

connections that have been physically carried in the bodies of people moving back and forth between these places, in the social remittances that the migration experience has brought to the residents of these transborder communities in all of their sites, and through the transnational social fields of power linked to commercial agriculture, U.S. immigration policy, and the recruitment of workers.



CHAPTER 4

Transborder Labor Lives

HARVESTING, HOUSECLEANING,

GARDENING, AND CHILDCARE

This chapter focuses on the ways in which the U.S. and Mexican economies have become integrated since World War II largely as a result of ongoing economic globalization. Globalization not only has affected the kinds of work and opportunities available in rural Oaxaca, Mexico, for people in communities like Teotitlán del Valle and San Agustín Atenango, but also has resulted in new labor markets for immigrant workers in the United States, markets that are segmented by gender and race. The chapter begins by linking the specific experiences of two Mixtec migrant workers, José Luis García López (introduced in chapter 2) and Mariano Bautista, to a general pattern of Mixtec migration through the twentieth century that is characterized by continuous involvement with labor contractors who regulate when and where Mixtecos have migrated, even into the United States. This is contrasted with the experiences of Catalina García and Emiliano Gómez, which are more typical of a different pattern of migration seen among Valley Zapotec migrants. That pattern involves more direct movement into the United States and insertion into the service sector, providing somewhat more stable work conditions. The next section lays out how the integration of commercial agriculture in Mexico and the United States and the creation of a consumer market for year-round fresh vegetables and fruits have affected the migration patterns and experiences of Mixteco workers such as Mariano Bautista. To illuminate the experience of workers such as Catalina García, the final section discusses the development of a labor market for domestic work in the United States that targets immigrant women to do caring and cleaning work.

The link between the development of certain types of jobs in industry, the service sector, and commercial agriculture and the creation of mobile and flexible migrant labor forces can be seen clearly in the bracero program, launched during World War II. As both a labor and immigration policy, this program was a cornerstone in establishing Mexican migrant labor and residency patterns in the United States beginning in the 1940s. Nevertheless, although Zapotec migrants from towns like Teotitlán del Valle and Mixtec migrants from communities like San Agustín Atenango both participated in the bracero program as contracted laborers, other than this shared experience, the trajectories of their migration and the kinds of work experiences they have had both within Mexico and in the United States are often different. While Zapotec migrants from other communities in the valleys of Oaxaca did work as agricultural workers in Sinaloa and Sonora, as many Mixtec workers did, by the late 1970s and early 1980s they had moved out of agriculture into the service sector, primarily in the Los Angeles area.

Men from the Zapotec community of Teotitlán del Valle were recruited into the bracero program beginning in 1944, when the *presidente municipal* publicized the program. For many in the community, this program was the first opportunity to earn substantial cash income. Braceros recall buying their first pairs of shoes and coming home with tailored pants that were the envy of all. Estimates of the numbers of male migrants to the United States in the late 1940s were about 25 percent of the male population over fifteen, or about two hundred of the eight hundred males in the community (Stephen 1991: 110–11). Approximately 25 percent of the households in Teotitlán continued to send one or more workers to the United States on an annual basis throughout the duration of the bracero program, that is, until 1964. By that time, many had established permanent footholds in a number of areas, including Chicago, Los Angeles, and even New Mexico. Those who stayed in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s were often able to secure legal residence. After the bracero program ended, even more people went as undocumented workers, staying with their established relatives.

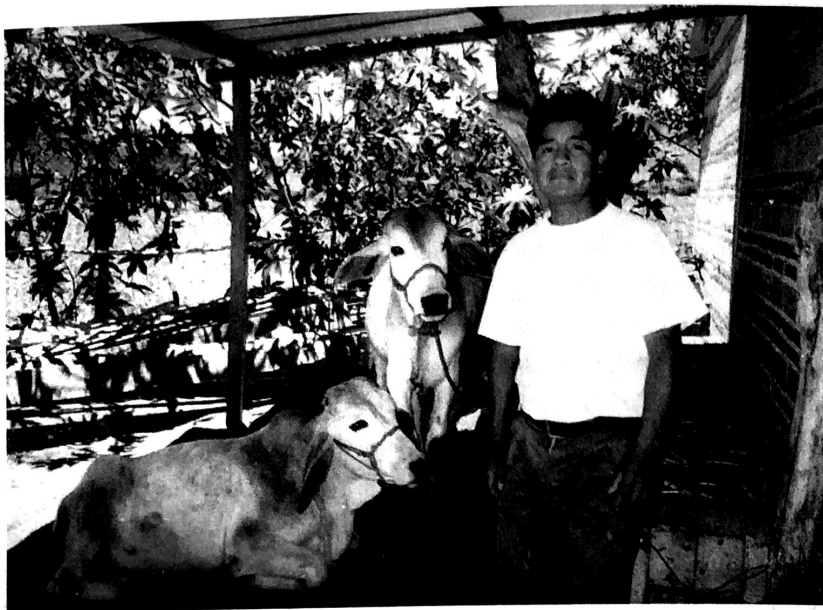
Cash earned through the continuous labor of braceros and then undocumented workers in the United States served as an important part of the process that allowed some members of this weaving community to

become entrepreneurs and merchants in Oaxaca, on the border in the markets of Tijuana and Rosarita, and in some cases in the United States. Kinship and relationships of *compadrazgo*, or ritual kinship, were quite significant in recruiting young people to work for those who had established themselves on the border with stores in Tijuana, Ensenada, Rosarito, and in a few locations in the United States. Often grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and godchildren went to work for older relatives or their godparents to help out in running a small family business or, in the case of girls, giving a hand with domestic work or childcare.

About twenty-five people from Teotitlán del Valle are believed to have obtained legal U.S. residency after the bracero program, a few moving to Colorado and others to California, primarily to Santa Ana (Lopez and Runsten 2004: 261). These earlier legal residents did not seem to have much influence on migration to the United States from Teotitlán. A steady migrant flow from Teotitlán to the United States did not come into full swing until the mid-1980s. Many of these people began by first going to visit relatives and *paisanos* (fellow community members) established in the Tijuana area and then went up to Santa Ana, where some of the early legal residents had settled. The successful expansion of the weaving industry for tourism and export in the early 1980s (see Stephen 2005b) provided money to fund people's journeys north. Most went on their own to Tijuana, used a local coyote to cross over with few problems, and then landed with relatives or friends in the Santa Ana area, at least initially. Most ended up working in the service industry in the Santa Ana area (López and Runsten 2004: 254).

Emiliano Gómez comes running through the door of his family compound. A small band of sweat is visible under his broad-brimmed hat. His face breaks into a grin as he explains why he is late. A neighbor's refrigerator was broken and he had to go and fix it for them. A small-scale farmer, weaver, and appliance repairman, Emiliano earns money in as many ways as he can in his community of Teotitlán del Valle in the central valleys of Oaxaca (see Stephen 2005b). Once he takes off his hat, Emiliano sits down on a wooden chair next to mine. He is still warm in his white cotton t-shirt and jeans but begins to cool down as we start to talk in the night air.

Emiliano Gómez went to the United States for the first time when he was nineteen years old. Prior to that he had been working at home with his parents as a weaver, producing high-quality textiles for a local mer-



11. Emiliano Gómez in Teotitlán del Valle.

chant who sold them in the United States. Emiliano worked for a total of four years in the United States, living there on two different occasions. When he returned to Mexico for good in 1990, he remained in Teotitlán; he had no desire to go back to the United States. He has a wife and three children. He also has a house with an interior patio filled with grass, flowers, and fruit trees, one of the nicest patios in the community—a reflection of his days as a gardener in the States, a job he found after two other disagreeable ones. He told me his story during the summers of 2001 and 2002 as part of many other conversations.

After a stay in a California labor camp near Santa Ana, Emiliano responded to a local radio ad looking for someone to clean houses and garden in the San Bernardino area. It turned out that the person running the ad was from Teotitlán del Valle. For three years he lived with her family in what turned out to be a very mixed experience. Emiliano described this work experience to me in 2002, beginning with his phone call in response to the radio ad.

I spoke to the woman on the other end. “What kind of work is it?” I asked her.

“Well,” she said, “I need someone who can clean up the house for me, who can tend the garden, and do other work around the house.”

“Ok,” I told the woman. “I can do this work. If you give me this job then I will come right over to your house.”

“Well,” she said to me, “I need someone who will live here, not someone who will come and go. I want someone who will be here in the house all the time.”

“Ok,” I responded. “That’s fine.”

When I got back to the house where I was staying with this guy from Teotitlán, I told him I had gotten a job. I told him the address and asked him if he could take me there. He knew the whole area. The job was in San Bernardino on Arriaga Street. He took me there.

When we got there I saw that the woman whom I had talked to on the phone was from Teotitlán. She was an older woman, about fifty-five years old. Her name was Marina Alavez. I stayed with this señora, and she told me what I had to do. She told me I could stay with them. She had two daughters and a son living with her. The very next day she took me to work to go clean. She and her daughter took me to clean houses. The señora liked how I worked and she told me I could stay.

They bought me shoes and some pants so that I had something to wear. I didn’t have anything. She bought me a towel and other things. They gave me a room to live in that was a garage that was closed up, and there were two beds in it. That was where I stayed.

I stayed with them for a long time. I think she was paying me about \$120 per month. I had already suffered quite a bit in the United States. I was afraid to leave. I thought that if I left, then I wouldn’t be able to find my way back. A lot of people invited me to go to other things.

“Come on,” they would say. “Why don’t you come and pick strawberries with us? If you do that you can earn \$300 per week or every two weeks. In one month you can earn \$800 or \$600 picking strawberries.” But I wasn’t sure about that. I felt more secure living with these people. It’s true that \$120 per month is very little. But I felt secure because I had food and a place to live. I didn’t have to pay for anything. At least the \$120 was mine to keep. Once I had been there for two months, they paid me \$150 per month. After three months they paid me \$200 per month, and they paid me that rate for about one year.

During the second year I lived with them, I learned how to drive. They taught me how to drive the vehicles they had. They had one pickup truck, a larger truck, and two small cars. I would take the cars out and fill up the gas tanks. They would tell me, “Today there isn’t much work here. Take the cars and fill up the tanks.” I had access to everything they had. I could watch tv

with them, I ate with them. We made our meals together. They taught me how to cook. They taught me how to make tortillas. They taught me a lot of different things. When I had more confidence, they took me to Disneyland. They also took me to Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and other places. I couldn't go to these places alone because I didn't know how to get there. Once I started to drive, I knew how to get around more. I would go to the store for them.

I was living with them when my brother Jorge came and later my other younger brother, Porfirio. I came back to Teotitlán in 1986. I lived in that house for three years. My brothers stayed there. After I left, they didn't like living there. They didn't like how the señora treated them. Sometimes she would get mad and she would yell at us if she didn't like how we did the work. Sometimes we would get really tired of all the pressure she put on us. She was getting older and she got mad more easily. It seemed like with every day that passed she got more and more mad and difficult. They left because they couldn't put up with her any more.

Emiliano went back to Teotitlán for several months. The first time he told me about his time working in California he skipped smoothly from one job to the next, narrating his return in early 1987. One year later, he invited me back to his house and told me that he had to add something to his story. What he added were two very painful events he had experienced in the United States. He found it difficult to share them with me but felt it was important for me to know. These occurrences were the chief reasons he never wanted to return to the United States. After returning in 1987 and working briefly, he and his brother were badly wounded in a robbery in a park. Having no health insurance attached to their jobs cleaning houses, they became liable for huge hospital and physical therapy bills. The family they had worked for and lived with for years did nothing to help them with their medical costs. Emiliano recounted this period as follows:

EMILIANO: When I came back in 1987, on the second of January, my brother Jorge went out on his bike. He had bought the bike about a month before. On that day he was late and as his older brother, I felt like it was my responsibility to go out and see what was keeping him. When I got to where he was in a park I saw that some guys had taken away his bicycle. I stood in front of them and said that it was his bicycle. They wanted the bicycle. I pulled the bike back from them. When we had recovered the bike from them, one of them pulled out a knife. He wanted to fight with us.

"Come on. Let's go." I told my brother.

There were two of them behind me. They were not going to let us leave. We were going to have to face them. I had only my fists and both of them had knives drawn at that point. I learned a little bit about fighting when I was a kid. I remembered that the first thing I had to do was to disarm them, to get rid of the knives. I disarmed one and there was still one more. When it was clear that we might win because we knew how to knock the knives out of their hands, some other guys who were parked in a car on the other side of the street started firing a gun. I heard the sound of a shot in the air. Then I felt a great pain and heat in my legs. I felt five bullets. Then I heard my brother.

"I can't feel my feet," he cried. He had fallen down. "I can't feel my feet," he screamed.

"Don't move," I said to him. I was on the ground at that point too. "Stay quiet," I said very softly.

We lay there very quiet for some time. When they saw that we didn't move at all, then maybe they thought we were dead. They ran to their car and then they sped off.

I was able to get up and sort of walk. I had bullet wounds, too, but I carried my brother from the park to the house where we were living. By the time we got there, his pants were totally soaked with blood. He couldn't feel his feet at all. He kept saying, "I can't feel my feet." When we got to the house we called an ambulance and the police. They took us in an ambulance to the county hospital. They wanted to take out all the bullets. They tried to take out the bullets, but some of the bullets were lodged in the bone. They were going to have to operate on both of us.

They put me in a separate room from my brother. I was in the hospital for eight days. My brother stayed for another three. After I had been out of the hospital for about five days, they sent me a list of all the things they had done and all the materials they had used to take care of us in the hospital. My bill was for \$20,000 and Jorge's was for another \$20,000. I thought, "Where am I going to get \$40,000 to pay for both of our bills?" I had never even seen that much money. I couldn't walk without crutches and my brother couldn't walk at all. He was in a wheelchair. When he got out of the hospital I had to do everything for him. I had to bring him his food; I had to take him to the bathroom. I had to take him into the shower. It was a very hard time. He had a big cast on.

LYNN: Did your parents know what happened?

EMILIANO: No. They didn't know at the time. I spent a lot of time trying to figure what to do about the big hospital bills. I had to knock on a lot of

doors. I went to the county government to see if they could forgive my debt. This was a huge amount of money for us. We never would have been able to pay for it. They sent me to an office of the government that supports victims of crimes. It was the U.S. government. This office opened an investigation to see if we were at fault or the thieves. If it turned out that it was our fault, then we had to pay. If it turned out to be the thieves' fault, then we didn't have to pay the bill.

Months passed in this investigation. They had to ask us a lot of questions. This was very hard for me. I didn't speak English and every time we met I had to have someone translate for me. Finally after a long time, they ruled that we didn't have to pay this money and that we would be free from this debt. I spent months working and then going to this office. I had to go to court, and my brother needed a lot of physical therapy. I had to take him to physical therapy and to pay for it. This was a total nightmare for us, this time. When I came back here to Teotitlán I was pale and demoralized. I felt terrible.

Shaken, Emiliano returned again to Teotitlán in late 1987 and returned to working in the cornfields and weaving. In 1989, in order to pay for the costs involved in having a formal wedding in Teotitlán, he returned once again to the United States and worked first in a factory and then as a gardener in San Bernardino.

EMILIANO: I went back again in 1989. When I arrived I went to live with my brother Jorge. He wasn't working for that woman anymore. He had his own apartment with my youngest brother and they were both working in a factory. The boss there gave me work, and our check was about \$300 or \$350 per week. We were paying taxes.

I worked in the factory with my brothers for a little while and then I decided to change jobs. I met some guys who worked as gardeners in what they called "yardas." They worked outside taking care of people's yards. I thought maybe I could make more money doing that work than I made at the factory. They were going to pay me \$300 per week in cash. I had a driver's license and I knew how to drive. They put me in charge of a truck and a few workers. I went to work all around the Los Angeles area. We went to Long Beach, Corona, from Corona up to Anaheim, from Anaheim to Santa Ana to Orange and then from Orange I would go to Costa Mesa, Newport, and then I would return to San Bernardino. I worked from six in the morning until six in the evening and sometimes even on Sunday.

LYNN: Did you like this work?

EMILIANO: I liked this work much more because I was traveling around. I had more freedom. I enjoyed it and was able to make money. But then something else happened.

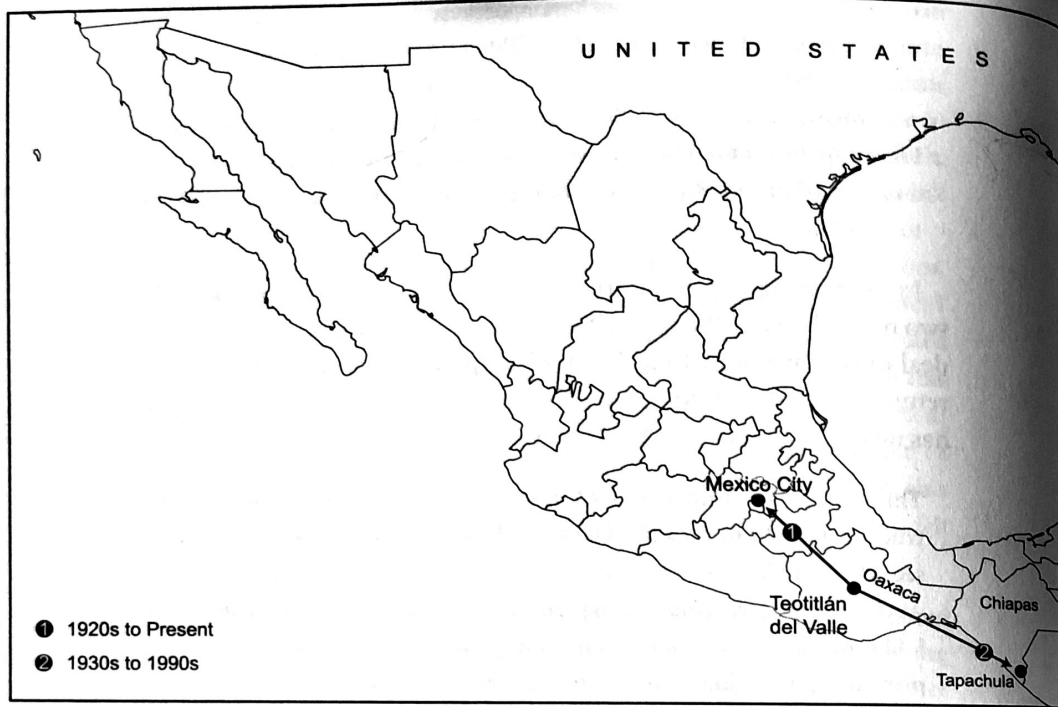
I bought a truck after a while that cost me \$3,000. I fixed it up really nice. I fixed up the motor, I bought new tires for it and I fixed up the inside. It was a 1967 Ford pickup. I was using it for my work. I was going to bring it back to Mexico.

In attempting to sell the truck, Emiliano was robbed at gunpoint by two men who stole the truck. It was eventually recovered, but had a great deal of damage done to it. He fixed it up as best he could, sold it, and returned to Teotitlán for good. His concluding remarks focus on why he has no desire to return to the United States:

This was the last time I set foot in the United States. When they stole my truck. I thought to myself, "The United States is not for me." Now you can see why I don't have any desire to return there or to work there. I am fine working here. I can make \$200 pesos a day (about US\$20), and I am happy. I like my life here. I am living much more peacefully here. Nobody is pressuring me. I don't have to work seven days a week. I am more independent. I have my own house here. I am working as a plumber and working as a weaver. I have a kitchen, beds, water. I have everything I need. We have animals, a bull, some sheep and chickens. This is plenty for me. I don't need more.

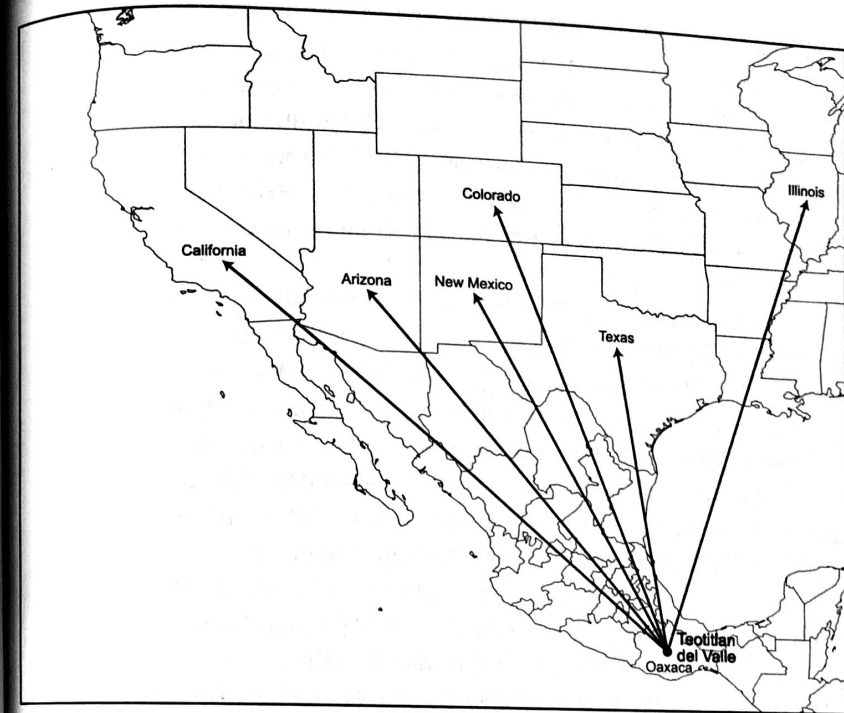
Emiliano has been living in Teotitlán since his return. His trajectory of moving from cleaning to factory work to independent gardening is fairly typical. Emiliano has been able to apply some of the skills he learned while in the United States to building up a small business in Teotitlán that offers an alternative source of income to weaving and farming. The difficult times he suffered while working in the United States underline the trying conditions faced by many Zapotec workers.

The case of Teotitlán is somewhat typical of other Zapotec patterns of migration from the central valleys of Oaxaca. Oral histories I conducted in the 1980s in Teotitlán del Valle of some of the communities' oldest male and female residents indicated that a few had migrated to Oaxaca City, Tapachula, Chiapas, and Mexico City to work following the Mexican Revolution in the 1920s and 1930s. In Chiapas men worked either on plantations or selling *paletas*, equivalent to popsicles, on the streets of Tlacolula. In Oaxaca and in Mexico City men were either household

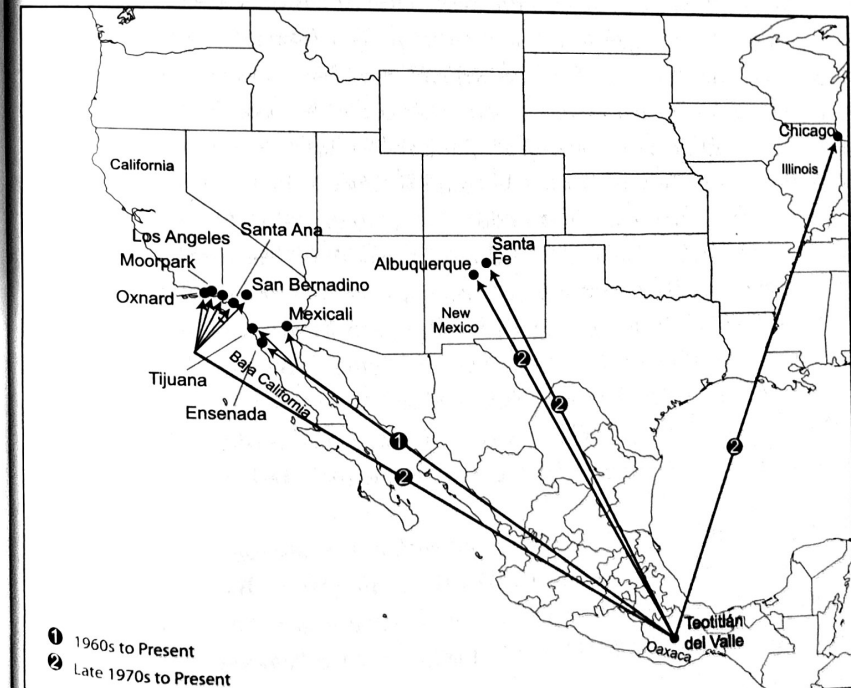


MAP 6. Teotitlán internal migration paths, 1920s to 1990s

servants or worked in construction. Women worked primarily as domestic servants for wealthy families. In his study of migration histories and experiences in twelve Oaxacan, primarily Zapotec communities, Jeffrey Cohen suggests that Oaxacan migration in the early decades of the twentieth century was marked by short-term seasonal moves to places in the region or elsewhere in Mexico (2004: 55; see also Iszavish 1988). Oral histories he collected from other Zapotec communities close to Teotitlán such as Santa Ana del Valle and Díaz Ordaz as well as from other Zapotec communities indicate similar trends (2004: 56–60). Marije Hulshof, drawing on research from several master's theses carried out in three Zapotec communities in the late 1980s, also documents significant internal migration from Zapotec communities to Tapachula. For example, in the 1930s villagers from San Bartolomé Quialana began to migrate seasonally to Tapachula, where they worked harvesting coffee, sugarcane, and, later on, cotton. Before the advent of the Pan-American Highway, men walked in small groups for up to twenty days to reach their destination (1991: 33).



MAP 7. Teotitlán del Valle migration paths during bracero program, 1944–64



MAP 8. Teotitlán del Valle migration paths to the United States and U.S.-Mexico border

Some men from valley villages such as Santa Ana del Valle, San Lucas Quiavini, Díaz Ordaz, San Miguel del Valle, Teotitlán del Valle, and San Bartolomé Quialana participated in the bracero program (Cohen 2004: 60; López and Runsten 2004: 262; Stephen 2005b: 145; Hulshof 1991: 33). In the mid-1960s, once the bracero program ended, contractors from Sinaloa and Sonora began to recruit seasonal agriculture workers from some Zapotec communities such as San Bartolomé Quialana (Hulshof 1991: 33).

In 1974, some villagers from San Bartolomé went with an acquaintance from Tlacolula to work in the cotton fields in southern California. Their numbers increased and until 1979 about eighty people worked in California agriculture. By 1980, a significant number of people had moved into restaurant work in Santa Monica and into gardening in Stanton and Santa Ana (Hulshof 1991: 35). By 1990, there were about three hundred migrants from San Bartolomé in Santa Monica, one hundred in Santa Ana and Stanton, and ten in Fresno and the state of Washington (1991: 35).

Valley Zapotecs began to migrate in significant number to the United States in the 1970s (López and Runsten 2004: 262). While the path for Teotiteco migration to the United States is closely tied to the development of craft markets on the border and the development of tourism in Tijuana, Ensenada, Rosarito, and then northward to Los Angeles, others from the central valleys began to arrive directly in Los Angeles in the 1960s. Zapotecos from the central valleys depended primarily on social and familial networks to migrate and to gain access to jobs (López and Runsten 2004: 251). In the Tlacolula region, one Zapotec-speaking coyote brought people from a number of neighboring villages to Los Angeles (López and Runsten 2004: 263). Hulshof documents migration from the community of San Pablo Huixtepec (below Zimatlán) to Monterrey, California, during the bracero program, and some stayed there after 1964. In the 1970s people from the neighboring community of Santa Inés accompanied people from San Pablo to the United States and worked in agriculture in Monterey, Fresno, Bakersfield, and as far north as Oregon. By the 1980s, however, migrants from both communities had settled into the restaurant sector of Monterey, Pacific Grove, Carmel, and Seaside (Hulshof 1991: 44).

In data that Jeffrey Cohen collected on migration in the late 1990s and early 2000s from twelve Oaxaca communities (including three that were predominantly Zapotec-speaking), a majority of migrants headed for the United States settled in southern California, with a majority (54

percent) moving into the Los Angeles area (2004: 78). People from Tlacolula and San Lucas who migrated in the mid- to late 1960s began working in the restaurant sector, often beginning as dishwashers or janitors. In time, some made it into other kitchen positions, such as prep-person, lead cook, kitchen, manager, or chef. They found jobs for other friends and family who arrived in the area as well (López and Runsten 2004: 265). Thus those from towns like Teotitlán del Valle, Tlacolula, and San Lucas who were in the service sector and in restaurant work tended to have year-round, stable positions—albeit at minimum wage. But by the 1990s, some had saved enough money to open small businesses. By 1992, the first Oaxacan restaurant was opened in Santa Monica by four brothers from San Marcos Tlapazola and another man from Tlacolula who pooled their money. By 2003 there were twenty-eight Oaxacan-owned restaurants in Los Angeles. Eighteen of them are owned by valley Zapotecs from the Tlacolula district. One is owned by a family from Teotitlán del Valle (López and Runsten 2004: 267–69). Cohen's data on migrants to the United States from the central Oaxacan valleys indicated that 48 percent were employed in the service sector, including restaurants, hotels, gas stations, and convenience stores. Only 16 percent were employed in agriculture, 14 percent in construction and unskilled labor positions, 13 percent as gardeners for private households and small landscaping firms, and 8 percent as domestic workers (2004: 79). This is consistent with the employment patterns reported by López and Runsten for Zapotec migrants in Los Angeles and by Hulshof as well (1991).

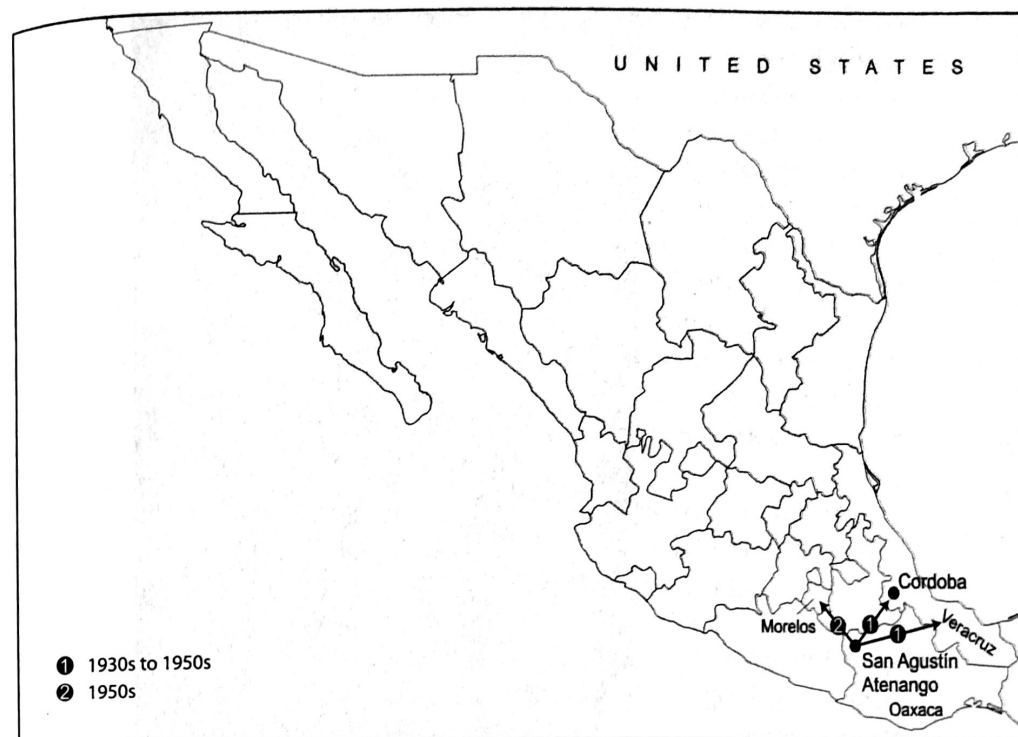
Some Zapotec migrants from Teotitlán who began working at entry-level jobs in supermarkets, drugstores, warehouses, and in factories were sometimes able to stay in the same job and be promoted until they reached managerial positions. Francisco Gutiérrez from Teotitlán, who began work stocking shelves at Long's Drugs in the early 1980s, is now a regional manager for the chain and travels throughout the West, earning a middle-class salary. His wife, Mariana, does some housecleaning but spends more time at home. She can now work less because her husband earns a good salary and has benefits that include health care. Mariana and Francisco have been legal residents since 1987. Their two children were born in Santa Ana and are U.S. citizens.

The migration of Teotitecos and others like them from the Zapotec communities of the central valleys of Oaxaca has been characterized by stable employment that in some cases led to possibilities for advancement. Felipe López and David Runsten, who made a detailed study of

Zapotec migration and employment in Los Angeles, believe that because the Zapotecs migrated directly through kin and community networks, resisted contract agricultural work in northwest Mexico, were located close to the capital city of Oaxaca, and had entrepreneurial experience through tourism, they were able to successfully integrate themselves into the service sector in the Los Angeles area and prosper in the United States (2004: 274–75). The overall migration experience of Zapotecs from Teotitlán and elsewhere in the central valleys, contrasts significantly with the experience of Mixtecos from communities like San Agustín Atenango, who have remained contracted agricultural laborers, first within Mexico and then in the United States. Some have managed to move out of agricultural labor into the service sector after five to ten years in the United States, but others have not.

While Teotitecos shared the experience of being contracted laborers under the bracero program with men from San Agustín Atenango, after the bracero program was terminated, the similarities in the two migration experiences ends. Mixtec migration has a long history. According to Moisés de la Peña, since the last part of the 1800s, workers from the Mixteca Alta worked as contracted laborers in Valle Nacional in significant numbers when the cultivation of tobacco was formalized and in smaller numbers prior to that time in cotton (1950: 153). At the same time the development of coffee cultivation in Córdoba and Orizana, Veracruz, and sugarcane in the lowlands of Veracruz accelerated migration to that region from the Mixteca Alta.

Labor contractors, or *enganchadores*, have had a major role in the history and specific localities of Mixtec migration since the early twentieth century (López and Runsten 2004: 254). De la Peña writes about how labor contractors who were recruiting Mixtecs made verbal agreements and gave workers an advance so they could leave some money for their families while they traveled and worked (De la Peña 1950: 154; López and Runsten 2004: 255). Migrant workers began their contract in December each year and worked under contract for three to five months per year. After 1910, the number of Mixteco palm weavers doubled in an effort to increase their income (De la Peña 1950: 154). Palm weaving and seasonal migration were the primary means for the poor to try to increase their incomes. Municipalities in the Mixtec Baja region such as Juxtlahuaca and Silacayoapán were averse to migration in the first decades of the twentieth century according to de la Peña, in part because of monolingualism (1950: 155). Those who consistently migrated before the Mexican Revolution



MAP 9. San Agustín Atenango internal migration paths, 1930s to 1950s

were from Spanish-speaking “mestizoized” communities. Oral histories from San Agustín suggest that migration to the coffee and sugarcane producing regions of Veracruz probably did not begin until the 1930s. When migration did begin, workers combined contract labor in Veracruz with the weaving of palm hats and subsistence farming in corn and beans. According to one source, as early as the 1940s—coterminous with the bracero program—some ranch owners from Baja California Sur sent labor contractors to Sinaloa and Oaxaca to recruit workers: “The recruiters who went to the Mixtec villages of Oaxaca offered good jobs and health and life insurance, and they promised to return workers back home. In some of these cases transportation ended up being only one way; seldom were these workers returned home, and most promises were never kept” (López and Runsten 2004: 255).

The recruitment of men from San Agustín into the bracero program occurred in a context in which many men and some women were already migrating in regular circuits within Mexico. José Luis García López,



12. José Luis García
López relaxing in San
Agustín Atenango.

introduced in chapter 2, was born in 1936. He currently lives with his wife, daughter, daughter-in-law, and four grandchildren in San Agustín Atenango. He continues to plant corn and beans and to weave *tenates* (basket to hold tortillas) and hats out of the short local native palm tree that is used for palm products produced in the Mixteca region. José Luis worked as a contracted bracero in the United States in 1961 and again in 1963. Prior to that, he worked in Veracruz harvesting coffee and sugarcane. After being a bracero, he worked as a farm laborer in Sinaloa and Baja California with his wife and children. He has not returned to the United States, but his son is living and working in Santa Maria, California, while his wife and two children remain in San Agustín. We spoke in August of 2004. The conversation began with José Luis alone, but his daughter Margarita joined in as we switched to talking about farm labor in Mexico. She was born in 1971.

JOSÉ LUIS: I had an uncle who had a coffee ranch in Presidio, Veracruz. It belonged to him and his sister. He wasn't from here, he was from a nearby town they call Natividad. A lot of people from this community went there

to harvest coffee. Señor Pedro, his brother, and his sister, an uncle of mine whose name is Felipe and his daughter—they all went. We would go there for the coffee harvest. When it was over, we would come back here. We also harvested sugarcane there as well. The sugarcane work began in December and continued through May. The coffee harvest began in September and went until November. We would spend June, July, and August here and the rest of the time there. People went there to work every year. Some people also began to plant their own crops there as well. I went to Veracruz every year from 1945 until 1955 until I was nineteen or twenty years old. I went there for nine months a year . . . I remember that I was really young the first time I went there. The first time everyone went out to work they left me. I started to cry, and when they came back they brought me some oranges which calmed me down. I was nine years old.

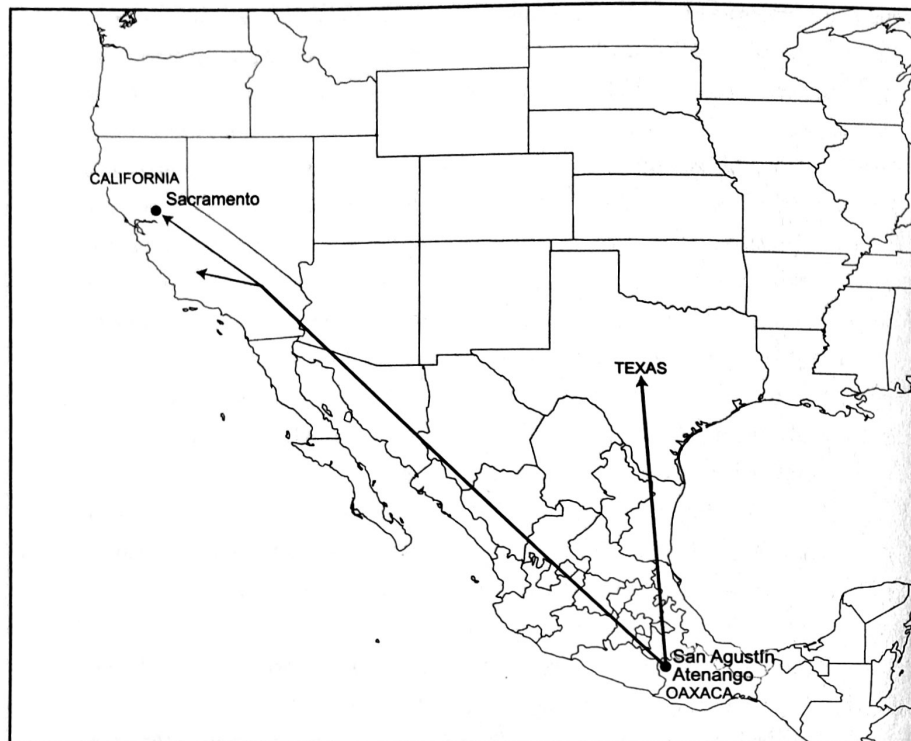
In 1955, I started going to Morelos to pick tomatoes and corn for four or five months every year. From 1955 until 1960 we went there every year to pick crops. Then the contractors started taking us to Sinaloa.

LYNN: When did you go to the United States?

JOSÉ LUIS: In 1960, I first went to the United States as a bracero. I went there for forty-five days to work in Texas. They gave me a contract to work in the United States. I went with a friend and we worked in the cotton harvest. When the contract was over, we came home. I went again in 1963 to Sacramento. The second time I was there for three months. Look, here are my papers. [He holds out a card that is labeled "Alien Laborer's Identification Card," then another card labeled "Unión de Ex-Braceros"]. This is the one they gave me recently. They are trying to get our money back for us that was taken out of our checks when we were braceros.¹

As mentioned by José Luis above, a number of families from San Agustín had been migrating for nine months a year to Veracruz to harvest coffee and cut sugarcane during the 1940s and 1950s and probably earlier. Others went to the state of Morelos in the 1950s.

In the early 1960s, at the time José Luis and others were recruited to work in cotton and other harvests in the United States through the bracero program, they were also targeted by Mexican labor contractors and encouraged to work in Sinaloa harvesting tomatoes, chiles, and other crops. Here we can see the overlap of efforts on the part of the U.S. government and Mexican growers to create a reliable migrant Mexican labor force that couldn't unionize or control its conditions of work. Mexican commercial agriculture is developing in the north, and labor



MAP 10. San Agustín Atenango bracero program migration, 1942–64

contractors are establishing themselves in the Mixteca region of Oaxaca in an effort to move workers from Veracruz to Sinaloa and Baja California. These recruiters began operating in Mixtec villages where Spanish was spoken. By the early 1960s they had worked their way into much more remote regions of the Mixteca region such as San Agustín and the district of Juchitahuaca, towns which were predominantly monolingual in Mixteco at that time. The last period of the bracero program overlaps with the beginning of significant Mixtec movement from Oaxaca northward to northwest Mexico and into the United States

In her study of health and international migration in the Mixteca Baja community of Ixpantepec Nieves, Konane Martínez documents similar patterns of migration. Drawing upon oral histories and the research of Teresa Mora Vásquez (1982), Martínez describes how migration in Nieves in the 1970s included both temporary migration of heads of households and often dependents who migrated seasonally and returned home as well as permanent migration. Mora Vásquez carried out a survey in

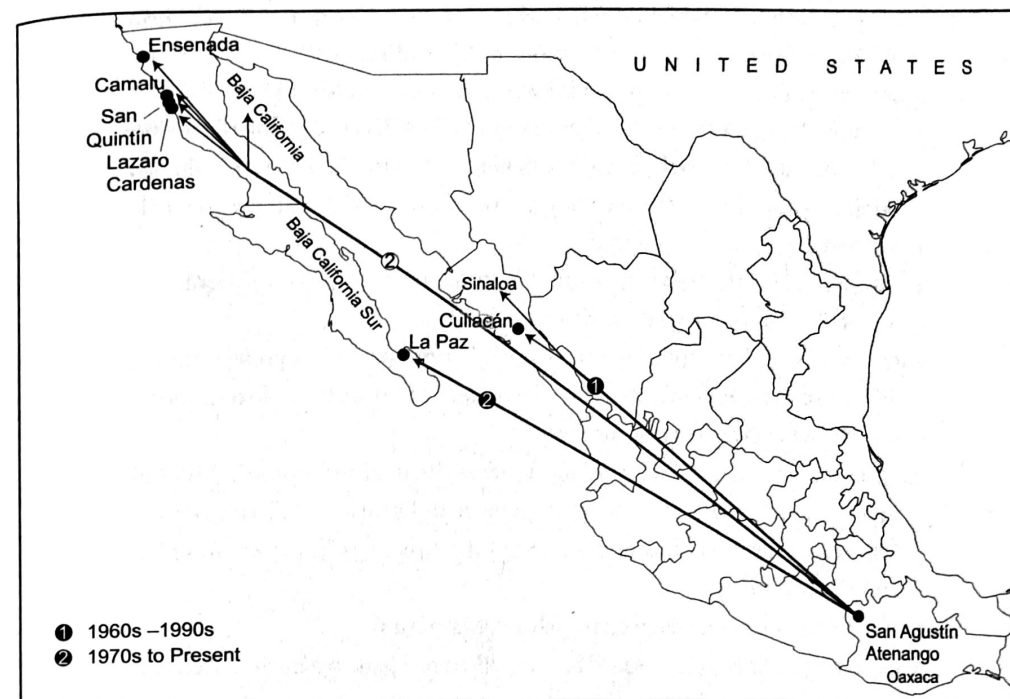
Nieves in 1977 that indicated that 10 percent of the community had migrated temporarily and 11 percent had migrated permanently. Between 1960 and 1970, the population of Nieves dropped from 2,608 to 1,528 (a loss of 41 percent of the population) (Martínez 2005: 61). Of those who migrated temporarily (representing about 152 people in relation to the 1970 census figures), almost all (91 percent) were working as *jornaleros*, or day laborers (Mora Vásquez 1982: 22). Among this majority of day laborers, 67 percent went to Sinaloa, 24 percent to the United States, and 8 percent to Mexico City (Vásquez 1982: 22, cited in Martínez 2005: 52).

The anthropologist Federico Besserer's long-term study of migration from the municipio of San Juan Mixtepec to areas throughout Mexico and the United States also provides confirmation of the general patterns found in San Agustín Atenango and among other Mixtec communities. Besserer literally maps the geographical dispersion of Mixtepec as it spread from south to north in Mexico and into the United States and from the west coast to the east coast. Citing people's memories of significant life events, including work patterns from survey respondents in San Juan Mixtepec, he documents two kinds of movements from 1920 to 1940. The first involves Mixtec muleteers, who traveled throughout the state, and the second involves wage workers, who established a separate circuit of statewide movement (2004: 35–37; see also García Arellano 2000). Besserer's respondents recall that from the period of 1940 to 1960 they traveled to locations that included the states of Sonora, where they worked in cotton cultivation, and Baja California, where they worked in the tomato fields. Many worked for numerous years in circuits between these two crops. Another group of workers labored in the tomato fields of California during this period as part of the bracero program (2002: 79). From 1960 to 1980, Besserer documents migration to the northwestern states of Mexico and to the United States, up the West Coast to California, Oregon, Washington and east to Idaho, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico (2004: 40). The maps he put together from these interviews also indicate the presence of some people from Mixtepec in Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, Virginia, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York during this period as well (2004: 40, 42). Between 1980 and 2000, the geographical dispersion reflected in his interviews spread within Mexico along the Gulf of Mexico coast and in the United States to many states as far north as those on the Canadian border (2004: 37–41). It is important to keep in mind that Besserer documented not perma-

ment settlement but traveling routes of workers. His larger point in this discussion is to help readers conceptualize the process of the deterritorialization of San Juan Mixtepec, but also to understand the unevenness and fluidity of migration as a process spanning several generations. "It may be more fluid than settled, as is the case of families of Mixtepecquenses with children born in Oregon and now living in Virginia mobile homes—underscoring the temporary yet not-localized character of their transgenerational traveling condition" (2002: 82; 2004: 41). Laura Velasco, who has specialized in the study of Mixtec migration to the U.S.-Mexico border region, provides a similar overview of Mixtec migration patterns from the 1940s to the present. She highlights urban and rural migration and the work that Mixtec women have done in the domestic service sectors of cities as well as their participation as agricultural workers (Velasco 2002: 56–59; 1995).

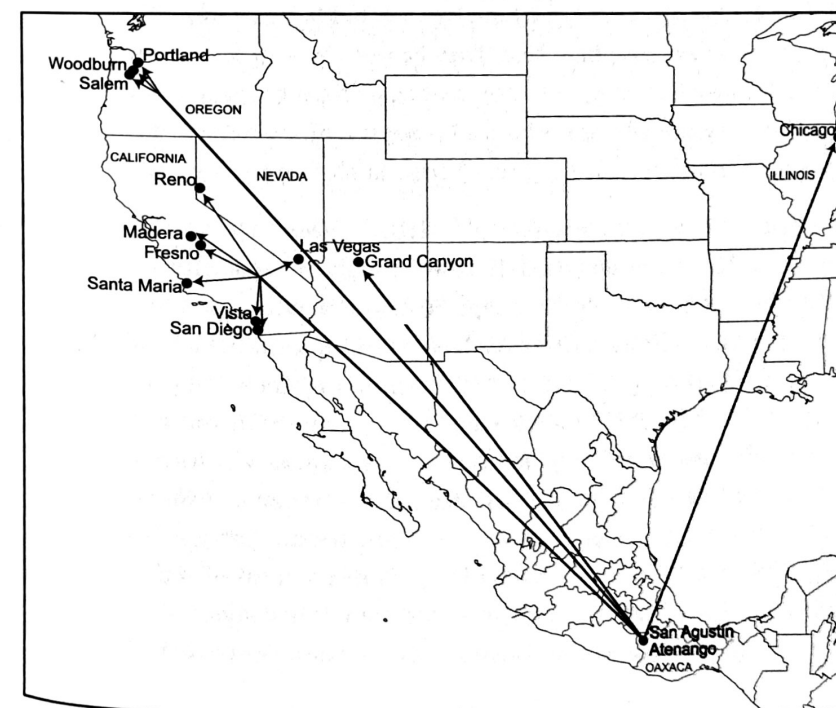
By the 1970s, Mixtec migration was well established and significant in northwest Mexico and had also begun to spill over into the United States, as discussed above (López and Runsten 2004: 255). By the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a significant population of Mixtecos in Baja California (Zabin et al. 1993). Velasco writes, "Beginning in the 1970s we could speak of a massive arrival of Mixtecos to the northwest border of Mexico . . . according to different sources of information, it is calculated that there are about 200,000 indigenous Oaxacans in California and Baja California, in large part Mixtecos. In general the Mixtecos who are arriving to the border region are from the districts of Huajuapán de León, Silcayoapan, and Juxtlahuaca, located in the heart of the Mixteca Baja" (2002: 59). The number two hundred thousand refers to the 1990s. Yet these numbers fluctuated because many Mixtecos who were residing in Baja California in places like San Quintín were further recruited by agents of farm labor contractors who operated in the United States (López and Runsten 2004: 255). Labor contractors who worked for growers in the Baja region were also reaching further and further into remote regions of the Mixtec region, recruiting not only Mixtecos, but Triquis as well. Many of these workers first went to San Quintín, Camalú, or other Baja regions and from there some headed right away for the United States. José Luis's story reflects this trajectory. His daughter Margarita, who also worked in Sinaloa and Baja California, joined the conversation.

JOSÉ LUIS: When I came back from the United States the first time, I started to go to Sinaloa. First I went by myself and then I started to take my wife and



MAP 11. San Agustín Atenango migration paths, 1960s to 1990s

MAP 12. San Agustín Atenango migration paths to the United States, late 1970s to present



my kids when they were little. They were about two years old. This is how old they were when we went to Camalú in Baja California.

MARGARITA: I was born in 1971. So if I was two, then it was 1973.

JOSÉ LUIS: We went to Camalú, then we went to Rosario and to the place they call Cárdenas. They were already working, my kids. They were already helping me out. They were big enough so that they could help me to work.

LYNN: Did they go to school there?

MARGARITA: No. All we did was work. We studied here, primary school.

LYNN: So the kids would go to work after school?

JOSÉ LUIS: No. What happened was that when they started to go to school, I didn't take them with me any more. They stayed here and went to school.

LYNN: Did they stay with their mother?

JOSÉ LUIS: No. They stayed with my mother, their grandmother. My wife went with me. After that I started to go more to Rosario, to Vizcaino, to La Paz, to the Valle de la Constitución. I went there by myself and wandered all over there working.

LYNN: When did you finish primary school, Margarita?

MARGARITA: I finished in 1984. Then we all went again with my parents to work. They were in Cárdenas.

JOSÉ LUIS: In 1986 we began to plant here and I didn't leave again. One time I went to the United States in 1987. My son wanted to go by himself, but I didn't let him go alone. So I went with him. We went to Madera in 1987. He went that year and then came back here. Then he went back to the United States again. He went back alone and that is when he fixed his papers. He came back here very pleased because he had his green card. I never got one while I was there. Now I am just living here. I don't think about going back.

Mariano Bautista is a forty-eight-year-old Mixtec agricultural worker from the town of San Juan Cahuayaxi. His hair and short mustache are almost white. He wears a blue baseball cap. He has a friendly, open face that reveals a sad smile. He often feels tired from working a shift at a local fruit and vegetable packing plant. He is sitting in the living room of a two-bedroom apartment he shares with his wife, their five children, and two grandchildren. He has another daughter who lives in Madera, California, with her four children. Mariano and his wife receive frequent visitors, who come to them for *limpias*, or cleansings. Mariano has an herb garden that supplies him with necessary herbs for his sideline business of acting as a *curandero*, or healer. Their most sought-after talent is massage, which he and his wife may perform once or twice per day. Mariano also worked

in Mexico City and Veracruz before working in Sinaloa and Baja California. From the time he was ten years old, he worked in many different parts of Mexico and then in the United States, always as an agricultural worker. His story takes him through the major commercial agricultural areas of Mexico and the western part of the United States

MARIANO: I was born in San Juan Cahuayaxi, in the municipio of San Juan Mixtepec in the Mixteca Alta. When I was three months old, my father left my mother. He went with another woman. My mother waited five years for him to return, but he never did. She had to marry another man to get by. I went with her and with the other man she married. He had five sons. It was not easy for me to live with them. I couldn't do anything.

I was five years old and still really small. They made me take care of the animals. I was six or seven years old when I went to live with my grandparents because my stepfather beat my mother a lot. He simply rejected me. He didn't accept me as his son so it was better for me to go and live with my grandparents.

LYNN: How was it living with your grandparents?

MARIANO: It went really well for me there. I was only there for about a year or two when my birth father came to get me and took me to a town called Las Minas, which is in the municipality of San Juan Mixtepec. He took me there to take care of his goats. He didn't allow me to go to school. I was there for six months with them and then I decided to leave home. I left when I was about ten years old. I hid in the back of a truck that went to Tlaxiaco.

LYNN: Why Tlaxiaco? What did you do there?

MARIANO: I hid myself in a truck in order to get there. I got off in Tlaxiaco and I first found work taking care of sheep. I just couldn't keep living with my stepmother—the new wife of my father. She hardly gave me anything to eat. She gave bread, milk, and meat to her own children, but she hardly gave me anything. I didn't even have a pair of shoes. I didn't get my own shoes until I was about eleven years old. Only then did I start dressing in a shirt, pants, and shoes. . . . I went back once to my mother's house in Cahuayaxi, but nobody wanted me. No one wanted to take care of me. . . .

. . . There were some people from Mexico who were visiting Tlaxiaco. They had come for the patron saint's fiesta. They gave me a ride to Mexico City. I left Oaxaca. They were workers who took me to Mexico City. When I got there, I was amazed. I loved it and admired it. It was like another world. What I couldn't do was to communicate there. I didn't know how to read or how to write. I could only speak Mixtec.

LYNN: How did you survive there?

MARIANO: Well, no one had any work to give me there at first. There are lots of big markets in Mexico City. What I did was to dedicate myself to cleaning up the fruit markets, carrying around the large baskets of fruit and working as a porter for people moving things for them in the market. I started to sell popsicles and to shine shoes. So I was there shining shoes, selling popsicles, and cleaning for five years. I slept in the street, in the garbage dump of the market and in abandoned houses. When I was sixteen years old, I went to Veracruz.

LYNN: Was there a particular reason why you went to Veracruz?

MARIANO: I went because I heard that it was really beautiful there. Some people I knew took me there. It is a port and the city is on the sea. I went to work in the port. I gutted and cleaned chickens and fish. I helped to fill up the big baskets with fish.

One time I came back to Cahuayaxi to look for my family. I felt really sad. I didn't have anyone there in Cahuayaxi who I could call family. I was there for a week. After that I went to Culiacán, Sinaloa, with some people from Cahuayaxi who were working in agriculture. . . . When I first arrived in Culiacán I didn't know how to harvest tomatoes. They paid you about sixteen pesos per day for this work. There were some people there working in the tomatoes from Cahuayaxi. There were a lot of people from Oaxaca there as well. They were there from Huajuapán de León, from San Miguel el Grande, other places . . .

. . . There in Culiacán, the tomato season lasted for three months. From there, you went on to harvest cotton in Obregon. When the cotton was over then there was another cotton harvest that happened in Hermosillo. When we finished there, then we would go to La Paz, Baja California. There in La Paz was where we went to pick chiles, tomatoes, beans. This was my route every year.

From 1978 to 1996, Mariano went back and forth over the U.S.-Mexican border between southern California and Baja California. He worked in the United States in order to earn money to purchase land to build a house in San Vicente, Baja California. While he worked in the United States his wife and children stayed in San Vicente. In 1993 a storm destroyed his home in Baja California. After that he went further north to Madera and in 1996 brought his entire family.

I started coming to the United States to work so I could save money to buy some land in San Vicente, Baja California. I spent ten years going back

and forth. By 1989, I was able to save a little money and I bought that land. I thought we could plant tomatoes, chiles serranos, watermelon, and corn. I didn't want to come back to the United States. I had built a little house with three rooms, and I really felt like my luck was changing. So I stayed there.

Then in 1993, there was a huge storm and the bridges fell down in San Quintín, in Colonia Guerrero, and in Rosario. There was no transportation and no way to get food in. The Mexican government sent in the army to get us out of there and they put us all into a camp called El Walter next to a hospital. We were given shelter there and food. We lost everything in that storm. I was left with nothing. I lost everything I had built up. That was why I eventually decided to leave Baja and come to the United States again. In 1996 my whole family came to Madera, California. I didn't think that it was good for us to live separated and for my children not to know their father. So we came to Madera where there were other people from San Juan Cahuayaxi.

When workers like José Luis, his daughter Margarita, and Mariano began to migrate on a regular basis to Baja California, some of them also settled there. Mariano was able to save up money from working both in the United States and in Baja, bought land in San Vicente, and built a small house. The first settlers in Baja were documented at the end of the 1950s in Tijuana in the Colonia Obrera. Some who settled in Tijuana came to work on a daily basis in Tijuana. Others who settled later in San Quintín, Lázaro Cárdenas, Camalú, and El Rosario and elsewhere even participated in petitioning the Mexican government for *ejido* land to build houses and to have small plots to farm. Others purchased land privately. In their documentation of migration flows from the community of Asunción Naranjos, Juxtlahuaca, López and Runsten found that migrants came to work in the agricultural area of Del Mar, Oceanside, Vista, and Oxnard in the late 1970s. By 2003 there were about sixty families from Asunción in Oxnard and some families who migrated to Gresham, Oregon (López and Runsten 2004: 258).

Moving from a base in California to Oregon or another state is common. Mariano began coming from Madera, California, to Woodburn, Oregon, where he worked in the fields. Eventually in 2001 he brought most of his family except for his eldest daughter and her children to Woodburn. There he continued in agricultural work, which is primarily seasonal. Mariano's family has had a difficult time in Oregon as he relates below.

MARIANO: My family stayed in Madera while I came to Woodburn, Oregon, so that I could look for work. I worked harvesting strawberries, blueberries

and also in the cannery. I came up here first to look for work. Then in 2001 I decided to bring my whole family up here.

LYNN: What was it like when you first moved to Woodburn with your family?

MARIANO: It was very hard when we first came. When we first arrived, we were living on the farm owned by a Russian. Then we were renting an apartment on Young Street with a cousin of mine. But because we didn't have a lease for the apartment, they didn't want to let us stay there and they threw us out. So at that point we started to sleep in the street. We slept in our car parked on the street during the winter. My wife and I slept in the car. We put one of our kids in one house with relatives, another one with another one, and so forth. We used to meet each other in the park during the day to see one another. My wife and I slept in our car in front of the post office. Then a man from Oaxaca told us we could park the car in the parking lot of his garage. We finally found housing here [at a farmworker housing project called Nuevo Amanecer] for about eight months. Now we have to find something else, and my job at the cannery is about to end for this year . . .

. . . There is no work for me during the months of November, December, January, and February. Right now in September, October there is a little bit of work in the grapes, but after that there is nothing. You can only find work here in Woodburn for part of the year. . . . As someone who is an agricultural worker, I have to really struggle to keep my kids dressed, to buy them shoes, to buy their sports clothes.

Mixtec immigration to the West Coast of the United States appears to have increased significantly from 1995 to 2005. One recent estimate put the number of Mixtecos in California at one hundred thousand (Stanley 2005). One of the premier destinations for workers from San Agustín is Santa María, California, in the county of Santa Barbara. There were an estimated two hundred people from San Agustín living there in 2004. There is a local San Agustín Atenango Mixtec community group in Santa María that is affiliated with the FIOB.

According to the reporter Melinda Burns, about eleven thousand Mixtecs live year-round in Santa María, ten times as many as there were in 1995. In addition to San Agustín, they come from seven other Oaxacan communities (Burns 2004a: 10). Most of the adults and increasingly teenagers fifteen years old and older are picking strawberries and other crops, earning between seven thousand and twelve thousand dollars per year (Burns 2004a:10; 2004b). According to officials at the State Center

for Assistance to Oaxacan Migrants (Coordinación Estatal de Atención al Migrante Oaxaqueño), the rate of migration from the Mixtec region has doubled since the mid-1990s. In some Mixtec communities in Oaxaca only 10 percent of the population remains (Burns 2004c: 4). In San Agustín, about 60 percent of the population remains, but out-migration has increased significantly in the past ten years. In her study of Ixpan-tepec Nieves, Martínez found that a majority of adults between the ages of twenty and sixty-four were absent by the year 2000. Between 1988 and 2000, the population of Nieves went from 1,435 to 1,112, a decline of 22.55 percent (2005: 54–55). In Nieves, as in San Agustín Atenango and elsewhere, it has become a normal part of social development to finish secondary school and then to migrate to the United States. This type of norm certainly is suggestive of what Jeffrey Cohen terms “a culture of migration.” Cohen elaborates on this term, stating that it signifies not only that migration is pervasive and has a historical presence but also that the decision to migrate is one people make as a part of their everyday experiences; furthermore, he claims, most people view this everyday decision as one path toward economic well-being (2004: 5).

The pattern of migration reflected in the stories of José Luis, Margarita, and Mariano is representative of the overall pattern of Mixtec migration. Mixtec migration has a long history in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Workers first left to labor closer to home in Veracruz, Oaxaca, and Morelos. They then went farther afield through the bracero program to the United States. Simultaneous with their recruitment to the United States, Mixtecos were recruited to work in Sinaloa, Sonora, and Baja California as export agriculture expanded in that region. From there, they went again to the United States to work in agriculture. Mixtecos have largely remained in agricultural labor with some moving into other kinds of work such as year-round positions in nurseries or in the service sector. Because they have continuously engaged in seasonal work that pays minimum wage and have been in some of the most exploitative labor contracting circumstances (including in the labor camps described in chapter 5), Mixtecos have had a more difficult time than Zapotecs from places like Teotitlán saving money and having any kind of surplus to invest in entrepreneurial activities. Mixtecos historically have had much higher rates of monolingualism and less education and fewer Spanish-speaking skills than Zapotecs. For more than four decades, Mixtec migrant farmworkers have provided the cheap, mobile labor force needed to support the commercialization of agricul-

ture in Mexico and the United States. When the economic integration of the U.S. and Mexican economies accelerated in the 1970s and Mexico's economy underwent a process of "structural adjustment" in the 1980s, Mixtec workers were part of the invisible glue of poverty and extremely difficult working conditions that held the integration together, as Besse-
r notes (2002: 288-89).

Mexico's "structural adjustment" and "open economy" had a tremendous impact on agriculture. The new model reduced government support for peasant agriculture in order to encourage peasants to migrate to high-wage regions. Supposedly, salaries would rise in the areas of peasant production as those seeking employment migrated elsewhere, while migrant remittances would also flow back into peasant zones to provide them with productive capital. Meanwhile, the migrant agricultural force would "contribute" to zones of agricultural export production by providing low-cost labor (as it did). The result was massive mobilization of migrant workers from the traditionally peasant regions of the country such as Oaxaca, Guerrero, Puebla, Morelos, Estado de Mexico, and Hidalgo, mostly states with a high proportion of indigenous population. The states receiving both international investment in agriculture and low-cost indigenous labor were Sinaloa, Sonora, and Baja California. Mixtec, Zapotec, Mixe, Triqui, and other ethnic peoples became workers for transnational agricultural producers in their own country. They quickly migrated even farther into the sites of global agricultural production in California, Oregon, Washington, and to many other states in the United States, becoming transnational workers in yet a second sense, namely, as workers who cross national borders.

What Happened in Mexico to Cause So Many People from Oaxaca to Migrate?

As outlined above, Mixtec migration in particular has been tied to the commercialization of Mexican agriculture beginning after World War II.

For the past two decades, liberalization of trade barriers between Mexico and United States has made it much easier for U.S. agricultural products to enter Mexico and for more Mexican products to enter the United States. Mixtec migrants from towns like San Agustín Atenango come from agricultural subsistence communities. While many of the residents of San Agustín have access to plots of communal land where many

continued to plant corn and beans, beginning in the mid-1980s falling Mexican corn prices, gradual withdrawal of government support, and increased labor recruitment of workers to Baja California and into the United States resulted in at least half of the fields remaining uncultivated. As stated succinctly by Melinda Burns (2004c: 1):

The Mixtecs form part of a de facto border exchange, one in which the U.S. exports cheap corn to Mexico and imports Mexican corn farmers to labor in the fields of California (and elsewhere). Nearly two decades of free trade have deepened the poverty and unemployment in Mexico's countryside, studies show. Mexico's three million peasants were simply outgunned by 75,000 farmers in Iowa who—with the help of ample rain, state-of-the-art technology, and millions of dollars in government subsidies—could produce twice as much corn at half the price.

As early as the 1960s, Mexico's farmers began to leave the countryside. In 1965, the average rural wage was more than a farmer with a small parcel could earn by relying on his or her own labor and that of the immediate family. In the 1970s, wholesale food prices failed to keep pace with the rural cost of living and with the cost of tools and inputs required by subsistence and small-scale farmers. Government support prices for basic grains dropped from 85 percent of their 1960 value in 1977 to 76 percent in 1979 (Fox 1992: 62). From the 1970s until significant reforms in agricultural policy were put in place in the mid-1980s, the primary way small farmers with rain-fed (unirrigated) land were able to continue was through government support prices. The Compañía Nacional de Subsistencia Popular (National Basic Foods Company, or CONASUPO), a major player in government intervention in agriculture, instituted programs for eleven basic crops: barley, beans, copra, maize, cotton, rice, sesame, sorghum, soybeans, sunflower, and wheat. CONASUPO not only provided support prices, but also processed, stored, and distributed these crops as well as regulating trade through direct imports (Taylor et. al. 2005: 87-88). Some policy makers in CONASUPO viewed their job as regulating domestic grain markets through periodic imports. Prior to the crash of the peso, imports appeared cheap in light of the overvalued peso. In 1980, CONASUPO increased support prices for corn by 28 percent, but since inflation was also 28 percent, the price supports simply slowed down the decline of the real value of what producers received for their corn (Fox 1992: 109). By 1981, Mexico's imports of basic foodstuffs were greater than its agricultural exports, but this did not necessarily indicate increasing

dependency on imported corn and other grains. The record level of grain imports in 1981 masked the success of record domestic corn production for human consumption, which has continued to be high despite the neoliberal economic model implemented in relation to agricultural policy beginning in the 1980s and culminating with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In 1981, Mexico incurred a very high agricultural balance of payments deficit with imports at US\$3.6 billion while exports were at US\$1.7 billion. Ironically, that same year domestic grain production reached record levels of 1.95 million tons of domestic maize (Fox 1992: 111).

The mid-1970s in Mexico (as in the rest of the world) mark the beginning of what is now called economic restructuring or economic globalization—shorthand for the deepening of the integration of national economies. U.S. and European markets were stagnant in the mid-1970s, and corporate profits had begun to decline. In order to increase profits, Western transnational corporations began to explore new markets around the world and to search for cheaper costs of labor. Transnational corporation investments overseas, free trade agreements, “‘lean and mean’ worker dismissal policies of neoliberalism and the ‘runaway-plant’ strategy of setting up assembly plants in low-cost labor areas like Mexico” began to predominate (Cockcroft 1998: 248). By 1994, U.S.-based transnational corporations employed 40 percent of their workers in the so-called Third World nations (Cockcroft 1998: 248). The emphasis on economic development in Mexico was on small islands of modernity that were focused on development of the *maquiladora*, or in-bond assembly plant sector of Mexico. Industrial expansion was limited to capital-intensive areas that provided few jobs.

The agricultural policy that accompanied economic restructuring focused on pushing subsistence farmers out of what was seen as unproductive subsistence farming. The policy begun in the 1980s and was formalized in 1992. That year marks the changes made to Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, which encouraged the privatization of the 50 percent of Mexico’s land base held in nonprivate status and increased investment in export production of fruit, produce, and other crops. Prior to 1992, land held in communal, or *ejido* status, could not be privately owned by an individual. Ejidos were created after the Mexican Revolution to satisfy the demands of landless peasants who had seen their communal village land eaten up by large agricultural estates and who had served as laborers on those estates. Ejido land is held in a

communal form of land tenure in which members have use rights, usually in the form of an individual plot. The ejido also refers to a specific area of land as well. For many communities their ejido also refers to their territory, as does communal land, or *terrenos comunales*—actual land tied to the community. Specific areas of land granted as ejidos or regained as *terrenos comunales* often, but not always, have long-standing historical meaning. This is particularly true if they were occupied pre-colonially and then usurped during the colonial period (Stephen 2002: xxvi–xxvii).

In addition to ejidos, a significant part of rural land held in nonprivate or social tenancy lies in *comunidades agrarias*. This land constitutes a significant part of the holdings of indigenous communities and is based on historical claims, usually dating to pre-Columbian or historical times. In many cases these lands are known as *comunales* (communal lands). Both Teotitlán del Valle and San Agustín Atenango have significant communal holdings or *comunales*. Teotitlán has 6,601 hectares of communal dry land, including forests (Stephen 1991:70). The communal lands of Teotitlán del Valle are documented in colonial maps dating to 1564, 1596, and 1797 which are on display in the community museum. The communal lands of San Agustín Atenango were first purchased in 1867 but were formally constituted by the Mexican government as *terrenos comunales* only in 1947 (Departamento Agrario 1947). An ongoing dispute with San Mateo Libre and San Vicente del Palmar (beginning in the 1940s) over part of this land was finally resolved in the Agrarian Tribunal of Huajuapán de León in 2000 confirming that San Agustín Atenango has 8,451.10 hectares of communal land. As described in chapter 2, only about 10 percent of this land is usable for farming.

The lowering of trade barriers and tariffs through the 1994 ratification of NAFTA permitted ever-increasing amounts of U.S. corn—primarily yellow corn for animal feed—and other products to enter Mexico to compete with those produced by subsistence farmers. Recent studies evaluating what happened to corn farmers in the 1990s have revealed some interesting trends. Rather than knocking out all corn farmers from production in Mexico, U.S. imports of yellow feed corn in combination with the end of guaranteed prices (initially for basic crops other than corn and beans and then later income support programs for all farmers producing basic crops) resulted in an increase in corn production among middle-size and larger farmers with access to irrigated land. Many of these farmers converted to corn from other crops such as oilseeds.

Smaller-scale subsistence farmers who grew corn and beans primarily for their own subsistence continued to produce at a loss, even with the subsidies provided by post-CONASUPO programs. [The real higher costs of producing corn for farmers in subsistence-based communities such as San Agustín became too high for most people to continue farming after CONASUPO subsidiaries and price supports were phased out by the mid-1990s. In San Agustín, many migrants returned for at least part of the year to maintain subsistence crops of corn and beans in local fields. By the mid- to late 1990s, however, this pattern had changed dramatically as migration became less circular and people began to settle in Baja California and in the United States.] In Teotitlán del Valle, about 26 percent of the population were full-time subsistence and small-scale farmers in 1980. By 1986, this percentage had decreased to 11 percent as people increasingly took up textile production and migration (Stephen 1991: 72). Understanding what happened in rural Mexico from 1980 onward is a crucial component to understanding the migration and labor stories in this chapter.]

In 1982, Mexico experienced a deep economic crisis linked to the slashing of oil prices, expanded international borrowing at high interest rates to develop the petroleum industry and other infrastructure, runaway inflation, and problems of corruption and accountability in the government (Cockcroft 1998: 271). [In August 1982, Mexico announced that it could not meet its debt payments, and a two-stage 100 percent devaluation of the peso was completed. When the dust settled, a U.S.-led financial bailout of Mexico totaled ten billion dollars. In exchange for the restructuring of its debt, Mexico had to radically change its economic model, ending import substitution and protectionism and entering a full-tilt program of what is now known as neoliberalism. In exchange for its financial assistance package, Mexico had to reduce the public sector deficit from 18 percent of GDP in 1982 to 3.5 percent in 1985 in an effort to reduce foreign borrowing and restrain inflation (White, Salas, and Gammage 2003: 10).]

[When translated into agricultural policies, this involved the elimination of producer price supports for five basic crops (copra, cotton, safflower, sunflower, and sesame seeds), and CONASUPO, which had purchased basic grains, provided price supports; further, a network of stores that subsidized basic goods in rural areas was downsized significantly.] In 1992, guaranteed prices for wheat, sorghum, soybeans, rice, barley, safflower seed, and sunflower were eliminated. In 1995, CONASUPO elimi-

nated all domestic price supports and became “the buyer of last resort” for producers (White, Salas, and Gammage 2003: 11). By this time, the implications of NAFTA for the agricultural sector had also begun to appear, exacerbating an already difficult situation in which prices for basic crops declined and the prices of things like fertilizers, seeds, and equipment increased.]

Under NAFTA, all nontariff barriers to agricultural trade between the United States and Mexico are to disappear. NAFTA also required the Mexican government to reduce price supports for domestic farmers and to reduce import restrictions (White, Salas, and Gammage 2003: 13). [In the early 1990s, there were about three million corn producers in Mexico, equivalent to about 40 percent of all rural Mexicans working in agriculture (Woodall et. al 2001: 23). At that time, corn farmers received about \$240 per ton of corn from CONASUPO owing to what remained of pre-NAFTA price support policies (Woodall et. Al 2001: 23). Within thirty months of the implementation of NAFTA, Mexico eliminated its corn quotas from the United States and CONASUPO reduced the amount of crops it purchased from farmers. From 1994 through 2002, with the exception of 1997, U.S. corn imports to Mexico have increased, tripling in comparison with levels prior to NAFTA (Fanjul and Fraser 2003: 16). The amount of corn CONASUPO bought “fell from 45 percent of domestic corn in 1994 to 20 percent in 1995. The real price farmers received for corn declined by 26 percent between 1993 and 1995” (White, Salas, and Gammage 2003: 14). By 2001, real corn prices had fallen more than 70 percent, meaning that corn farmers and their families had to live on less than one-third of the income they earned in 1995 (Fanjul and Fraser 2003: 17). While one might think that the availability of cheaper U.S. imported corn in Mexico would mean cheaper prices for consumers, it has not. The price of a kilo of tortillas—the basic foodstuff of poor Mexicans—rose threefold, in real terms, between 1994 and 1999 (Fanjul and Fraser 2003: 18).]

While the Mexican government has offered roughly one hundred dollars per hectare to small-scale and subsistence farmers to offset their losses from NAFTA through a program called PROCAMPO (see Stephen 2002: 66–67), this has not been enough. [Between 1991 and 2000, the total number of corn producers for household consumption declined by 670,000, and the number of producers cultivating corn for sale declined by 343,000. Thus a little over 1 million corn producers (1,013,000) have stopped producing corn and have had to find another source of income

(White, Salas, and Gammage 2003: 18).] While the number of corn producers decreased by about 21 percent among *ejidatarios* and communal farmers, the total amount of land devoted to corn in Mexico remained fairly stable from 1991 to 2000. The explanation for this is not surprising, given the dynamics of increased stratification in many sectors within Mexico under NAFTA. After the revisions to Article 27 in 1992, some farmers began to rent land from others, particularly from *ejidatarios* and *comuneros* who had small plots. By switching to corn on irrigated land and collecting about eighty-five to one hundred dollars per hectare through PROCAMPO and other direct payments through a second scheme called the Program of Direct Supports for Marketing and Development of Regional Markets, medium- and large-sized farmers who had a marketable surplus were able to produce corn under favorable conditions. Their access to irrigated land greatly increased their productivity compared to that of rain-fed land. The Direct Supports Subprogram provides producers with a surplus of marketable output with access to a fixed subsidy per ton directly from the Mexican government through the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fishing, and Nutrition (SAGARPA). In 2002, expenditures in the amount of 37 percent from the Direct Supports Subprogram went to white corn producers in Sinaloa, Sonora, and Baja California (Zahniser and Coyle 2004: 8). Sinaloa produced 42 percent of the corn cultivated on irrigated land in Mexico that year. Marketing supports and rental of ejido lands have facilitated the "emergence of large-scale farms for corn and dried beans" (de Ita Rubio 2003). By 1997, grain yields on irrigated land was 3.4 times greater than on rain-fed land (Taylor et. al 2005: 98). In other words, very small-scale subsistence producers with rain-fed land on ejidos and in comunidades agrarias dropped out of agricultural production, but other farmers, who had more resources to begin with, were able to continue producing white corn for a domestic market at a relative advantage. This may change in 2008, when PROCAMPO is scheduled to phase out and all supports to Mexican corn farmers are supposed to end in accordance with the provisions of NAFTA.

Some of the small-scale corn farmers who dropped out of production may have found work in the commercial agricultural sector in horticulture, industrial food production, and fruit production. Since the implementation of NAFTA, the number of jobs in these sectors has grown by 20 percent, reaching approximately 1,847,680 by the year 2000 (White, Salas, and Gammage 2003: 17). While the number of jobs in these sectors

increased somewhat, the wages for agricultural workers fell dramatically between 1991 and 2003, as they did elsewhere in Mexico. Monthly income for agricultural workers in constant 1994 pesos fell from 550 pesos per month in 1991 to 483 pesos in 2003—an average of 2.8 pesos per hour, or about US\$2.50 per hour in a forty-hour week. Self-employed farmers had even more dramatic wage losses. In 1991, self-employed farmers earned 1,959 pesos per month, and in 2003, 228 pesos for the same amount of work (as measured in constant 1994 pesos) (White, Salas, and Gammage 2003: 19). This is a devastating loss of income for subsistence farmers under NAFTA. According to these figures, by 2003, subsistence farmers were earning only 11.6 percent of what they did in 1991!

Another way to look at this is in terms of what subsistence farmers could purchase through the sale of one metric ton of corn before and after the economic restructuring of the agricultural sector began in the early 1980s. In 1980, one metric ton of corn could purchase 6.1 baskets of basic goods. A basic basket of goods (*canasta básica*) is defined by the Mexican central bank (Banco de Mexico) as the cost of basic goods and services for the average Mexican based on eighty essential items, including expenditures for food, clothing, health, public transportation, housing and rental estimates, as well as costs associated with primary and secondary education, school supplies, and uniforms. A hearing of the Mexican Senate in December 2000 put the cost of the official *canasta básica* at approximately 3,300 pesos (US\$330/month) (Kada 2004). Thus by 2000, one ton of corn could purchase only 2.4 baskets of basic goods (White, Salas, and Gammage 2003: 24).

The proportion of rural households living in poverty increased from 56 percent in 1992 to 60.7 percent in 2000 (White, Salas, and Gammage 2003: 27).] Poverty is defined as that income which fails to meet a basic basket of goods. All of these figures spell out one clear trend: those who had previously earned a living in small-scale or subsistence agriculture or even as agricultural workers in Mexico had to find additional sources of income to survive in the 1990s and beyond. Data from the Mexican National Rural Household survey of 2003 suggest that rural out-migration (both internal and to the United States) rose dramatically during the 1990s. The number of migrants from Mexican villages who relocated to other parts of the country rose 352 percent between 1980 and 2002. The number of migrants from rural Mexico in the United States was 452 percent higher in 2002 than in 1980 (Taylor et al. 2005: 103).] Many rural workers and farmers did not find work in Mexico during the 1990s

because of insufficient growth in manufacturing employment. Many now work in urban informal services or have migrated to the United States (Taylor et al. 2005: 103).

Even urban manufacturing workers who had jobs had a hard time in the 1990s, including those involved in what until quite recently was the most successful sector in Mexico's engagement with neoliberalism—the maquiladora sector. A maquiladora is a form of production in which raw material, parts, and equipment are imported into Mexico for the purpose of being assembled or transformed in Mexico (as in putting together clothing and electronic goods or engine parts) and subsequently exported to foreign markets, including the United States. In 2004, the government-mandated minimum wage for workers on the border was US\$4.20 per day—the same as ten years ago. Many maquiladora workers earn close to this wage. It takes a maquiladora worker in Ciudad Juárez almost an hour to earn enough money to buy a kilo of rice. A gallon of milk, which costs US\$3.00, requires five to six hours of labor (Bacon 2004).

Many observers of NAFTA thought that the expanding maquila sector would save Mexico and make up for job losses elsewhere by creating good permanent jobs in assembly plants. By 2001, 1.3 million workers were employed in two thousand border plants (Bacon 2004). This number of jobs was created from the late 1960s to the present. These jobs are tied to the U.S. market that the plants were producing for. At the same time that maquiladoras were producing some new jobs every year, about 1.5 million young Mexicans were entering the workforce every year. While providing a small outlet for Mexicans being shut out of other sectors since 1994, the job growth in maquilas stopped and reversed by 2004.

In 2001, when U.S. consumers stopped buying consumer goods in large quantities, a recession hit and maquiladoras began shedding workers. The Mexican government estimated in 2004 that up to 400,000 jobs disappeared (Bacon 2004). While the Mexican government has blamed the loss entirely on China, Mexico's vulnerability to consumer patterns in the United States is also part of the story. More than 520 factories in Mexico have shut their doors and moved to China since December 2000, including the Japanese television maker Sanyo, which closed six plants in Tijuana, laying off 1,900 workers (Sneider 2003). According to Merrill Lynch analysts, Mexican hourly wages, including benefits and taxes, now average US\$2.96. Move to China and you only have to pay 72 cents per

hour, wiping out the advantage Mexico has of proximity to the American market (Sneider 2003). Job growth inside of Mexico was anything but certain for the later part of the twentieth century.]

What Happened in the United States to Encourage Mixtecos and Zapotecos to Migrate and Settle There?

"Fresh" Produce Markets in the United States and Mexican Workers

At the same time that Mexican agriculture pushed out subsistence and small-scale farmers such as those in San Agustín Atenango and elsewhere, commercial fruit and vegetable production expanded in northern Mexico and became incorporated with that of the United States, providing an alternative labor market for rural Mexicans. This change was driven in part by U.S. consumer demand. On any day of the year you can walk into the produce section of any grocery store and find a wide array of fresh fruits and vegetables: tomatoes, strawberries, melons, cucumbers, lettuce, apples, oranges, and carrots. American consumers can pick up prewashed and precut salad mixes, cut and washed fruit salads, and more. A complete line of "fresh" temperate and tropical fruits and vegetables is available anywhere, anytime. As pointed out by Walter Goldfrank, *fresh* refers to the "pristine appearance of the foodstuff, not [to] its space-time proximity to the consumer" (1994: 268). In fact, the appearance of freshness is made possible by the availability of counterseasonal produce that can be delivered through what are called long-distance cool chains that allow fruits and vegetables picked "weeks or even months in advance to be cooled, stored, and/or shipped with the aid of spoilage-retardant chemicals, handled by workers at multiple job sites" (often in different parts of the globe) to be delivered on demand to supply affluent consumers everywhere (Goldfrank 1994: 268). Efforts to develop new items for produce consumers accelerated in the 1980s. The average supermarket produce department sold 65 items in 1975, and 210 in 1988 (Goldfrank 1994: 271). As American women entered the paid labor force in greater numbers, their demand for domestic services and for easy-to-prepare foods increased. Fresh produce and fruit that requires no preparation beyond washing is viewed as nutritious and healthy.

The availability of such allegedly fresh fruits and vegetables year-round in the United States is also tied to the integration of the U.S. economy with others, often through the neoliberal reorientations that began in the

1970s. By 1998, Mexico dominated the U.S. market for fresh vegetable imports, totaling US\$2.1 billion (Cook 2002: 16). Although the number of U.S. farms producing fruits, nuts, and vegetables continued to decline in the 1990s, in key production regions such as California a few large growers became "forward integrated" into the marketing of their own production and the production of other growers—hence their designation as grower-shippers. Grower-shippers control production, packing, and cooling facilities and also arrange for domestic and export sale, transportation, and promotion (Cook 2002: 21). Many grower-shippers are multiregional, multinational, and multicommodity so that they can have a year-round presence in grocery stores. The rapid growth of multi-location firms beginning in the 1980s led to the integration of the Mexico-California-Arizona vegetable industry (Cook 1990). In the early 1980s, San Diego grower-shippers began to work in Baja California, attracted by lower labor, land, and water costs. According to Carol Zabin, U.S. grower-shippers entered into joint ventures or other arrangements to finance and market tomatoes and other crops with about a dozen Mexican growers.

Production technologies have been transplanted intact from southern California to Baja. Patented seeds, plastic mulching, and planting in plastic tents are common practices in both areas, as is drip irrigation. The tasks carried out by field workers—which include transplanting, staking, pruning, and harvesting—are almost identical. Baja growers belong to the same U.S.-based trade organizations as their counterparts north of the border and call upon University of California extension agents when they have a pest problem (Zabin 1997: 341; Cook 1991).

Nevertheless, while there has been greater market access and expansion of Baja California agriculture, the bulk of fresh vegetables produced by California and Arizona firms is still produced in the United States owing to infrastructure, technology, and efficiency advantages (Cook 2002: 21). This has kept a significant number of harvesting jobs in the United States, not only in California and Arizona but in other states as well, such as Oregon.

The use of computerized forecasting for when crops will ripen according to ground conditions, temperature, and other factors has led growers to be able to predict when they will need a certain number of farm laborers. Processors set the schedules for when fruits and vegetables should be harvested and delivered. For growers, this means communicat-

ing with labor recruiters about how many workers they will need when. The use of cell phones, e-mail, and faxes can facilitate communication between growers in the United States and labor recruiters in Mexico.

In the 1990s, growing consumer demand for convenience-oriented fresh-cut produce in supermarkets also produced new U.S. jobs in the production of things like bagged salads, broccoli and cauliflower florets, sliced mushrooms, cored pineapples, fresh-cut melons, stir-fry vegetable mixes, packaged baby carrots, carrot and celery sticks, and precut vegetables (Cook 2002: 23). Farmworkers who harvest in the fields are often working second shifts in what is called postharvest handling, and specialty produce or in canneries and frozen food processing plants that are located in close proximity to where fruits and vegetables are harvested in the United States. In many food processing plants, frozen vegetable mixes with such labels as "Oriental vegetables," "Mediterranean vegetables," and "flavor fiesta" may include vegetables from several global locations—but marketed under a regional ethnic label. With the integration of production, processing, and marketing of fruits and vegetables in the United States and Mexico, a new labor market for displaced subsistence and small-scale farmers emerged.

The labor histories of transborder workers such as José Luis and Mariano often revolve around following products such as the tomato or the strawberry from one location to another. Their journeys began at a young age when they started working outside of their natal communities, spreading elsewhere in Mexico, and finally to varied locations in the United States. Such histories often combine various experiences in different places into one articulated chain of following products from one place to another without necessarily reflecting directly on the larger structural conditions that produce repeated experiences of low-wage work in both Mexico and the United States. The kind of knowledge that workers talk about might be thought of as practical knowledge they have accumulated through their own experiences and those of others in their border-crossing lives as they move from one site to another but often continue to engage in similar kinds of labor.

In his analysis of the greater transnational community of San Juan Mixtepec, Besserer describes how what he calls "transmigrant workers" understand the spaces they labor in as they follow transnational commercial agriculture:

Transmigrants' practical understanding of the discontinuous space of post-fordist agriculture revealed important erasures that tended to obscure the fact that greater profit comes to agribusiness from the articulation of agricultural hyperspaces. Transmigrants frequently narrated their lives in terms of having been "in the tomato," forgetting the specifics of where they had been while "just remembering" specific events they experienced. (2002: 300)

It is important to contrast such product-driven memories with structural discussions of how and why, for example, U.S. and Mexican commercial agriculture has merged to form one continuous field of labor relations and production cycles that are geared toward providing the North American market with year-round access to fresh fruits and produce (increasingly organic).

The Domestic Services Market and Mexican Workers

At the same time the U.S. market for ready-to-eat produce was expanding, a demand for other kinds of convenience services emerged. The same woman who wanted to purchase a bagged salad and fresh fruit to feed to her children because she didn't have a lot of time to prepare food was also looking for assistance in cleaning her home and caring for her children. There was a rise in demand for domestic workers in cities such as Los Angeles, where capital concentrates began in the mid-1980s (see Sassen 1991). Global cities like New York, Rome, Paris, Tokyo, Mexico City, and Los Angeles help to integrate global economies and are also reflective of the nations, economies, and cultures they pull together as a kind of global command post (see Sassen 1991). Los Angeles is a dynamic economic center for the Pacific Rim that has a large, diversified economy supported by a huge manufacturing sector as well as the entertainment industry. As Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo writes,

The Upshot? Los Angeles is home to many people with highly paid jobs. . . . Many people employed in business and finance, and in the high-tech and entertainment sectors, are high-salaried lawyers, bankers, accountants, marketing specialists, consultants, agents, and entrepreneurs. The way they live their lives, requiring many services and consuming many products, generates other high-end occupations linked to gentrification (creating jobs for real estate agents, therapists, personal trainers, designers, celebrity chefs, etc.), all of which in turn rely on various kinds of daily servicing that low-wage workers provide. For the masses of affluent professionals and corpo-



13. Catalina García (*right*) with her mother.

rate managers in Los Angeles, relying on Latino immigrant workers has almost become a social obligation. (2001: 6–7)

From 1989 to the present, Catalina García has served as a nanny for affluent professionals in the greater Los Angeles area. Born in Teotitlán del Valle in 1946, Catalina worked as a weaver and a mother of five children until she came to the United States. Her husband left her after five years of marriage when her children were quite young. She has spent much of her adult life raising her children with the support of her mother-in-law, who died in 2005. In August 2004, we spoke in Teotitlán del Valle—one of many conversations we have held over the past twenty years. On that occasion Catalina had returned temporarily to Teotitlán to prepare for her youngest child's wedding, which was taking place later that month.

Catalina's hair is pulled together in one long, thick braid that snakes down her back. The braid is now slightly tinged with gray but is mostly black. She has a wide, round face which is open. Her eyes are dark pools of kindness that reflect someone who knows suffering. She has a quick smile and often tilts her head when her smile is relaxed. Her arms are thick and strong, as are her hands. This comes from grinding cornmeal by hand since she was eight years old and decades of hard work cooking, cleaning,

and taking care of her own and other people's children. Here she describes twelve years she spent raising the children of an Anglo couple in the Greater Los Angeles area as well as the friendships she developed with other nannies and domestic workers from Latin America.

CATALINA: At first, I was living with my sister and my brother-in-law and I was cleaning houses with my sister Margarita. After that, one of the women we were cleaning for, her name was Rose Hoffman, took me to her house. I went there with my sister Margarita. Rose had a little boy named Carl who was one year and four months old. She liked my work, and sometimes she would leave her little boy with me. She was pregnant with a girl at that time. So she told me that I could take care of him for one or two hours while I was there cleaning. She told me that she liked my work, but I didn't speak English and she spoke very little Spanish.

When she was close to giving birth to her baby, she asked my sister Margarita if I could work with her and take care of her kids. The woman who had been working for her taking care of her son was very old, and she wasn't going to be able to take care of two small children. So she asked me if I could take care of them. This was in 1991 . . . I told her that I couldn't because I couldn't speak any English and they didn't speak Spanish.

LYNN: How much Spanish did she speak?

CATALINA: Very little. So she told me that I could go to school to learn English so I could learn to talk with her and she could teach me what I needed to do. But I didn't want to go to school for a long time because it is very difficult to learn another language. Well, she started to cry and said, "Please, I want someone I can trust."

My sister Margarita had been cleaning her house for some years and she knew her very well. Margarita said to me, "Rose really wants you to work with her."

I said to Margarita, "No. I came to help you. I am not going to look for other work. Besides, I can't work for her because I don't speak English."

. . . The señora called me every day asking me to work for her. She called my sister every day, too. . . . Finally my sister said, "Please, she really wants you to do this. Can you please do this?" So finally, I said, "Yes. I can do it."

. . . So I started working slowly for her, four hours here, then five hours every day. Margarita was living in Santa Ana, and Rose Hoffman lived in another small town nearby. So Margarita my sister took me there everyday to work. It was very hard for me because I didn't understand anything the señora told me. She took me by the hand and taught me everything. I was

like a mute person with her. I couldn't speak. It was very hard, and I felt really sad because I couldn't communicate with them.

Her husband would go to work at 5:30 or 6:00 in the morning. Rose wasn't going to work when I started out. But when the child was born, I had been working with her for two months. The few days she went to the hospital when the baby girl was born she didn't use me. She told me that after three days I should come to work.

When the baby was four days old, she came home. She told me then, "Thank you so much for coming to work with us. Now the new baby has arrived and you are going to take care of the children. I will be very kind to you and I will teach you everything about taking care of the new baby." She was only home for a week, and then she went back to work, and I stayed with the kids. I was there all day long. I started taking care of them at six in the morning.

LYNN: Did the baby nurse?

CATALINA: The baby didn't nurse during the day. The señora would pump her milk and then I would put it in a bottle. She would leave enough to fill up three bottles and she told me that I should give it to the baby when she cried. So I gave the milk to the baby. The baby was quite pretty. I had to always change her clothes and then the other child was there also. I was running around like a crazy person because I had two babies. The little boy was really something—*tremendo*. He was always getting into mischief. Sometimes when their grandmother would come, she would bathe the baby and I would bathe the little boy. But most of the time I was taking care of the two of them alone for twelve hours a day.

LYNN: When did you go back to see your sister and your kids?

CATALINA: I went back on the weekends to be with them. During the week I was just there to sleep and then back to work. My two children were going to school in Santa Ana. I was working five days taking care of those kids and resting on Saturday and Sunday.

LYNN: Did you really rest or did you work more?

CATALINA: I was working because I wanted to help out my sister. On Saturdays I would help Margarita wash clothes and I would wash my kids' clothes . . .

. . . I spent two and a half years like this. Then this family moved further away to San Pedro and they took me with them. The señores didn't want to look for another person. Where they moved was about an hour away from Santa Ana where my sister and kids were living. I worked for them for a total of twelve years.

One of the most difficult issues for nannies and domestic workers like Catalina can be an inability to communicate effectively with their employers and their young charges. For Catalina, learning English was important, not only for being able to communicate on the job, but to be able to maneuver better in the United States. Through a network of other domestic workers she met with in the park, Catalina eventually went back to school and learned to read and write—something she had never been able to do in Teotitlán. Her network of friends also helped to sustain her during the week when she was away from her own children, a common situation for live-in nannies.

LYNN: Did it continue to be so hard? You said at first, you were very sad because you couldn't communicate.

CATALINA: Well, everything changed because the señora had a lot of patience. When we moved to San Pedro she would sit down at the table with me at night and she would teach me a little English and I would teach her Spanish. She was very smart. She taught me some English, but I spoke Spanish with the kids. After the little girl was four years old, I was able to speak English. But then she told me she was really happy that I spoke Spanish with the children.

... I had this friend Olga who was from El Salvador. She told me I should try to speak English with the kids because then I would learn English. She said that if I wanted to change jobs and couldn't speak English, that I wouldn't be able to find a job. So after that I started to speak more English with them. I don't know what kind of English I spoke, but I did speak with them.

LYNN: How did you get to know Olga?

CATALINA: I got to know her there in San Pedro. She was working close by in another house. She did the same work as I did, taking care of kids. I also got to know others who were doing this work too. I got to know four women from Guatemala, three from El Salvador, and two from Chiapas.

LYNN: What did you talk about?

CATALINA: First we would talk about where we were from, the kind of work we were doing. We also talked about the English school, about learning English and our work. We talked to each other about how we felt about our bosses. Often we would see each other in the park. We would all take the kids we were taking care of there and each lunch together. We would take the kids on walks together. They were important friendships.

... I also got to know an American woman there as well. Her name is

Marion. She worked in the library and she helped me to study English. She was the *patrona* (employer) of one of my friends, named Graciela from Guatemala. My friend spoke to her patrona about me. She told her that I didn't know how to read or write or really speak English. My friend Graciela told me that I would need to learn all of these things. ... So when I would take the kids over to play at the house where Graciela worked then her patrona would teach me some English.

LYNN: Is that where you learned to read and write?

CATALINA: Yes. I learned with her. I learned how to read a little bit. And after this my friend Olga told me, "You need to speak with your patrona about going to school." So I spoke with my patrona. I told her, "I want to go to school."

The little boy was already in school and the little girl was still in the house with me. She told me, "When the little girl begins to go to school, then you can go to school too." She told me that I could go to the school for a couple of hours if I had someone to take me there. Because the school was kind of far from the house where I lived and there was no bus line that arrived there. ... So my friend Marion took me to the school. She picked me up and brought me back home.

The labor of workers like Catalina became vital to significant parts of the population in California in the 1990s and beyond. In 1998, Catalina received legal residency with the assistance of her employer. She now works independently as a nanny, returning home at night.

In 2004, the Mexican filmmaker Sergio Arau and his wife, Yareli Arizmendi, produced a film titled "Un día sin Mexicanos" (A Day Without Mexicans). In the film, all of the Latino immigrants in California disappear one day without leaving a trace. A mysterious cloud envelops Los Angeles, and it is completely cut off from the outside world—the phones don't work, the Internet is interrupted, and the territory of California is completely isolated. Within a short period of time restaurants cease functioning because there are no waiters, cooks, or kitchen staff, no one cleans up anything anywhere (from city garbage to houses), vegetables and fruits rot in the fields, and the public schools also cease to function as many of the pupils, teachers, and staff have disappeared. The invisible workers become temporarily visible as most public and private services and businesses fall apart in California (see Wides 2004).

The visibility of Mexican immigrant service workers in Los Angeles and other global cities began to increase in the 1990s. Hondagneu-Sotelo

reports that twice as many gardeners and domestic workers were working in Los Angeles in 1990 as in 1980. These jobs are performed by Mexican, Salvadoran, and Guatemalan immigrants who by 1990 "numbered about 2 million and made up more than half the adults who had immigrated to Los Angeles since 1965" (2001: 7). For women like Catalina, some of the best job opportunities were in housecleaning, childcare, elder care, and other paid domestic work.

The labor force participation of women in the United States rose steadily beginning in the 1960s and leveled off to slightly over 80 percent by 1995 (Fair and Macunovich 1996: 2). By 1990 in the United States, women were 45 percent of the total labor force (Goldin 2002: 1). This statistic included a group that has resisted joining the labor force—married women with small infants. While the numbers of women—particularly married women with children—who are in the paid labor force have increased dramatically in the past three decades in the United States and in other industrialized countries, they still remain responsible for what is known as the reproductive labor of households. Rhacel Salazar Parreñas defines reproductive labor as "the labor needed to sustain the productive labor force. Such work includes household chores; the care of elders, adults, and youth; the socialization of children; and the maintenance of social ties in the family" (2001: 61; see also Glenn 1992). For professional women, the easiest way to maintain their professional positions is by purchasing the services of other women to perform work as day-care providers, after-school baby sitters, and as privately hired domestic workers and nannies. Having high incomes, families that include professionals have the flexibility to buy the services they need. The hiring of Mexican immigrant women such as Catalina as private nannies and domestic workers is a gendered and racial dimension of the integration of global economies.

In her analysis of Filipina domestic workers in Los Angeles and Rome, Salazar Parreñas emphasizes the ways in which the globalization of the market economy has extended the politics of reproductive labor into the international arena. She calls for an understanding of the racial division of reproductive labor in its globalized dimensions as part of the international division of labor (2001: 62). This international transfer of caretaking from one group of women to another involves social, political, racial, and economic relationships between women in the global labor market. Salazar Parreñas elaborates: "This division of labor is a structural relationship of inequality based on class, race, gender, and (nation-based)

citizenship. In this division of labor, there is a gradational decline in worth of reproductive labor. As Rothman (1989: 43) poignantly describes, 'When performed by mothers we call this mothering . . . ; when performed by hired hands we call it unskilled.'" Regional race, class, and gender relations contain specific histories of the domestic worker—employer dyad between women.

Mexican immigrant women and Mexican American women have filled the occupation of domestic worker along with Asian, African American, and Native American women in the western part of the United States since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This stems in part from the area's proximity to Mexico and also from the fact that much of the southwestern United States was part of Mexico until 1848. From the 1880s until World War II, domestic work provided the largest source of non-agricultural employment for women of Mexican descent (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001: 15). This trend continued well into the 1970s in some regions and into the present in places such as Los Angeles. As Hondagneu-Sotelo points out, by opening up public sector jobs to African American and Mexican American women, "the Civil Rights act made it possible for them to leave domestic service and move into jobs as secretaries, sales clerks and public service employees as well as into low-paid service jobs in convalescent homes, hospitals, cafeterias and hotels" (2001: 16). By the mid-1970s, immigrant Mexican and other immigrant women (primarily Latin American and Asian) began to fill the shoes of Mexican American, Chicana, and African American women who had predominated in domestic labor. In Los Angeles, "the percentage of African American women working as domestics in private households fell from 35 percent to 4 percent from 1970 to 1990, while foreign-born Latinas increased their representation from 9 percent to 68 percent (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001: 17). During the 1990s and beyond these numbers undoubtedly grew as the number of Latin American immigrants increased significantly not only in Los Angeles, but elsewhere as well. Many undocumented women initially start as live-ins, as Catalina did, before moving on to other kinds of more independent work. Thus the trend in service-based economies that favored immigrant women's providing reproductive labor services emerged in tandem with the adoption of neoliberal economic models around the world. The trends outlined above, which were exacerbated by NAFTA in Mexico—such as lower real wages and decreased supports to consumers for basic consumption goods—combined with increased demand in the United States for domestic labor. For people like Catalina and Emiliano

these conditions produced a situation that made it difficult to refuse domestic work in the United States when earning possibilities were fewer and at significantly lower wages in Mexico.

Conclusions

As we have seen in this chapter, the political and economic integration of Mexico and the United States throughout the twentieth century is closely tied to the movement of people within each country and across borders. The work experiences of people like José Luis, Mariano, Catalina, and Emiliano are closely linked to the larger political economy of the United States and Mexico. In their daily life experiences, however, the personal, emotional, and physical experiences of work are what they emphasize in their recollections of migrating and working in Mexico and in the United States. The effort and dignity they bring to their work are stressed as are their relationships with employers, other workers, and other migrants. The challenge for ethnographers is to both conceptualize the larger structural conditions framing migration and work—such as the emergence of consumer markets in the United States for fresh produce and domestic services and the effects of neoliberal economic policy in Mexico—as well as to capture the human relationships and lived and remembered experience of cross-border workers. Thus the geographies we create of cross-border migration and work have to be multidimensional, responding not only to structural conditions but also to embodied memories and experience. As we will see in the next chapter, work experiences and memories are also integrated with the status of actual or presumed “illegality” that many workers have faced when they were undocumented and simultaneously trying to remain invisible while also the objects of surveillance.

CHAPTER 5

Surveillance and Invisibility

in the Lives of Indigenous Farmworkers in Oregon

Americans face a dilemma. While in our post-9/11 culture many are calling for stricter border controls and ever more stringent immigration legislation to prevent the entrance of terrorists to the United States, we have a food economy that is highly dependent on recent immigrant labor—much of it Mexican and much of it undocumented. On February 17, 2005, the *New York Times* reported, “New intelligence information strongly suggests that Al Qaeda has considered infiltrating the United States through the Mexican border, top government officials told Congress” (Jehl 2005). Undocumented workers and others who are read as undocumented in the United States and increasingly as supposed possible terrorists have been living in the world of surveillance and limited personal liberties for quite some time. They live in a contradictory state of trying to maintain invisibility while simultaneously being the object of significant surveillance at different points in their journey and work experiences in the United States.

Scholars such as Alejandro Lugo (2000) and Renato Rosaldo (1997) have questioned overly optimistic readings of the border that leave behind the militarized, policing, segregation, and surveillance aspects of border life for working men and women. While the border is perhaps the most intensive location of surveillance, for undocumented workers and even for those who have papers, being watched continues to be one of the most difficult parts of their work experience because of continued nervousness about being undocumented. In farm labor camps, surveillance of workers extends far beyond the kind of supervision normally found in the fields and food processing factories. Labor contractors often strictly control who can have access to labor camps, the forms of transportation available,