to promote the organization's work. Finally, half the group stood on the floor and the half stood up on chairs facing the camera. We each recited lines – some in English, some in Spanish – and due to the cheering, joking, and laughing, had to do it four times before getting it just right. As one participant recited his line, "Let me out of jail and let me work; let me be productive" in Spanish, I suddenly realized that the *Congreso's* consistent discourse asserting the right to remain without fear from the authorities was not only tied up in the community individuals had formed in the area, but also through the labor of the migrants who rebuilt the city and their future labor as productive citizens of New Orleans. These sessions were the energizing yet time-consuming labors of the member-leaders. Public protest was the platform for the sense of community and assertion of solidarity.

April 5, 2014 was a national day of immigrant protest against deportation (Ahmed 2014). The *Congreso* was holding its own rally near the French Quarter. I initially stepped into Louis Armstrong National Park, formerly known as Congo Square when it was a *de facto* gathering ground for slaves to play music and socialize on the Sundays they were given off under the eighteenth century French *Code Noir* (Evans 2000). I saw a bustling crowd of mostly African-American adults, with several children running around, playing games. A medical van offered free blood pressure and blood sugar testing, while stands selling homemade lotions and other beauty products and a Tulane School of Public Health mobile unit dotted the square. I spotted a young girl dressed in an elaborate pink costume being carried like royalty by an older man. In her lap was a small doll version of herself, also dressed in pink. I strolled over to the entrance and asked two Latinx men holding signs where the meeting was. The men were speaking with an elderly Black lady who was voicing her support of their struggle. One of the men pointed south as he nodded his approval to the lady. The moment was quintessentially New Orleans in its particular form of conviviality. In a city where strangers regularly talk to one another and neighborliness is paramount, it was stranger intimacy in political form.

I found the crowd of more than a hundred people protesting with signs on the neutral ground of Basin Street. Here too there were many children and mostly Latinx adults. Someone handed me a sign stating “Not 1 More” – a common slogan referring to deportations – and I held it above my head as an African-American man in a tour bus held up a Black Power fist and nodded vigorously in what I perceived to be solidarity. Several migrants returned the gesture. Organizers were handing out signs, the most common stating, “We are reconstruction workers,” while individuals gathered on the

grass surrounding a statue of General Francisco Morazán, a progressive nineteenth century Honduran leader who sought to unify the countries of Central America.



Photo 6.5: “Too Million Too Many” Protest, April 5, 2014. Photo by author.



Photo 6.6: “Too Million Too Many” Protest, April 5, 2014. Photo by author.

No less than ten meters away from the statue a man asked me to take his photo with his sign and we started chatting in a mix of English and Spanish. Yadiel was a Honduran reconstruction worker and now shuttled between New Orleans and Baton Rouge for construction jobs. He mentioned attending college in Honduras and introduced the topic of the banana trade, mentioning that Standard was located in La Ceiba and United was in Tela and La Lima, where he is from. He was a regular to *Congreso* meetings and while he usually worked on Saturdays, he made a point of canceling his workday in order to attend the protest. Yadiel spoke of the discrimination he faced when he first came to New Orleans after Katrina, relating the story of how he and a group of migrant workers were denied membership cards by a recently reopened public library.

But, he countered that experience by articulating his love for New Orleans. He admired its diversity and enjoyed visiting the French Quarter to see the different people who congregate in the downtown. He then motioned around to the group surrounding us, pointing out the racial diversity in the protestors. Indeed, *Congreso* events are NOWCRJ events, thus members of STAND with Dignity and the National Guestworkers' Alliance were present as well. As I have described in Chapter 3, many Latinx migrants were not reconstruction workers by chance. Labor brokers, homeowners, and city officials alike sought the importation of workers they could pay less and treat less well than native New Orleanians (Adams 2012). Nested within in the clarion call "We are reconstruction workers" is the reality that the majority Black working class was displaced and replaced with a new labor pool, cheaper and more easily exploitable. Though not without tensions, Yadiel's point about a cross-racial presence was true.

I witnessed such interracial organizing at a *Congreso* protest in support of activist migrants who were picked up by ICE in June, 2014. First gathering in front of the regional ICE office, the protestors afterwards made their way to Mayor Mitch Landrieu's office. Like the immigration court, the ICE offices are located in a nondescript office building downtown, even further away from the chain hotels and French Quarter nightlife. This area of downtown is where the city bureaucracy thrives. There was an array of people – old and young, racially mixed, and members of all three organizations under the NOWCRJ umbrella. As the microphone got passed around to migrants and organizers who verbalized their demands amidst anti-deportation chants, I overheard an older Black man behind me talking to two other Black men about the history of New Orleans, and the Caribbean, particularly Haiti (formerly Saint-Domingue), the practice of free people of color owning slaves, and the French colonial influence. He mentioned Toussaint Louverture, the Haitian independence leader. I saw Yolanda scurry by, helping to facilitate a series of speakers, including migrants who recounted their experiences of incarceration. One young Black man took the microphone and was particularly vociferous, adopting a preaching tone in African-American vernacular, utilizing call and response, and inflecting his speech with humorous yet biting anecdotes about incarceration in New Orleans. People clapped and responded.

Though seemingly light-hearted, these shared testimonies of aggressive law enforcement bring into the social movement sphere the fight for multiple forms of citizenship rights, whether for undocumented Latinx migrants or African-American US citizens. As the testimonies went on, a male security guard for the building loudly and aggressively warned participants not to step over a particular line separating the sidewalk

from the building. A woman next to me shook her head and stated in Spanish, “this whole situation is crazy,” motioning to the security guards that were now converging on the protesting group. Another man explicitly said that we should videotape the police and to be careful from diverging too far from the sidewalk, as they were looking for any reason to arrest us. The protestors made sure to stay on the sidewalk as tensions rose. This political action was the literal interfacing of protestors and the state. By tiptoeing up to ICE offices and risking arrest due to overstepping from public to private space, the deployment of security personnel represented where the “embodied frontlines of the state” meet “embodied effects (and negotiations) of these practices within immigrant communities” (Coleman and Stuesse 2016, 529). As such, the *Congreso* was decidedly unafraid, explicitly declaring the presence of migrant workers as insurgent citizens in the public space of New Orleans.

Conclusion

Whether in a weekly *Congreso* meeting or constituent-led organizing meeting, or a political protest in support of detained fellow members, these non-citizen citizens are consistently reminding the city they helped rebuild of their presence.¹⁴¹ But the organizing goes beyond the utilitarian aims of achieving the right to stay. The intraethnic, cross-racial, and egalitarian social bonding that occurs is also part and parcel of this insurgent citizenship movement. Like CAE, mourning can immediately follow a celebration, a stark reminder of the conditions of insecurity that follow migrants over borders, as a *Día de los Muertos* event that I attended in 2014 at the NOWCRJ illustrated.

¹⁴¹ How long the *Congreso* will be able to draw upon the discourse of being reconstruction workers is open to debate, as Katrina becomes more and more a part of history.

Like most events there, children played in the backyard and people ate food from the open buffet. Initially the only apparent difference in the typical NOWCRJ *mise-en-scène* was the altar set up by the fence. Calling on the participants to quiet down, the organizers spoke briefly and then held a moment of silence for all the migrants who had died trying to cross the border. Several people then came up to discuss their loved ones. One man noted how being murdered is different from just losing someone to other causes of death. A woman, while choking up, stated, “Though I have been here [in New Orleans] for seven years, I never had such an opportunity to mourn publicly because no one had organized it.” As the lead singer of a band from Honduras began to sing in Spanish about how men dominate the world, I examined the altar closer, with photos of Cesar Chavez, Emilio Zapata, Malcolm X, and the (to me) unknown individuals who had died along their journey. While reflecting unimaginably heartbreaking moments in migrant lives, the mood that night was in turns somber and joyful. People chatted and took photos and, as I found out *en route* to the restroom, some children had mischievously drunk some of the coffee brewing in the kitchen and were running around, letting out over-caffeinated squeals of laughter. My own infant son was doted upon and passed around from outstretched hands to outstretched hands.



Photo 6.7: Day of the Dead Altar. Photo by author, 2014.

The work of organizing and protesting undoubtedly relies on the forms of connection that people have formed through such intensely personal and social events. The ability to “mourn publicly,” as the woman stated, is an important explanation of the *Congreso*’s role in migrant lives. Coming out of the shadows as informally authorized workers to proclaim belonging is both highly personal and political. Similarly, for CAE organizer Christine, one of my closest interlocutors in New Orleans, working with migrants is deeply personal in regards to her Catholic faith and also political in terms of her decades of advocacy for incoming refugees and later post-Katrina workers. Separating the personal from the political is difficult, however, and after ending a formal interview in late 2014, Christine excused herself to go to the restroom. As I packed up my belongings she returned with a thoughtful expression and said to me, “You know, Deniz, I just thought of something. CAE has always reminded me of Sundays of my childhood.” She recounted how, as a child, extended family would meet at her house Sundays after church and have lunch together. Like the *Congreso*, CAE was also a social constant in

migrant lives and a time to contribute to the community while gaining something affective in return.

As I found out in a follow up meeting with Christine in April 2016, along with the death of immigration reform in Congress in 2015, she had noticed a marked decrease in attending students. Many had told her that they had simply lost hope in regularizing their legal status and therefore did not see the point in improving their language skills. While interest in CAE has dropped, attendance at *Congreso* meetings has, conversely, increased. How can one explain the difference in attendance at two sites where community building has been so important for migrant members? As many interlocutors have reported to me via Whatsapp, since the national election of Donald Trump and increased deportation actions by ICE, informally authorized individuals are increasingly careful about moving through the city and more likely to move from home to work, and back only. At the same time, the political capital that the *Congreso* has built in the city has made them a strong pillar of support to migrants who, because of that support, feel emboldened to come out of the shadows. Thus, less than a decrease in social belonging that has influenced participation at CAE, not attending may in fact constitute a self-preservation technique for those migrants who are made vulnerable by their legal status in ways that even a strong social community cannot right.

Conclusion

Two days before the twelfth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Harvey made landfall in Texas on August 25, 2017, causing widespread damage in the Houston area. Just over five weeks later, Hurricane Maria – a category 5 hurricane – hit the US territory of Puerto Rico along with many other Caribbean islands (Samenow 2017). In the case of Harvey, echoes of Katrina abounded in the news media, as articles probed the role migrant workers would play in the initial cleanup and subsequent rebuilding of the massive destruction wrought by the storm. Such headlines included “Latinos Rebuilt New Orleans after Katrina. Who will Rebuild Houston?” (Horne 2017), “South of the Border, Migrants Eye a Storm-Torn Texas” (Correal and Semple 2017), “How Trump’s Crackdown could Slow Flood-Hit Houston’s Efforts to Rebuild” (Rosenberg and Levine 2017), and “All the Relief Money in the World Won’t Rebuild Houston. Undocumented Workers Will” (Campbell 2017). Additionally, President Trump’s slow, ineffectual, and roundly criticized response to the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Puerto Rico has provoked public comparison of Maria as Trump’s Katrina (Johnson and Parker 2017; Pilkington and Smith 2017), thereby referencing the infamous failures under the Bush administration in New Orleans, from insufficient evacuation procedures to poor coordination with local and state governments to insufficient rescues as vulnerable residents were left to fend for themselves (Adams 2013; Hsu 2006, Johnson 2011).

Saket Soni (2017), the founder and executive director of the NOWCRJ, wrote an op-ed in the LA Times entitled, “Post-Hurricane Rebuilding Will Be Done by Undocumented Workers – and They Will Need Protection.” The certainty of the phrase

“will be done” in regards to post-Harvey rebuilding was certainly not by accident. Post-disaster economies in the U.S. rely on low-wage, largely undocumented labor and as I have highlighted in this dissertation, the recent past of Katrina indicates how a reliable yet vulnerable Latinx migrant population can fill the ranks of such local labor markets. In the article Soni calls for heightened labor law enforcement and a relaxation of immigration enforcement in order to ensure that locals can rebuild in the wake of Harvey with the help of migrants seeking work while still protecting workers from wage theft and work injury.

In the first nine months of the Trump administration the reverse has been reality: throughout 2017 immigration enforcement has ramped up while labor enforcement has weakened with a Department of Labor that has undergone budget cuts, undoing of Obama-era worker protections, and anti-worker, pro-corporate personnel changes (Elejalde-Ruiz 2017). These changes inevitably affect how ongoing disaster relief will unfold. Hurricanes – growing more destructive under a warming climate in the Anthropocene – inevitably bring into stark relief labor, migration, social inequality, governmental enforcement, and ultimately, the importance of studying how these factors are interconnected.

After the 2016 presidential election, I checked in with research participants via Whatsapp and most reported a tempered worry; migrants were concerned about a more aggressive law enforcement presence but several of them reminded me that they had long been coping with the potential for detainment. Nonetheless, bewilderment characterized many interlocutors. In the words of Indra, the housekeeper in her late twenties, “How could people elect someone with no heart, Deniz? The world is crazy.” For

undocumented migrants, disasters – both political and natural – have converged in a contemporary moment in which the ability to work under safe conditions and reside without fear remain precarious.

In this dissertation I have argued that under protracted insecurities Honduran migrants working in the construction industry have forged civic belonging in New Orleans by framing their past labor in rebuilding as an ethical contribution provided under exploitative conditions. While the pull factor of post-Katrina reconstruction played a significant role in encouraging settlement in New Orleans, many of these post-Katrina Honduran workers arrived under network-mediated migration stretching back to the early twentieth century, when New Orleans-based fruit companies entered the commodity trade and, as scholars have shown, exploited Honduras' banana plantations and dominated its national politics until the mid-twentieth century. Throughout this period until the post-Katrina era, the demographics of migrating Hondurans shifted from a smaller number of elites and upper management working in the orbit of fruit companies to poor to middle class residents, with a particularly large influx in the post-Katrina era. Exploitative labor regimes of the past and contemporary labor migration are linked, as the structural effects of historical interventions reverberate into the present moment. While we know a great deal about how fruit companies and subsequent US governments have played a role in Honduras' social trajectory, how have the relations formed through that earlier trade contributed to New Orleans itself?

My study in the archives revealed only a partial understanding of how capital extracted from this commodity trade returned to New Orleans in the form of investment. This case illustrated how archives "condition what counts as historical evidence" and

“impart the qualia of authenticity, validity, soundness, and truth by conditioning the epistemological ‘rules of credibility’” (Trouillot 1995, 52 in Bonilla 2011, 327). The material traces of these historical relations are necessarily grounded in the interests of capital over labor, boss over worker, New Orleanian over Honduran. By speaking to Hondurans who emigrated during that time, it became possible to question those “rules of credibility” in order to further qualify Standard’s written archives with the oral accounts of individuals who shaped and were shaped by historical forces. Further ethnographic study into these personal accounts of earlier Honduran migrants (an endeavor obviously complicated by the advancing age of older migrants) would help to fill in the gaps left by a partial record that in its current form reflects the dominant perspective of Standard Fruit. Though earlier generations of Honduran arrivals and post-Katrina Honduran labor migrants appear to be divided through social class, the vulnerabilities that more recent Honduran arrivals face reflects how US society more broadly and New Orleans in particular have become increasingly securitized in terms of immigration law and less stringent in regards to worker protections.

Reconstruction and new forms of construction since 2005 have continued to present the majority of undocumented Hondurans with the risks of work injury, wage theft, and an aggressive federal deportation regime. Analyzing how these workers have contributed to rebuilding the city under such insecurities through their bodily vulnerability adds to anthropological understandings of inequalities on the worksite and worker subjectivity under raced, classed, gendered, and legally precarious conditions. By listening to workers explain why they do what they do, this study additionally sheds light on how labor can be instrumentalized for purposes beyond just material gain. In other

words, while labor can make a worker vulnerable to injury and exploitation, it is precisely through that vulnerability that workers are reimagining their work history as an affirmation of their right to stay and remain productive. When former reconstruction worker-turned-*lonchera* owner María clapped her hands and said “*manos a la obra*” (“let’s get to work”) in reference to the desire of incoming migrants to immediately start their work in clean-up and rebuilding, she was not only pointing to what she viewed as a shared work ethic grounded in support of family and dignity and pride in hard work, but also an investment in the city that owed to them in return public appreciation and the right to stay, i.e. an affective if not legal claim upon the US public. This instrumentalization of labor in discursive and politically engaged ways further opens up questions about how worker engagement with the material world can return to Marx’s original formulation of labor power as the fundamental creative human capacity for production within “capitalism, along with its embodied subjects ... a system whose materialization is never complete” (Wright 2006, 14). In so doing, studies of labor can explore new understandings of moral personhood and social belonging through human work.

Informing these conceptualizations of work by Honduran migrants are legal regimes, regulatory systems, and bureaucratic enforcement that overlay a construction industry characterized by complex layers of subcontracting. Subcontracting and the seasonal nature of work availability heighten the precariousness of work. Yet, as I have shown, this precarity is embedded within the structures of low-wage industries in New Orleans and Louisiana more broadly. Underfunded federal bureaucracies nominally meant to protect workers’ rights (regardless of legal status) and statewide right-to-work

laws that privilege capital over labor help to create an environment in which workers and their advocates must carry the burden in righting wrongs, as in the case of the wage claim clinic. Moreover, as labor law enforcement grows more negligent (i.e. insecure jobsites) and immigration law enforcement more stringent (i.e. insecure public spaces) under the Trump administration (Kopan 2017; Sacchetti and O’Keefe 2017), examining how the shift of burden from homeowners and contractors onto the workers themselves in attempting to obtain stolen wages, for instance, is key to understanding how inequalities in local labor markets may worsen in the coming years. My study of subcontracting has additionally highlighted how legal status itself may exist in a grey zone in which work opens up certain civic responsibilities (e.g. to the IRS as a taxpayer) while remaining undocumented, unable to work legally, and therefore deportable.

Similarly, future research probing how governmental bureaucracies and law enforcement agencies such as the Department of Labor and ICE function on the ground could help in further qualifying studies of how labor regimes and state security apparatuses are linked in ways that reinforce labor discipline among vulnerable populations. In particular, “studying up” (Nader 1972) to those in power within these bureaucracies would shed additional light on an as-yet opaque aspect of federal law enforcement and how executive decisions on labor and immigration policy filter down to on-the-ground actions. Such actions – particularly on the part of ICE – constitute one of the many risks that Honduran migrants face within a continuum of insecurity that stretches from the conditions of crime and state-sanctioned impunity in Honduras, to the perilous migration northward, to residency in New Orleans, where Honduran migrants are targets not only of law enforcement but also criminals who interpret their supposed

undocumented status as an opportunity. Rather than singular situations of crisis-like conditions, in fact the insecurities embedded within emigration, arrival, and potential departure are connected through the embodied act of migration. They are also linked structurally.

A regional economy that facilitates the arms flow to Honduras and drugs and humans northward into the U.S. contributes to increasingly insecure conditions in Honduras. As individuals flee that instability the migratory journey has grown increasingly hazardous due to investments by the US government into heightened border control and federal aid to Mexico as an actor the US has recruited to help stem the flow. When migrants do make it over the U.S.-Mexico border, they enter a national space in which the border has been internalized and local law enforcement works in concert with federal authorities. Rather than viewing potential detainment and deportation as the main source of insecurity for Hondurans, viewing such threats as layered upon past traumas and vulnerabilities aids in understanding how migrants assess relative safety and danger and make decisions accordingly.

While these multiple crises of everyday life animate the lives of Honduran migrants, it is in non-work spaces such as CAE and the *Congreso* that individuals are creating social and political imaginaries of non-citizen citizenship. By informally engaging with fellow Latinxs and native English-speakers in the moments before, during, and after the English course, migrants made sense of their experiences in New Orleans and commiserated over shared experiences. Through making time for language learning, migrants also enacted what they articulated as educational values and civic aims towards becoming “American” in the hopes of legalizing their status one day. For the migrants

active in the *Congreso*, testimony, organizing, and public protest have allowed them to come out of the shadows and claim their right to exist in the city they helped to rebuild. Studying the *Congreso* enriches the theory of insurgent citizenship, until now primarily focused on popular movements in the global South such as Brazil, where individuals petition for their right to gain the *de facto* rights of a citizenship they already nominally hold. In the case of Latinx migrants in New Orleans, worker organizers argue that while *de jure* forms of belonging through legal documentation may not currently exist, breaking up families and deporting workers who helped rebuild the city in fact deprives them of a fundamental right to reside in peace.

While participation in CAE has dropped due to what Christine identified as disillusionment with the death of immigration reform and a growing sense that legalization is a distant hope, the *Congreso* has only grown in numbers and has continued to invigorate its members in a new era of hardened immigration enforcement. Participation in CAE and the *Congreso* also revealed an affinity for New Orleans, a city many Hondurans I spoke with had grown to love for, as they articulated to me, its architecture, its festive cultural practices, its diversity, its humor, its mild and warm climate, and the multitude of ways it has become familiar as a home. The labor through which Honduran migrants have staked claims to belonging is also the labor that makes the city what it is, a place whose absence you feel immediately upon exit.

For those traveling northeast, Interstate 10 is the main exit out of New Orleans. This was the route I myself took when, in late November 2014, I packed up my belongings in my rented house in Treme, loaded the car, exited onto Interstate 10, and drove over the working class neighborhoods of East New Orleans. After passing over

Lake Pontchartrain, the Interstate descends to sea level again, knifing through the federally protected, low-lying wetlands that lie flatly parallel with the highway. I also quickly exited any landscape that was visibly “New Orleans” and entered the familiar space of a US suburban highway, with its green signs marking distances and exits. Radio stations such as New Orleans’ much-loved local jazz station, WWOZ, almost immediately became aural fuzz, now out of reach of the car antenna.

New Orleans was, literally and figuratively, behind me. Geography is not destiny, yet geography does help to explain how New Orleans is also a Honduran city. The city’s location at the mouth of the Mississippi River aided in its subsequent development into a port for a series of empires, all seeking imperial expansion into the waters of the circum-Caribbean and eventually into the banana plantations of Honduras’ northern coast. New Orleans’ proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border through Texas has eased passage for migrants fleeing insecurity and violence in the Northern Triangle of Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Many of these migrants have drawn upon previous contacts in the area to arrive in a post-disaster city whose centuries-long quest to expand economically has replicated inequalities of race, class, gender, and legal status. Yet, as agents in these historical relations and contemporary structures of inequality, Honduran migrants have increasingly asserted their right to stay in a city where their presence is not only deeply rooted but also forged through the labor they have given and the community they have built.

References Cited

- Abrams, Eve. 2015. "Fazendeville, The Town Razed to Make Way for the Chalmette National Monument." *WWNO*, January 8, 2015.
<http://wwno.org/post/fazendeville-town-razed-make-way-chalmette-national-monument>.
- Abrams, Philip. 1983. *Historical Sociology*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Acker, Alison. 1988. *Honduras: The Making of a Banana Republic*. Boston: South End Press.
- Adams, Thomas J., and Steve Striffler, eds. 2014. "Introduction: Placing Labor in New Orleans History and New Orleans in Labor History." In *Working in the Big Easy: The History and Politics of Labor in New Orleans*, ix-xvi. Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press.
- Adams, Vincanne. 2013. *Markets of Sorrow, Labors of Faith: New Orleans in the Wake of Katrina*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Adams, Vincanne, Taslim Van Hattum, and Diana English. 2009. "Chronic Disaster Syndrome: Displacement, Disaster Capitalism, and the Eviction of the Poor from New Orleans." *American Ethnologist* 36 (4): 615-636.
- Adler, Rachel H. 2005. "¡Oye Compadre! *The Chef Needs a Dishwasher: Yucatecan Men in the Dallas Restaurant Economy*." *Urban Anthropology* 34 (2-3): 217-246.
- Águila, Álvaro Del. 2016. "The Hummingbird and the Bricks: Re-Recreation of Ethnicity among Paraguayan Workers in the Construction Industry of Buenos Aires." *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 11(2): 119-141.
- Ahmed, Amel. 2014. "Protestors Rally Across U.S. For Immigration Reform." *Al-Jazeera America*, April 5, 2014. <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/4/5/protesters-rallyacrossusforimmigrationreform.html>.
- Alcalde, Cristina. 2011. "Masculinities in Motion: Latino Men and Violence in Kentucky." *Men and Masculinities* 14 (4): 450-469.
- Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press.
- Anthony, Arthe Agnes. 1978. "The Negro Creole Community in New Orleans, 1880-1920: An Oral History." PhD diss., University of California, Irvine.

- Applebaum, Herbert A. 1981. *Royal Blue: The Culture of Construction Workers*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Aranda, Elizabeth, and Elizabeth Vaquera. 2015. "Racism, the Immigration Enforcement Regime, and the Implications for Racial Inequality in the Lives of Undocumented Young Adults." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1 (1): 88-104.
- Arendt, Hannah. 2000 (1964). "Labor, Work, Action." In *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, edited by Peter Baehr, 167-181. New York: Penguin.
- Arnesen, Eric. 1991. *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2014. "The Peculiar Waterfront: the Crescent City and the Rewriting of the History of Race and Labor in the United States." In *Working in the Big Easy: The History and Politics of Labor in New Orleans*, edited by Thomas J. Adams and Steve Striffler, 1-32. Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press.
- Auyero, Javier, and Débora Alejandra Swistun. 2009. *Flammable: Environmental Suffering in an Argentine Shantytown*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baehr, Peter, ed. 2000 (1964). *The Portable Hannah Arendt*. New York: Penguin.
- Bankston, III, Carl L., and Min Zhou. 1996. "Go Fish: The Louisiana Vietnamese and Ethnic Entrepreneurship in an Extractive Industry." *National Journal of Sociology* 10 (1): 37-55.
- Barnes, Sandra L. 2012. *The Cost of Being Poor: A Comparative Study of Life in Poor Urban Neighborhoods in Gary, Indiana*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Bender, Daniel E., and Jana K. Lipman. 2015. *Making the Empire Work: Labor and United States Imperialism*. New York: NYU Press.
- Benson, Peter. 2012. *Tobacco Capitalism: Growers, Migrant Workers, and the Changing Face of Global Industry*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Blim, Michael L. 1990. *Made in Italy: Small-Scale Industrialization and Its Consequences*. New York: Praeger.
- Bolner, Crystal, Stewart Yerton, and Keith Darcé. 2003. "Free Trade Trade-Offs." *Times-Picayune*, August 3, 2003.
- Bonilla, Yarimar. 2011. "The Past Is Made by Walking: Labor Activism and Historical Production in Postcolonial Guadeloupe." *Cultural Anthropology* 26 (3): 313-339.
- Bosniak, Linda. 2000. Citizenship Denationalized. *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 7 (2): 447-509.

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1987. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bourgois, Philippe. 2001. "The Power of Violence in War and Peace: Post-Cold War Lessons from El Salvador." *Ethnography* 2 (1): 5-34.
- Braverman, Harry. 1998 (1974). *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Monthly Review.
- Brettell, Caroline B. 1998. "Fieldwork In the Archives: Methods and Sources in Historical Anthropology." In *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, edited by H. Russell Bernard, 516-546. Lanham, MD: Altamira.
- Brettell, Caroline B., and James F. Hollifield. 2008. *Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Breunlin, Rachel, and Helen Regis. 2006. "Putting the Ninth Ward on the Map: Race, Place, and Transformation in Desire, New Orleans." *American Anthropologist* 108 (4): 744-764.
- Bucher, Jakob, Michelle Manasse, and Beth Tarasawa. 2010. "Undocumented Victims: An Examination of Crimes Against Undocumented Male Migrant Workers." *Southwest Journal of Criminal Justice* 7 (2): 159-179.
- Burawoy, Michael. 1979. *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2016. "Household Data Annual Averages," 1-6. <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18.pdf>.
- Cabot, Heath. 2014. "Crisis and Continuity: A Critical Look at the 'European Refugee Crisis.'" *Allegra Lab*, November 10, 2014. <http://allegralaboratory.net/crisis-and-continuity-a-critical-look-at-the-european-refugee-crisis/>.
- Çağlar, Ayşe. 1995. "German Turks in Berlin: Social Exclusion and Strategies for Social Mobility." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 21 (3): 309-323.
- . 1996. "Hometown Associations, the Rescaling of State Spatiality and Migrant Grassroots Transnationalism." *Global Networks* 6 (1): 1-22.
- Callahan, Manuel. 2012. "In Defense of Conviviality and the Collective Subject." *Polis, Revista de la Universidad Bolivariana* 11 (33): 59-90.
- Campanella, Richard. 2008. *Bienville's Dilemma: A Historical Geography of New Orleans*. Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

- Campbell, Colin. 1987. *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*. Great Britain: Blackwell.
- Campbell, Alexia Fernández. 2017. "All the Relief Money in the World Won't Rebuild Houston. Undocumented Workers Will." *Vox*, September 7, 2017. <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/9/7/16243176/harvey-undocumented-immigrants>.
- Campos-Delgado, Amalia. 2017. "A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words: Irregular Transmigrants' Journeys and Mental Mapping Methodology." *International Migration*
- Caple James, Erica. 2010. *Democratic Insecurities: Violence, Trauma, and Intervention in Haiti*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Castañeda, Ernesto. 2012. "The *Indignados* of Spain: A Precedent to Occupy Wall Street." *Social Movement Studies* 11 (3-4): 309-319.
- Çelik, Ayşe Betül. 2005. "I Miss My Village!": Forced Kurdish Migrants in Istanbul and Their Representation in Associations." *New Perspectives on Turkey* 32: 137-163.
- Chamlee-Wright, Emily, and Virgil Henry Storr. 2009. "'There's No Place Like New Orleans': Sense of Place and Community Recovery in the Ninth Ward After Hurricane Katrina." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 31 (5): 615-634.
- Carmichael, Katie, and Nathalie Dajko. 2016. "Ain't Dere No More: New Orleans Language and Local Nostalgia in *Vic & Nat'ly Comics*." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 26 (3): 234-258.
- Chávez, Leo. 1992. *Shadowed Lives: Undocumented Immigrants in American Society*. Fort Worth, TX: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- . 2001. *Covering Immigration: Population Images and the Politics of the Nation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 2007. "The Condition of Illegality." *International Migration* 45 (3): 192-196.
- . 2008. *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Chishti, Muzaffar, Sarah Pierce, and Jessica Bolter. 2017. "The Obama Record on Deportations: Deportee in Chief or Not?" *Migration Policy Institute*. January 26, 2017. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/obama-record-deportations-deporter-chief-or-not>.
- Clawson, Dan, and Mary Ann Clawson. 1999. "What Has Happened to the US Labor Movement? Union Decline and Renewal." *Annual Review of Sociology* 25: 95-119.

- Cliggett, Lisa. 2003. "Gift Remitting and Alliance Building in Zambian Modernity: Old Answers to Modern Problems." *American Anthropologist* 105 (3): 543-552.
- Cohen, Jeffrey H. 2011. "Migration, Remittances, and Household Strategies." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40: 103-114.
- Cohen, Rich. 2012. *The Fish That Ate the Whale: The Life and Times of America's Banana King*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Coleman, Mat, and Angela Stuesse. 2016. "The Disappearing State and the Quasi-Event of Immigration Control." *Antipode* 48 (3): 524-543.
- Colten, Craig E. 2002. "Basin Street Blues: Drainage and Environmental Equity in New Orleans, 1890-1930." *Journal of Historical Geography* 28 (2): 237-257.
- Colton, Nora Ann. 1993. "Homeward Bound: Yemeni Return Migration." *International Migration Review* 27: 873-886.
- Comaroff, Jean and John L. Comaroff. 1992. *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*. Oxford: Westview.
- . 2001. *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Comfort, Louise K. 2006. "Cities at Risk: Hurricane Katrina and the Drowning of New Orleans." *Urban Affairs Review* 41 (4): 501-516.
- Conradson, David, and Deirdre McKay. 2007. "Translocal Subjectivities: Mobility, Connection, Emotion." *Mobilities* 2 (2): 167-174.
- Correal, Annie, and Kirk Semple. 2017. "South of the Border, Migrants Eye a Storm-Torn Texas." *New York Times*, August 31, 2017.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/31/us/harvey-migrants-texas-mexico.html>.
- Coutin, Susan Bibler. 2003. "Suspension of Deportation Hearings and Measures of 'Americanness.'" *The Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 8 (2): 58-95.
- Csordas, Thomas. 1993. "Somatic Modes of Attention." *Cultural Anthropology* 8 (2): 135-156.
- Dalakoglou, Dimitris. 2010. "Migrating-Remitting-'Building'-Dwelling: House-Making as 'Proxy' Presence in Postsocialist Albania." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16: 761-777.
- Daly, Erin Moore. 2006. "New Orleans, Invisible City." *Nature and Culture* 1 (2): 133-148.

- Daser, Deniz. 2014. "Children in the Court: Deportation Proceedings for the Child Migrants of the Northern Triangle." *Border Criminologies*, October 13, 2014. <https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/research-subject-groups/centre-criminology/centreborder-criminologies/blog/2014/10/field-children>.
- Davis, Julie Hirschfeld, and Michael D. Shear. 2014. "57,000 Reasons Immigration Overhaul May Be Stalled for Now." *New York Times*, July 16, 2014. https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/17/us/politics/border-crisis-casts-shadow-over-obamas-immigration-plan.html?_r=0.
- Dawdy, Shannon Lee. 2008. *Building the Devil's Empire: French Colonial New Orleans*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dawdy, Shannon Lee, and Richard Weyhing. 2008. "Beneath the Rising Sun: 'Frenchness' and the Archaeology of Desire." *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 12 (4): 370-387.
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2002. "Migrant 'Illegality' and Deportability in Everyday Life." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31: 419-447.
- . 2005. *Working the Boundaries: Race, Space, and "Illegality" in Mexican Chicago*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- . 2009. "Conflicts of Mobility, and the Mobility of Conflict: Rightlessness, Presence, Subjectivity, Freedom." *Subjectivity* 29 (1): 445-466.
- . 2010. "The Management of 'Quality': Class Decomposition and Racial Formation in a Chicago Factory." *Dialectical Anthropology* 34: 249-272.
- De Genova, Nicholas, and Nathalie Peutz, eds. 2010. *The Deportation Regime: Sovereignty, Space, and the Freedom of Movement*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- De Leon, Jason. *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Delp, Linda, Laura Podolsky, and Tomás Aguilar. 2009. "Risk Amid Recovery: Occupational Health and Safety of Latino Day Laborers in the Aftermath of the Gulf Coast Hurricanes." *Organization and Environment* 22 (4): 479-490.
- Demerath, Nicholas J., and Harlan Gilmore. 1954. "The Ecology of Southern Cities." In *The Urban South*, edited by Rupert Vance and Nicholas J. Demerath, pages here. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Dimanche, Frédéric, and Alenna Lepetic. 1999. "New Orleans Tourism and Crime: A Case Study." *Journal of Travel Research* 38: 19-23.
- Dixon, Nancy. 2014. "Sex, Drugs, and Violence, Just Another Night on Bourbon Street in Joe Longo's 'S.I.N.ners.'" In *Working in the Big Easy: The History and Politics*

- of Labor in New Orleans*, edited by Thomas J. Adams and Steve Striffler, 191-210. Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press.
- Domínguez, Virginia R. 1986. *Social Classification in Creole Louisiana*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Douglass, William A. 1974. *Echalar and Murelaga: Opportunity and Rural Exodus in Two Spanish Basque Villages*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Durkheim, Émile. 2001. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Translated by Carol Cosman. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Echeverri-Gent, Elisavinda. 1992. "Forgotten Workers: British West Indians and the Early Days of the Banana Industry in Costa Rica and Honduras." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24 (2): 275-308.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2001. *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Elejalde-Ruiz, Alexia. 2017. "Labor Policy is in the Midst of a Shift Under Trump." *Chicago Tribune*, July 21, 2017. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-trump-policies-overtime-nlrb-0719-biz-20170718-story.html>.
- England, Sarah. 2010. "Afro-Hondurans in the Chocolate City: Garifuna, Katrina, and the Advantages of Racial invisibility in the Nuevo New Orleans." *The Journal of Latino-Latin American Studies* 3 (4): 31-55.
- Euraque, Darío. 1996. *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- . 2003. "The Threat of Blackness to the Mestizo Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Honduran Banana Economy, 1920s and 1930s." In *Banana Wars: Power, Production, and History in the Americas*, edited by Steve Striffler and Mark Moberg, 229-252. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Fernandez-Kelly, Maria Patricia. 1990. "Delicate Transactions: Gender, Home, and Employment Among Hispanic Women." In *Uncertain Terms: Negotiating Gender in American Culture*, edited by Faye Ginsburg and Anna L. Tsing, 183-195. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Euraque, Samantha. 2004. "Honduran Memories: Identity, Race, Place and Memory in New Orleans, Louisiana." M.A. thesis, Louisiana State University.
- Evans, Freddi Williams. 2011. *Congo Square: African Roots in New Orleans*. Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press.

- Faist, Thomas. 2007. "Migrants as Transnational Development Agents: An Inquiry Into the Newest Round of the Migration-Development Nexus." *Population, Space and Place* 14 (1): 21-42.
- Farmer, Paul. 1999. *Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 2004. "An Anthropology of Structural Violence." *Current Anthropology* 45 (3): 305-325.
- Fasquelle, Rodolfo Pastor. 2011. "The 2009 Coup and the Struggle for Democracy in Honduras." *NACLA Report on the Americas* January/February: 16-21, 40.
- Feldman, Allen. 1991. *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fernandez-Kelly, Maria Patricia. 1990. "Delicate Transactions: Gender, Home, and Employment Among Hispanic Women." In *Uncertain Terms: Negotiating Gender in American Culture*, edited by Faye Ginsburg and Anna L. Tsing, 183-195. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Ferreti, Gwendolyn. 2017. "Southern Inhospitability: Latino Immigrant Attrition and Resistance in the South." In *Navigating Souths: Transdisciplinary Explorations of a US Region*, edited by Jodi Skipper and Michele Grigsby Coffey, 87-100. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- Fine, Janice. 2013. "Solving the Problem from Hell: Tripartism as a Strategy for Addressing Labour Standards Non-Compliance in the United States." *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 50: 813-843.
- Fitzgerald, David. 2008. "Colonies of the Little Motherland: Membership, Space, and Time in Mexican Migrant Hometown Associations." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50 (1): 145-169.
- Fletcher, Laurel, Phuong N. Pham, Eric Stover, and Patrick Vinck. 2006. *Rebuilding after Katrina: A Population-based Study of Labor and Human Rights in New Orleans*. Research Report. Berkeley: Human Rights Center, University of California.
- Foner, Nancy. 2000. *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's Two Great Waves of Immigration*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Fouts, Sarah. 2017a. "Tacos, Gumbo, and Work: The Politics of Food and the Valorization of Labor." PhD diss., Tulane University.
- . 2017b. "The Mafia, La Raza, and the Spanish-Language Press Coverage of the 1891 Lynchings in New Orleans." *Journal of Southern History* 83 (3): 509-530.

- Freeman, Carla. 2000. *High Tech and High Heels in the Global Economy: Women, Work, and Pink-Collar Identities in the Caribbean*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Freidenberg, Judith, Graciela Imperiale, and Mary Louise Skovron. 1988. "Migrant Careers and Well-being of Women." *International Migration Review* 22 (2): 208-225.
- Freund, Helen. 2014. "NOPD Officer Cleared by DA in Fatal Hollygrove Shooting." *Times Picayune*, July 18, 2014.
http://www.nola.com/crime/index.ssf/2014/07/orleans_parish_district_attorn_6.html.
- Frey, Sylvia R. 2014. "Conclusion. Beyond Borders: Revising Atlantic History." In *Louisiana: Crossroads of the Atlantic World*, edited by Cécile Vidal, 184-204. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Fussell, Elizabeth. 2007. "Constructing New Orleans, Constructing Race: A Population History of New Orleans." *The Journal of American History* 94 (3): 846-855.
- . 2009a. "Hurricane Chasers in New Orleans: Latino Immigrants as a Source of a Rapid Response Labor Force." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 31 (3): 375-394.
- . 2009b. "Post-Katrina New Orleans as a New Migrant Destination." *Organization and Environment* 22 (4): 458-469.
- . 2011. "The Deportation Threat Dynamic and Victimization of Latino Migrants: Wage Theft and Robbery." *The Sociological Quarterly* 52 (4): 593-615.
- Garvin, Garvin. 2017. "Immigration Courts, Lacking Judges, Are Sinking Under a Massive Backlog of Cases," *Miami Herald*, June 30, 2017.
<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/immigration/article158889489.html>.
- Geu, Thomas Earl. 1991. "Understanding the Limited Liability Company: A Basic Comparative Primer (Part One)." *South Dakota Law Review* 37: 44-96.
- Ghannam, Farha. 1998. "Keeping Him Connected: Labor Migration and the Production of Locality in Cairo." *City & Society* 10 (1): 65-82.
- Gherardi, Silvia, and Davide Nicolini. 2002. "Learning the Trade: A Culture of Safety in Practice." *Organization* 9: 191-223.
- Giddens, Anthony, ed. 1992 (1930). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Routledge Classics.
- Gillen, Marion, Davis Baltz, Margy Gassel, Luz Kirsch, and Diane Vaccaro. 2002. "Perceived Safety Climate, Job Demands, and Coworker Support among Union and Nonunion Injured Construction Workers." *Journal of Safety Research* 33 (1): 33-51.

- Gladstone, David, and Jolie Préau. 2008. "Gentrification in Tourist Cities: Evidence from New Orleans Before and After Hurricane Katrina." *Housing Policy Debate* 19 (1): 137-175.
- Glick Schiller, Nina. 2009. "A Global Perspective on Migration and Development." *Social Analysis* 53 (3): 14-37.
- Glick Schiller, Nina, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton. 1992. "Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 645: 1-24.
- . 1995. "From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration." *Anthropological Quarterly* 68 (1): 48-63.
- Gluckman, Max. 1961. "Anthropological Problems Arising from the African Industrial Revolution." In *Social Change in Modern Africa*, edited by Aidan William Southall, pages here. London: Oxford University Press.
- . 1971. "Tribalism, Ruralism and Urbanism in South and Central Africa." In *Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960*, edited by Victor Turner, pages here. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gmelch, George. 1980. "Return Migration." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 9: 135-159.
- . 1992. *Double Passage: The Lives of Caribbean Migrants Abroad and Back Home*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Goldín, Liliana R. 2001. "Maquila Age Maya: Changing Households and Communities of the Central Highlands of Guatemala." *The Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 6 (1): 30-57.
- Goldstein, Daniel M., and Carolina Alonso-Bejarano. 2017. "E-Verify: Securitized Immigration and Biometric Surveillance in the Workplace." *Human Organization* 76 (1): 1-14.
- Gomberg-Muñoz, Ruth. 2010. "Willing to Work: Agency and Vulnerability in an Undocumented Immigrant Network." *American Anthropologist* 112 (2): 295-307.
- . 2012. "Inequality in a 'Postracial' Era: Race, Immigration, and Criminalization of Low-Wage Labor." *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 9 (2): 339-353.
- Gomberg-Muñoz, Ruth, and Laura Nussbaum-Barberena. 2011. "Is Immigration Policy Labor Policy? Immigration Enforcement, Undocumented Workers, and the State." *Human Organization* 70 (4): 366-375.
- Gotham, Kevin F. 2002. "Marketing Mardi Gras: Commodification, Spectacle and the Political Economy of Tourism in New Orleans." *Urban Studies* 39 (10): 1735-1756.
- . 2007. *Authentic New Orleans: Tourism, Culture, and Race in the Big Easy*. New York: New York University Press.

- Gotham, Kevin F., and Miriam Greenberg. 2014. *Crisis Cities: Disaster and Redevelopment in New York and New Orleans*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Grafton, Andrew. 2017. "Honduran President Calls Migrants 'Martyrs, Heroes' in U.S. Speech." *PR Newswire*, September 25, 2017. <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honduran-president-calls-migrants-martyrs-heroes-in-un-speech-300524654.html>.
- Gramling, Robert, and Ronald Hagelman. 2005. "A Working Coast: People in the Louisiana Wetlands." *Journal of Coastal Research* 44: 112-133.
- Griffith, David. 2013. *(Mis)Managing Migration: Guestworkers' Experiences with North American Labor Markets*. Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press.
- Green, Linda. 1994. "Fear as a Way of Life." *Cultural Anthropology* 9 (2): 227-256.
- Gregory, Steven, and Roger Sanjek. 1994. *Race*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Grimm, Andy. 2014. "Ray Nagin, Once New Orleans' Mayor, Now Federal Inmate No. 32751-045." *Times Picayune*, September 9, 2014. http://www.nola.com/crime/index.ssf/2014/09/ray_nagin_once_mayor_of_new_or.html.
- Gruesz, Kirsten Silva. 2006. "The Gulf of Mexico System and the 'Latinness' of New Orleans." *American Literary History* 18 (3): 468-495.
- Guzman, Gloria G. 2017. "Household Income: 2016." *United States Census Bureau*. September 2017. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/acs/acsbr16-02.pdf>.
- Hagan, Jacqueline Maria. 2008. *Migration Miracle: Faith, Hope, and Meaning on the Undocumented Journey*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hakken, David. 2000. "Resocializing Work? The Future of the Labor Process." *Anthropology of Work Review* 21 (1): 8-10.
- Hall, Gwendolyn Midlo. 1995. *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University.

- Hall, Stuart. 1991. "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities." In *Culture, Globalization and the World-System*, edited by Anthony D. King, 41-68. Houndmills, UK: Macmillan Press.
- Hammersley, Martyn, and Paul Atkinson. 1995. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Hankins, Joseph D. 2014. *Working Skin: Making Leather, Making a Multicultural Japan*. Berkeley: University of California.
- Harvey, Daina Cheyenne, Yuki Kato, and Catarina Passidomo. 2016. "Rebuilding Others' Communities: A Critical Analysis of Race and Nativism in Non-Profits in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina." *Local Environment* 21 (8): 1029-1046.
- Harvey, David. 1990. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry in the Origins of Cultural Change*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- . 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- . 2014. *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. London: Verso.
- Hasselberg, Ines. 2016. *Enduring Uncertainty: Deportation, Punishment and Everyday Life*. New York: Berghahn.
- Heitman, Danny. 2012. "Lafcadio Hearn in New Orleans." *Humanities* 33 (3), May/June, 2012. <http://www.neh.gov/humanities/2012/mayjune/feature/lafcadio-hearn-in-new-orleans>.
- Hirsch, Jennifer S. 1999. "En El Norte La Mujer Manda: Gender, Generation, and Geography in a Mexican Transnational Community." *American Behavioral Scientist* 42: 1332-1349.
- Holmes, Seth M. 2007. "'Oaxacans Like to Work Bent Over': The Naturalization of Social Suffering Among Berry Farm Workers." *International Migration* 45 (3): 39-68.
- Holston, James. 2009. "Insurgent Citizenship in an Era of Global Urban Peripheries." *City & Society* 21 (2): 245-267.
- Horne, Jed. 2017. "Latinos Rebuilt New Orleans After Katrina. Who Will Rebuild Houston?" *The Guardian*, September 1, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/sep/01/latinos-rebuilt-new-orleans-after-katrina-who-will-rebuild-houston>.
- Hsu, Spencer S. 2006. "Katrina Report Spreads Blame." *Washington Post*, February 12, 2006.

- Ibarra, María de la Luz. 2002. "Transnational Identity Formation and Mexican Immigrant Women's Ethics of Elder Care." *Anthropology of Work Review* 23 (3-4): 16-20.
- Illich, Ivan. 1973. *Tools for Conviviality*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Internal Revenue Service. 2017. "Substantial Presence Test."
<https://www.irs.gov/individuals/international-taxpayers/substantial-presence-test>.
- Iskandar, Natasha. 2012. "Street Vendors, Television Extras, Walmart Stockers, and More: Worker Subjectivity and Labor Processes in Atypical Work." *Work and Occupations* 39 (3): 270-279.
- Isotalo, Riina. 2009. "Politicizing the Transnational: On Implications for Migrants, Refugees, and Scholarship." *Social Analysis* 53 (3): 60-84.
- Iszaevich, Abraham. 1974. "Emigrants, Spinsters, and Priests: The Dynamics of Demography in Spanish Peasant Societies." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 2 (3): 292-312.
- Jackson, John L., Jr. 2011. "HBO's Utopian Realism: Down in the *Treme*." *Transforming Anthropology* 19 (1): 17-20.
- Jefremovas, Villia. 2002. *Brickyards to Graveyards: From Production to Genocide in Rwanda*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Jelly-Schapiro, Joshua. 2013. "¡Bananas!" In *Unfathomable City: A New Orleans Atlas*, edited by Rebecca Solnit and Rebecca Snedeker, 73-81. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Johnson, Cedric, ed. 2011. *The Neoliberal Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, Late Capitalism and the Remaking of New Orleans*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Johnson, Jenna, and Ashley Parker. 2017. "Trump Hails 'Incredible' Response in 'Lovely' Trip to Storm-torn Puerto Rico." *Washington Post*, October 3, 2017.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-praises-himself-for-administrations-great-job-in-puerto-rico/2017/10/03/fdb5eeb4-a83a-11e7-8ed2-c7114e6ac460_story.html?utm_term=.15ab75ccbe5c.
- Jonson, Fred'k A. 1877. "Republic of Honduras: Advantages and Grand Future of that Central American Republic, and to New Orleans, to be Brought About by Direct Trade." *Times Picayune*, January 13, 1877.
- Jung, Moon-kie. 2006. *Reworking Race: The Making of Hawaii's Interracial Labor Movement*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Kalleberg, Arne L. 2009. "Precarious Work, Insecure Workers: Employment Relations in Transition." *American Sociological Review* 74 (1): 1-22.
- Kao, Grace. 2006. "Where Are the Asian and Hispanic Victims of Katrina?: A Metaphor for Invisible Minorities in Contemporary Racial Discourse." *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 3 (1): 223-231.
- Kaplan-Levenson, Laine. 2016. "'The Monster': Claiborne Avenue Before and After the Interstate." WWNO, May 5, 2016. . " <http://wwno.org/post/monster-claiborne-avenue-and-after-interstate>.
- Karnes, Thomas L. 1978. *Tropical Enterprise: The Standard Fruit and Steamship Company in Latin America*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.
- Kasmir, Sharryn, and August Carbonella. 2008. "Dispossession and the Anthropology of Labor." *Critique of Anthropology* 28 (1): 5-25.
- . 2014. *Blood and Fire: Toward a Global Anthropology of Labor*. New York: Berghahn.
- Katz, Cindi. 2008. "Bad Elements: Katrina and the Scoured Landscape of Social Reproduction." *Gender, Place and Culture* 15 (1): 15-29.
- Kazin, Michael. 2016. "Trump and American Populism: Old Whine, New Bottles." *Foreign Affairs*, October 6, 2016. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2016-10-06/trump-and-american-populism>.
- Kertzer, David I. 1984. *Family Life in Central Italy, 1880-1910*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.
- Kingfisher, Catherine, and Jeff Maskovsky. 2008. "Introduction: The Limits of Neoliberalism." *Critique of Anthropology* 28 (2): 115-126.
- Kopan, Tal. 2017. "ICE Chief Pledges Quadrupling or More of Workplace Crackdowns." *CNN*, October 18, 2017. <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/10/17/politics/ice-crackdown-workplaces/index.html>.
- Kopytoff, Igor. 1986. "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process." In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, 64-91. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kovic, Christine. 2008. "Jumping from a Moving Train: Risk, Migration and Rights at NAFTA's Southern Border." *Practicing Anthropology* 30 (2): 32-36.
- Lamont, Michèle. 2000. *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Lamphere, Louise. 1987. *From Working Daughters to Working Mothers: Immigrant Women in a New England community*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Langley, Lester D., and Thomas Schoonover. 1995. *The Banana Men: American Mercenaries and Entrepreneurs in Central America, 1880-1930*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.
- Leerkes, Arjen, Mark Leach, and James Bachmeier. 2012. "Borders Behind the Border: An Exploration of State-Level Differences in Migration Control and their Effects on US Migration Patterns." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38 (1): 111-129.
- Lefebvre, Henri. 1995. *Writings on Cities*. New York: Blackwell.
- Lipsitz, George. 2006. "Learning from New Orleans: The Social Warrant of Hostile Privatism and Competitive Consumer Citizenship." *Cultural Anthropology* 21 (3): 451-468.
- . 2011. "New Orleans in the World and the World in New Orleans." *Black Music Research Journal* 31 (2): 261-290.
- Lomnitz, Larissa. 1977. *Networks and Marginality: Life in a Mexican Shantytown*. New York: Academic Press.
- Lutz, Catherine. 2014. "The U.S. Car Colossus and the Production of Inequality." *American Ethnologist* 41 (2): 232-245.
- Mahler, Sarah J., and Patricia R. Pessar. 2006. "Gender Matters: Ethnographers Bring Gender from the Periphery toward the Core of Migration Studies." *International Migration Review* 40 (1): 27-63.
- Mai, Nicola, and Russell King. 2009. "Love, Sexuality and Migration: Mapping the Issue(s)." *Mobilities* 4 (3): 295-307.
- Manley, Elizabeth. 2014. "'Cream with our Coffee': Preservation Hall, Organized Labor, and New Orleans's Musical Color, 1957-1969." In *Working in the Big Easy: The History and Politics of Labor in New Orleans*, edited by Thomas J. Adams and Steve Striffler, 131-162. Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press.
- Marrujo, Olivia Ruiz. 2003. "Immigrants at Risk, Immigrants as Risk: Two Paradigms of Globalization." *The Center for Migration Studies Special Issues* 18 (2): 17-28.
- Martin, Naomi. 2014. "After Man Shot Dead by Police in Hollygrove, Family Wants Answers." *Times Picayune*, February 17, 2014.
http://www.nola.com/crime/index.ssf/2014/02/family_of_man_slain_by_nopd_of.html.

- Martinez, Michael. 2005. "Big Easy Uneasy About Migrant Wave." *Chicago Tribune*, November 3, 2005. http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2005-11-03/news/0511030312_1_population-swap-migrant-latino-laborers.
- Massey, Doreen. 2005. *For Space*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Massey, Douglas, and Karen A. Pren. 2012. "Unintended Consequences of US Immigration Policy: Explaining the Post-1965 Surge from Latin America." *Population and Development Review* 38 (1): 1-29.
- Massey, Douglas, Joaquín Arango, Graeme Hugo, Ali Kouaouci, Adela Pellegrino, and J. Edward Taylor. 1993. "Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal." *Population and Development Review* 19 (3): 431-466.
- Massey, Douglas, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone. 2002. *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Mauss, Marcel. 1990. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Translated by W.D. Halls. New York: W. W. Norton.
- McClendon, Robert. 2014. "Hunt-Gibbs-Boh-Metro Wins \$546 Million Airport Contract: Live Coverage." *Times-Picayune*. August 7, 2014. http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2014/08/firms_battle_for_546_million_a.html.
- McKay, Deirdre. 2007. "'Sending Dollars Shows Feeling' – Emotions and Economies in Filipino Migration." *Mobilities* 2 (2): 175-194.
- McQuaid, John. 1991. "Bulk of New Orleans' Latin Population Born From Honduran Migration." *Times Picayune*, February 24, 1991.
- Meckler, Laura. 2014. "Young Migrants Tax System." *Wall Street Journal*, June 19, 2014. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/young-migrants-tax-system-1403222116>.
- Menjívar, Cecilia, and Shannon Drysdale Walsh. 2017. "The Architecture of Femicide: The State, Inequalities, and Everyday Gender Violence in Honduras." *Latin American Research Review* 52 (2): 221-240.
- Milian, Claudia. 2017. "Extremely Latin, XOXO: Notes on LatinX." *Cultural Dynamics* 29 (3): 121-140.
- Mintz, Sidney W. 1985. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Viking.

- Miraftab, Faranak. 2016. *Global Heartland: Displaced Labor, Transnational Lives and Local Placemaking*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Mitchell, J. Clyde. 1969a. *Social Networks in Urban Situations: Analyses of Personal Relationships in Central African Towns*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- . 1969. "Structural Plurality, Urbanization, and Labour Circulation in Southern Rhodesia." In *Migration*, edited by J.A. Jackson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mizell-Nelson, Michael. 2014. "Interracial Unionism Meets the Open Shop Drive: African American Membership in the Carmen's Union, 1918-1926." In *Working in the Big Easy: The History and Politics of Labor in New Orleans*, edited by Thomas J. Adams and Steve Striffler, 69-98. Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press.
- Morgen, Sandra, and Jeff Maskovsky. 2003. "The Anthropology of Welfare 'Reform': New Perspectives on US Urban Poverty in the Post-Welfare Era." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32: 315-338.
- Morrice, Stephanie. 2013. "Heartache and Hurricane Katrina: Recognizing the Influence of Emotion in Post-Disaster Return Decisions." *Area* 45 (1): 33-39.
- Mullings, Leith, and Alaka Wali. 2001. *Stress and Resilience: The Social Context of Reproduction in Central Harlem*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.
- Murga, Aurelia Lorena. 2014. "Organizing and Rebuilding a Nuevo New Orleans: Day Labor Organizing in the Big Easy." In *Working in the Big Easy: The History and Politics of Labor in New Orleans*, edited by Thomas J. Adams and Steve Striffler, 211-228. Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press.
- Myrdal, Gunnar. 1957. *Rich Lands and Poor: The Road to World Prosperity*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Nader, Laura. 1972. "Up the Anthropologist: Perspectives Gained from Studying Up." In *Reinventing Anthropology*, edited by Dell Hymes, 248-311. New York: Vintage Books.
- Negi, Nalini Junko, Alice Cepeda, and Avelardo Valdez. 2013. "Crime Victimization Among Immigrant Latino Day Laborers in Post-Katrina New Orleans." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 35 (3): 354-369.

- Negroponte, Diana Villiers. 2014. "The Surge in Unaccompanied Children from Central America: A Humanitarian Crisis at our Border." *Brookings Institution*, July 2, 2014. [https:// www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2014/07/02/the-surge-in-unaccompanied-children-from-central-america-a-humanitarian-crisis-at-our-border/](https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2014/07/02/the-surge-in-unaccompanied-children-from-central-america-a-humanitarian-crisis-at-our-border/).
- Ngai, Mae. 2004. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Nobles III, Wilborn P. "New Orleans Youth Rally at Immigration Office for Undocumented Parents." *Times Picayune*, May 12, 2017. http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2017/05/new_orleans_youth_rally_at_im.html.
- Nunez, Chanda M. 2014. "'Just Like Ole' Mammy Used to Make': The History of the New Orleans Praline Woman." In *Working in the Big Easy: The History and Politics of Labor in New Orleans*, edited by Thomas J. Adams and Steve Striffler, 163-190. Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press.
- Nyamnjoh, Francis B. 2015. "Incompleteness: Frontier Africa and the Currency of Conviviality." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 52 (3): 253-270.
- Office of Refugee Resettlement. 2017. "Unaccompanied Alien Children Released to Sponsors by State." June 30, 2017. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/unaccompanied-alien-children-released-to-sponsors-by-state>.
- Orrenius, Pia M., and Medline Zavodny. 2015. "The Impact of E-Verify Mandates on Labor Market Outcomes." *Southern Economic Journal* 81 (4): 947-959.
- Overing, Joanna, and Alan Passes. 2000. *The Anthropology of Love and Anger: The Aesthetics of Conviviality in Native Amazonia*. New York: Routledge.
- Ong, Aihwa. 1987. *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women in Malaysia*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- . 1996. "Cultural Citizenship as Subject-Making: Immigrants Negotiate Racial and Cultural Boundaries in the United States." *Current Anthropology* 37 (5): 737-762.
- Ordóñez, Juan Thomas. 2015. *Jornalero: Being a Day Laborer in the USA*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Orozco, Manuel, and Michelle Lapointe. 2004. "Mexican Hometown Associations and Development Opportunities." *Journal of International Affairs* 57 (2): 31-51.

- Paap, Kris. 2006. *Working Construction: Why White Working-Class Men Put Themselves – and the Labor Movement – In Harm’s Way*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Perry, Andre. 2016. “The New Orleans Youth Index.” *The Data Center*, December 14, 2016. https://www.datacenterresearch.org/reports_analysis/the-new-orleans-youth-index-2016/.
- Perry, Marc D. 2015. “Who Dat?: Race and Its Conspicuous Consumption in Post-Katrina New Orleans.” *City & Society* 27 (1): 92-114.
- Pessar, Patricia R., and Sarah J. Mahler. 2003. “Transnational Migration: Bringing Gender In.” *International Migration Review* 37 (3): 812-846.
- Phillips, James J. 2015. *Honduras in Dangerous Times: Resistance and Resilience*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Pilkington, Ed, and David Smith. 2017. “Trump Warned: Send Help or Risk Making Puerto Rico Crisis ‘Your Katrina.’” *The Guardian*, September 26, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/sep/26/trump-puerto-rico-crisis-massive-debt>.
- Pine, Adrienne. 2008. *Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Pink, Sarah, Dylan Tutt, Andrew Dainty, and Alistair Gibb. 2010. “Ethnographic Methodologies for Construction Research: Knowing, Practice and Interventions.” *Building Research & Information* 38 (6): 647-659.
- Plascencia, Luis. F.B. 2012. *Disenchanted Citizenship: Mexican Migrants and the Boundaries of Belonging*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Pope, Paul James, and Terence M. Garrett. 2012. “America’s *Homo Sacer*: Examining U.S. Deportation Hearings and the Criminalization of Illegal Immigration.” *Administration & Society* 45: 167-187.
- Popescu, Gabriel. 2012. *Bordering and Ordering the Twenty-First Century: Understanding Borders*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Powell, Lawrence. 2013. *The Accidental City: Improvising New Orleans*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rainey, Richard. 2017a. “Legal Aid for Louisiana Poor on Chopping Block in Trump’s Budget.” *Times Picayune*, April 3, 2017. http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2017/04/legal_aid_for_louisiana_poor_o.html.

- . 2017b. “Jefferson Parish a Leader in Deportations, but Sanctuary City Row Worries Sheriff.” *Times Picayune*, March 31, 2017.
http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2017/03/could_sanctuary_city_fight_cau.html.
- Ratha, Dilip, Sanket Mohapatra, and Ani Silwal. 2011. “Honduras.” Migration and Remittances Unit, World Bank.
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/Honduras.pdf>.
- Ravitz, Jessica. 2010. “Vietnamese Fishermen in Gulf Fight to Not Get Lost in Translation.” *CNN*, June 25, 2010.
<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/US/06/24/vietnamese.fishermen.gulf.coast/>.
- Reed, Merl E. 1972. “Lumberjacks and Longshoremen: The I.W.W. in Louisiana.” *Labor History* 13 (1): 41-59.
- Regis, Helen A. 2001. “Blackness and the Politics of Memory in the New Orleans Second Line.” *American Ethnologist* 28 (4): 752-777.
- Reichman, Daniel R. 2011. *The Broken Village: Coffee, Migration, and Globalization in Honduras*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Rivera, Lirio Gutiérrez, Iselin Åsedotter Strønen, and Margit Ystanes. 2017. “Coming of Age in the Penal System: Neoliberalism, ‘Mano Dura’ and the Reproduction of ‘Racialised’ Inequality in Honduras.” In *The Social Life of Economic Inequalities in Contemporary Latin America*, edited by Margit Ystanes and Iselin Åsedotter Strønen, 205-228. Bergen: University of Bergen Press.
- Robben, Antonius C.G.M. 1996. “Ethnographic Seduction, Transference, and Resistance in Dialogues about Terror and Violence in Argentina.” *Ethos* 24 (1): 71-106.
- Rodriguez, Robyn Magalit. 2010. *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Rodriguez, Sophia, and Timothy Monreal. 2017. “‘This State Is Racist...’: Policy Problematicization and Undocumented Youth Experiences in the New Latino South.” *Educational Policy* 31 (6): 764-800.
- Roediger, David. 2005. *Working Towards Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey From Ellis Island to the Suburbs*. New York: Basic Books.
- Roitman, Janet. 2013. *Anti-Crisis*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Kindle edition.

- Rolston, Jessica Smith. 2014. *Mining Coal and Undermining Gender: Rhythms of Work and Family in the American West*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Roseberry, William. 1989. *Anthropologies and Histories: Essays in Culture, History, and Political Economy*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- . 1997. "Marx and Anthropology." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26: 25-46.
- Rosenberg, Mica, and Dan Levine. 2017. "How Trump's Immigration Crackdown Could Slow Flood-Hit Houston's Efforts to Rebuild." *Reuters*, August 30, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-storm-harvey-immigration/how-trumps-immigration-crackdown-could-slow-flood-hit-houstons-efforts-to-rebuild-idUSKCN1BA2M0>.
- Rouse, Roger. 1995. "Thinking through Transnationalism: Notes on the Cultural Politics of Class Relations in the Contemporary United States." *Public Culture* 7 (2): 353-402.
- Ryo, Emily. 2016. "Detained: A Study of Immigration Bond Hearings." *Law & Society Review* 50 (1): 117-152.
- Sacchetti, Maria, and Ed O'Keefe. 2017. "ICE Data Shows Half of Immigrants Arrested in Raids Had Traffic Convictions or No Record." *Washington Post*, April 28, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/ice-data-shows-half-of-immigrants-arrested-in-raids-had-traffic-convictions-or-no-record/2017/04/28/81ff7284-2c59-11e7-b605-33413c691853_story.html?utm_term=.65179eeb5f56.
- Samenow, Jason. 2017. "As Hurricane Maria Slowly Pulls Away from Puerto Rico, Approaches Dominican Republic, Turks and Caicos." *Washington Post*, September 21, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/capital-weather-gang/wp/2017/09/20/as-maria-slowly-pulls-away-from-puerto-rico-the-u-s-east-coast-watches-and-awaits-its-next-move/?utm_term=.a68b023da2f5.
- Sassen, Saskia. 1991. *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- . 2006. "The Repositioning of Citizenship and Alienage: Emergent Subjects and Spaces for Politics." *Globalizations* 2 (1): 79-94.
- Sastry, Narayan. 2009. "Tracing the Effects of Hurricane Katrina on the Population of New Orleans: The Displaced New Orleans Residents Pilot Study." *Social Methods Research* 38 (1): 171-196.
- Sayre, Katherine. 2013. "Home Depot in Mid-City New Orleans to Close in November." *Times Picayune*, August 13, 2013. http://www.nola.com/business/index.ssf/2013/08/home_depot_in_mid-city_new_orl.html.

- . 2014. “Banana Giant Chiquita Returning Shipping Operations to Port of New Orleans After Four Decades Away.” *Times Picayune*, May 14, 2014. http://www.nola.com/business/index.ssf/2014/05/banana_giant_chiquita_returnin.html.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 1992. *Death Without Weeping: Everyday Violence in Brazil*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Scherer, Michael. 2014. “Obama in Political Bind over Unaccompanied Immigrant Minors.” *Time*, July 8, 2014. <http://time.com/2966469/obama-immigration-unaccompanied-minors/>.
- Schneider, Aaron, and Saru Jayaraman. 2014. “Ascriptive Segmentation Between Good and Bad Jobs: New Orleans Restaurants and Construction Workers.” In *Working in the Big Easy: The History and Politics of Labor in New Orleans*, edited by Thomas J. Adams and Steve Striffler, 229-264. Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press.
- Sennett, Richard. 2008. *The Craftsman*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Sisk, Blake, and Carl L. Bankston III. 2014. “Hurricane Katrina, A Construction Boom, and A New Labor Force: Latino Immigrants and the New Orleans Construction Industry, 2000 and 2006–2010.” *Population Research and Policy Review* 33 (3): 309-334.
- Sladkova, Jana. 2013. “Stratification of Undocumented Migrant Journeys: Honduran Case.” *International Migration* 54 (1): 84-99.
- Sluyter, Andrew, Case Watkins, James P. Chaney, and Annie M. Gibson. 2015. *Hispanic and Latino New Orleans: Immigration and Identity Since the Eighteenth Century*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. Kindle edition.
- Smith, C. Wayne, and J. Tom Cothren. 1999. *Cotton: Origin, History, Technology, and Production*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Solnit, Rebecca, and Rebecca Snedeker, eds. *Unfathomable City: A New Orleans Atlas*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Soluri, John. 2005. *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Soni, Saket. 2017. “Post-Hurricane Rebuilding Are Done By Undocumented Workers – And They Need Protection.” *Los Angeles Times*, October 12, 2017. <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-soni-hurricane-recovery-undocumented-immigrants-20171012-story.html>.

- Soysal, Levent. 2003. "Labor to Culture: Writing Turkish Migration to Europe." *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102 (2/3): 491-508.
- Spain, Daphne. 1979. "Race Relations and Residential Segregation in New Orleans: Two Centuries of Paradox." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 441: 82-96.
- Sparks, Evan. "The Philanthropy of the Banana King." *Philosophy Roundtable*, http://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/topic/excellence_in_philanthropy/the_philanthropy_of_the_banana_king.
- State of Louisiana. 2016. "Contractors Licensing Law and Rules and Regulations. United States Department of Labor. 2017. http://www.lslbc.louisiana.gov/wp-content/uploads/blue_book.pdf.
- Stiglitz, Joseph. 2002. *Globalization and Its Discontents*. London: Allen Lane.
- Stoler, Ann L. 2006. *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- . 2009. *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Striffler, Steve. 2002. *In the Shadows of State and Capital: The United Fruit Company, Popular Struggle, and Agrarian Restructuring in Ecuador, 1900-1995*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- . 2005. *Chicken: The Dangerous Transformation of America's Favorite Food*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Striffler, Steve, and Mark Moberg, eds. 2003. *Banana Wars: Power, Production, and History in the Americas*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Stuesse, Angela. 2010. "What's 'Justice and Dignity' Got to Do with It?: Migrant Vulnerability, Corporate Complicity, and the State." *Human Organization* 69 (1): 19-30.
- Sublette, Ned. 2008. *The World That Made New Orleans: From Spanish Silver to Congo Square*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press.
- Sykes, Andrew J.M. 1969. "Navvies: Their Work Attitudes". *Sociology* 3 (1): 21-35.
- Taussig, Michael. 1992. *The Nervous System*. New York: Routledge.
- Terkel, Studs. 1972. *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do*. New York: Ballantine Books.

- Terrio, Susan J. 2015. *Whose Child Am I?: Unaccompanied, Undocumented Children in U.S. Immigration Custody*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- The Data Center. 2017. "Who Lives in New Orleans and Metro Parishes Now?" June 30, 2017. <https://www.datacenterresearch.org/data-resources/who-lives-in-new-orleans-now/>.
- Thomas, Lynnell T. 2012. "'People Want to See What Happened': Treme, Televisual Tourism, and the Racial Remapping of Post-Katrina New Orleans." *Television & New Media* 20 (10): 1-12.
- Thompson, Paul, and Chris Smith. 2009. "Waving, Not Drowning: Explaining and Exploring the Resilience of Labor Process Theory." *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal* 21 (3): 253-262.
- Thompson, Shirley Elizabeth. 2009. *Exiles at Home: The Struggle to Become American in Creole New Orleans*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Trethewey, Natasha. 2010. *Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 1991. "Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness." In *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, edited by Richard G. Fox, 17-44. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- . 1995. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston, MA: Beacon.
- . 2003. *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Trujillo-Pagan, Nicole. 2012. "Neoliberal Disasters and Racialisation: The Case of Post-Katrina Latino Labour." *Race & Class* 53 (4): 54-66.
- United States Department of Labor. 2017. "What is 'Misclassification'?" <https://www.dol.gov/featured/misclassification/index.htm>.
- Valenzuela, Abel. 2003. "Day Labor Work." *Annual Review of Sociology* 29: 307-333.
- Vigneswaran, Darshan. 2014. "Protection and Conviviality: Community Policing in Johannesburg." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 17 (4): 471-486.
- Vine, David. 2014. "When a Country Becomes a Military Base: Blowback and Insecurity in Honduras, the World's Most Dangerous Place." In *Bioinsecurity and Vulnerability*, edited by Lesley A. Sharp and Nancy N. Chen, 25-44. Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press.
- . 2015. *Base Nation: How US Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the*

- World*. New York: Metropolitan Books.
- Vlach, John Michael. 1976. "The Shotgun House: An African Architectural Legacy: Part II." *Pioneer America* 8 (2): 57-70.
- Wacquant, Loïc. 1995. "Pugs at Work: Bodily Capital and Bodily Labour Among Professional Boxers." *Body & Society* 1 (1): 65-93.
- Waddington, Chris. 2012. "Epic Life of the New Orleans 'Banana King' Unfolds in a Sweeping New Biography." *Times Picayune*, June 1, 2012.
http://www.nola.com/books/index.ssf/2012/06/epic_life_of_the_new_orleans_b.html.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2004. *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Wallerstein, Michael, and Bruce Western. 2000. "Unions in Decline? What Has Changed and Why." *Annual Review of Political Science* 3: 355-377.
- Walter, Nicholas, Philippe Bourgois, and H. H. Margarita Loinaz. 2004. "Masculinity and Undocumented Labor Migration: Injured Latino Day Laborers in San Francisco." *Social Science & Medicine* 59 (6): 1159-1168.
- Warhurst, Christopher, Thompson, Paul, and Dennis Nickson. 2008. "Labour Process Theory: Putting the Materialism Back into the Meaning of Service Work." In *Service Work: Critical Perspectives*, edited by Cameron L. MacDonald and Marek Korczynski, 91-112. New York: Routledge.
- Weber, Max. 1992 (1930). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Routledge Classics.
- Weil, David. 1992. "Building Safety: The Role of Construction Unions in the Enforcement of OSHA." *Journal of Labor Research* 13 (1): 121-132.
- Wenger, Etienne. 1998. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Werbner, Pnina. 1990. *The Migration Process: Capital, Gifts, and Offerings among British Pakistanis*. New York: Berg.
- Werbner, Richard P. 1984. "The Manchester School in South-Central Africa." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 13: 157-185.
- White House. 2015. Executive Order. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/01/27/EO-use-project-labor-agreements-federal-construction-projects>.

- Wiley, James. 2008. *The Banana: Empires, Trade Wars, and Globalization*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Willen, Sarah S. 2007. "Toward a Critical Phenomenology of 'Illegality': State Power, Criminalization, and Abjectivity among Undocumented Migrant Workers in Tel Aviv, Israel." *International Migration* 45 (3): 8-38.
- Williams, Quintin, Jr., Michele Ochsner, Elizabeth Marshall, Louis Kimmel, and Carmen Martino. 2010. "The Impact of a Peer-Led Participatory Health and Safety Training Program for Latino Day Laborers in Construction." *Journal of Safety Research* 41 (3): 253-261.
- Willis, Paul. 1977. *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wilson, Tamar Diana. 2005. *Subsidizing Capitalism: Brickmakers on the U.S.-Mexican Border*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Winston, James E. 1924. "Notes on the Economic History of New Orleans, 1803-1836." *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 11 (2): 200-226.
- Wolf, Eric. 1982. *Europe and the People Without History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wolkowitz, Carol. 2006. *Bodies at Work*. London: Sage.
- Worby, Eric. 2010. "Address Unknown: The Temporality of Displacement and the Ethics of Disconnection among Zimbabwean Migrants in Johannesburg." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 36 (2): 417-431.
- Workers Defense Project. 2013. "Build a Better Texas: Construction Working Conditions in the Lone Star State." Austin: Workers Defense Project in collaboration with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at the University of Texas at Austin.
- Workplace Justice Project 2017. "Field of Practice: Workplace Justice Project." <http://www.loyno.edu/lawclinic/field-practice-workplace-justice>.
- Zaloom, Caitlin. 2006. *Out of the Pits: Traders and Technology from Chicago to London*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Zeitlyn, David. 2012. "Anthropology In and Of the Archives: Possible Futures and Contingent Pasts. Archives as Anthropological Surrogates." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41: 461-480.

Zhou, Min, and Carl L. Bankston, III. 1994. "Social Capital and the Adaptation of the Second Generation: The Case of Vietnamese Youth in New Orleans." *International Migration Review* 28 (4): 821-845.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2008. *Violence*. New York: Picador.

Zolniski, Christian. 2006. *Janitors, Street Vendors, and Activists: The Lives of Mexican Immigrants in Silicon Valley*. Berkeley: University of California Press.