

AMMPARO

Accompanying Migrants with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities

*Migrant Journey: A Guide to Creating
An Interactive Learning Experience*

WHAT IS THE MIGRANT JOURNEY?

The migrant journey is an interactive experience to learn about the factors driving people to flee their homes and seek refuge in the Americas. As people go through the journey, they learn why children and families are fleeing from their homes and the obstacles they face finding protection in other countries, including the United States.

The migrant journey is an experience that congregations (or any other group) can use to learn more about the perilous journey that children and families are making every day.

WHAT YOU NEED TO SET UP A MIGRANT JOURNEY EXPERIENCE:

Materials and space:

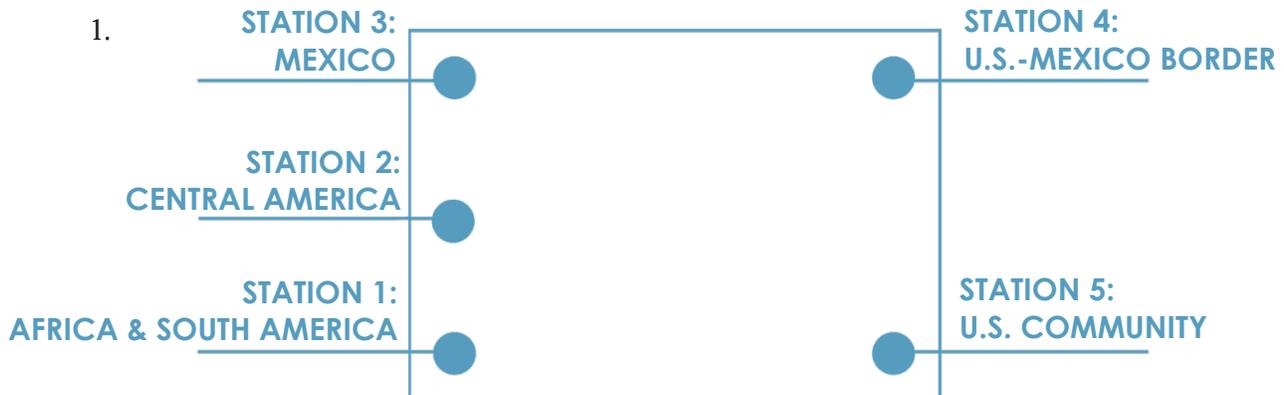
- The printed descriptions of the characters for each section.
- Space with room for five stations. An example is shown on the next page. The migrant journey is most effective when small groups of participants can walk from one location to another. But it is also effective in a large room where only the characters do so.
- If possible, use pictures at each station. You will need pictures representing:
 - Cameroon, Venezuela, Colombia, and the Darien Gap
- * Central American countries
 - Mexico
 - the U.S.-Mexico border
 - a U.S. community

Staff:

- One guide to take people through the migrant journey per every 15 people. Ideally, this person has a basic knowledge of the challenges in migrating to the Americas.
 - We recommend setting up groups of 15 people to go through the migrant journey together and determine the number of guides accordingly. Participants can learn more at ELCA AMMPARO or ELCA Advocacy.

BEFORE STARTING THE MIGRANT JOURNEY:

1. Set up five stations, each representing a place that migrants encounter in their journey. Be creative!



2. Prepare the guides for the important role they play! They should read the script below to familiarize themselves with the journey. Through the migrant journey, guides will:
 - facilitate conversation;
 - describe each setting; and
 - make sure each person knows their role and when to speak.
3. Prepare the guides for the important role they play! They should read the script below to familiarize themselves with the journey. Through the migrant journey, guides will:
 - facilitate conversation;
 - describe each setting; and
 - make sure each person knows their role and when to speak.

SUGGESTED SCRIPT FOR GUIDES

The following is a general script that guides can use as they are guiding people through the migrant journey. Groups will begin the journey in Central America, move to Mexico, then to the U.S.-Mexico border and finish the journey in a U.S. community. Guides will take people through the journey, explain what is happening and ask question to ensure this is an interactive experience.

Before starting the journey, you will:

- introduce yourself and your role in the journey;
- introduce people to the dynamics;
- hand out roles; and
- explain the reasons why children and families are forced to flee their communities -see script below

Welcome to the Migrant Journey! The Migrant Journey is an experiential learning activity that takes you through the principal migration routes in the Americas. Beginning in Western Africa, through South America, Central America and Mexico, this journey will lead us to a common destination of many people seeking safety, the United States. By the end of the journey, we hope you will understand some of the factors that force families and children to flee their communities and about the dangers they encounter along the way. At the same time, we will consider the resilience and self-determination that drive people to seek a dignified life. We need people to be some of the characters we will meet on the journey.
(Here you can hand out roles)

Starting in 2011, an increased number of unaccompanied children and families began leaving El Salvador, Honduras & Guatemala (the Northern Triangle) to make the perilous journey through Mexico. In 2014, there were about **70,000** unaccompanied children and another **70,000** families. Those numbers declined in 2015 but began increasing again in 2016. In 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic changed everything, more than **470,000** families and **76,000** unaccompanied children were apprehended by U. S. border patrol agents at the southwest border.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a global phenomenon that saw many nations implement border closures. The official statistics of Customs and Border Protection for 2020 reflect pandemic measures implemented by the United States, including a near total ban on asylum seekers under Title 42. These figures show arrivals plunging and then steadily climbing again between 2020-2022. So far in 2023, more than **430,000** families and **91,000** unaccompanied children have crossed the southwest border. These figures represent the sum of apprehensions between ports of entry, at ports of entry, and expulsions of migrant families and unaccompanied children. Numbers fail to tell the whole story—on the contrary, numbers skim important details and real-life consequences.

*Let's unpack some general trends. [Source: [CBP](#)]
 Migration, as we know it, has changed significantly since 2019. Migration to the United States from Central America, especially the Northern Triangle, and Nicaragua remains high. Intense poverty, climate shocks, and threats of violence are among the push factors impacting people in this region. But migrants embark from as far away as Cameroon, Afghanistan, and Ukraine and in greater numbers than ever before, often first landing in South America which is easier to fly to directly. For many, the journey then leads through the Darien Gap, a 100-mile patch of dense and dangerous jungle in Panama bridging the South American continent and the North American one. El tapon de Darien is known for being a gateway for migrants traveling north, which must be crossed by foot, and unfortunately it has claimed many lives. People are motivated to make this dangerous journey for many, often interrelated reasons. Official statistics from Panama's National Migration Service recorded that between January and March of 2023, most people attempting passage through the Darien were of Venezuelan, Haitian, and Ecuadorian origin. In one survey taken of people in Darien, **94%** of respondents said their final destination was the United States. [Source: [RFV](#)] Even as we highlight how many families and children are heading north, it's important to underline an important fact: most refugees and displaced people stay as close to their home countries as possible. Systemic reasons can push people to migrate multiple times.*

Several of you will be playing the roles of people along the migrant journey. These stories are based on real stories that we have received from the ELCA's global companions and AMMPARO partners who accompany children, youth, and women at key points along the migrant journey – countries of origin, in-transit countries and countries of return.

Content Warning:

Because we will be discussing topics like targeted violence and persecution, sexual and gender-based violence, racism, and death, we acknowledge that this may trigger strong emotions, particularly among directly impacted individuals. Recognizing that many directly impacted individuals have passed through this journey and may relive said trauma, we will strive to honor the best interest and safety of those individuals by slowing down, taking a beat to process, and answer questions as best as we can. The vulnerability and opportunity for shared learning we want to facilitate should not come at the personal cost of your well being. We want to encourage you to participate as much or as little as you feel comfortable.

Now let's move to Station 1.....

Station 1: Africa and South America

Sample script for guides

ROLES: Cameroonian mother/teacher and Venezuelan mother

SCRIPT:

We begin in Cameroon, in a country gripped by a human rights crisis. What would make you leave your home and your country? (*Wait for answer.*) Let's learn from someone from Cameroon. Please tell us your story.

1 Cameroonian mother/teacher

Questions for storytellers: Do you want to leave your country? What will happen if you stay? Are you going to stay or leave?

Helpful facts for this station

- *According to the U.S. State Department, the United Nations, and many other sources, violence plays a huge role in why people are displaced.*
- *According to human rights watchdogs, at least 4,000 civilians have been killed by both government forces and armed separatist fighters since late 2016 in the North-West and South-West regions.*
- *People have been persecuted for their political beliefs, sexual and gender orientation, and for participating in non-violent protests in Cameroon.*
- *Between 2019-2020, dozens of Cameroonians who fled to the United States to seek asylum were deported, where they were returned to torture, harassment, and other serious harm.*

Transition to the next section

(Most people will choose to make the journey. If someone chooses not to, they will likely have to spend all their time watching over their shoulders as the fighting wears on. They will also be putting their family at risk as they have now been identified as a target.)

Let's turn to a different experience. Venezuela has the most displacement in Latin America. Venezuelan migrants are fleeing in large numbers to neighboring countries in South America. We'll now meet someone from Venezuela. Let's learn from their experience so far.

2 Venezuelan mother

Questions for storytellers: What are some reasons someone may not want to go further north? Are you going to stay or leave?

Helpful facts for this station

- *7.3 million. That's how many Venezuelan refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers reportedly have left Venezuela. It's likely an undercount.*
- *Globally, the number of people who have left Venezuela is second only to Syria in scale.*
- *While most people presume that all migrants are headed to the US, in fact, most refugees and migrants prefer to remain close to their country of origin. Latin America and the Caribbean collectively host 6.14 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants. Colombia hosts the most of any single nation.*
- *Since October 2022, the United States government has offered Venezuelans a short-term stay in the US through what's known as humanitarian parole, if the person can secure a sponsor, have all their paperwork in order, and pay for their own flight to the US. Someone can apply even if they are in Mexico! Humanitarian parole is a temporary status that lasts typically 1-2 years.*

Transition to the next section

Sometimes, people make the best decision they can with the resources they have and later down the line, this might change. .

Transition to the next section

While it looks differently for everyone, most migrants will need to go through the Darien Gap. The New York Times recently did an immersive report. They talk about the turbulent rivers, lack of food, shelter, and water.

Let's continue the journey.

STATION 2: Central America

ROLES: Haitian husband or Haitian wife, 2. Nicaraguan university student, Central American parent, Central American youth, Central American youth

SCRIPT:

We are at a major border crossing between Nicaragua and Honduras, Trojes. We turn to two other people who are holding out hope for a similar sense of security. What would you give to be safe? (*Wait for answer.*) This story is based on a couple from Haiti who initially emigrated to Brazil, but then resumed their journey because they continued to feel vulnerable. Let's learn from their stories.

Please tell us your story. [*Note to facilitator: You can opt to use the story of the Haitian man or woman, depending upon the make-up of the group you're leading.*]

3 Haitian husband

4 Haitian wife

Questions for storytellers: What are some reasons someone might have to leave the place they emigrated to? Do you think it's easy to start over many times over? Are you going to stay or leave?

Helpful facts for this station

- *The number of Haitian migrants to Brazil and Chile rose after Haiti's earthquake in 2010. Many were eager to stay. But factors like tightening immigration laws, anti-Black racism, lack of employment prospects, and marginalization made staying in Brazil and Chile difficult. As early as 2015, many Haitians departed and made their way north. Then, in 2020 Haitian migration accelerated significantly. [Source: [IMUMI](#)]*
- *Haitians leaving Brazil for Mexico pass through between eight to 10 countries over the course of several months. In total, it can take between two and four months to reach Mexico. [Source: [IMUMI](#)]*
- *Migrants may pay smugglers to guide them through. Those smugglers are known to abandon, rob, extort, and commits acts of sexual assault. This is largely done with impunity.*
- *Trojes is along the border between Nicaragua and Honduras—about 80% of migrants journeying north, pass through Trojes.*

Transition to the next section

(Most people will choose to make the journey. If someone chooses not to, they will likely have to eke out an existence that is rife with anti-Black racism and xenophobia, diminishing their actual chances of becoming fully integrated. Migrating to another country with more jobs and perhaps less racism is fresh opportunity.)

Honduras has one of the highest murder rates in the world. According to the UN World Food Programme, it's also facing dire food insecurity. It's located in the Dry Corridor, which climate change has made drier, hotter, and less able to support crops. Let's meet some people and learn from their stories.

Please tell us your stories.

5 Central American mother

6 Central American youth

7 Central American youth

Questions for storytellers: Do you want to leave your country? What will happen if you stay? If you leave, how will you make the trip north? Are you going to stay or leave?

Helpful facts for this station

- Beyond violence, people also leave due to lack of opportunities, poverty and environmental degradation. These reasons are often interrelated.
- WFP estimates that, as of October 2021, the number of food insecure people in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras grew three-fold to 6.4 million, from 2.2 million people in 2019. [Source: [WFP](#)]

- *Police and other authority figures often are the perpetrators of violence, or they work with other expressions of organized crime, like gangs, so reporting crimes can be dangerous. The majority of murders in these three countries are never solved.*
- *Families often get loans or borrow against their house to pay for a guide called a coyote. The more money you pay, the more comfortable you might be, but the journey isn't safe for anyone. In 2021, the average was USD \$7,500 per person. [Source: [MPI](#)]*

Transition to the next section

Nicaragua stands out because of the record-number of people who have fled. Nicaraguans mainly fled to neighboring countries. Many have also sought asylum in the U.S. Government repression, violence, and extreme poverty have forced thousands of teachers, nurses, and everyday people to say goodbye to their loved ones. This is the case of the following person you'll hear from.

Please tell us your story.

Scene 1

8 Nicaraguan university student

Questions for storytellers: Do you want to leave your country? What will happen if you stay? If you leave, how will you make the trip north? Are you going to stay or leave?

Helpful facts for this station

- In 2018, Nicaragua experienced social and political upheaval—thousands were arbitrarily detained for expressing their views, and many were persecuted, especially university students, religious leaders, and opposition party members.
- Numerous international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have exited Nicaragua because of the political environment. The sum of NGOs to experience this fate is 3,248 since popular unrest broke out in April 2018.
- More recently, the U.S. government called for the release of Father Rolando Alvarez, Bishop of Matagalpa, a Roman-Catholic leader. His arrest comes after Nicaragua expelled 222 political prisoners. They were received by the U.S. government.

Let's continue the journey.

Station 3: Mexico

In this station you will:

- introduce people to the dangers people face as they travel through Mexico to the United States;
- talk about the asylum and protection system in Mexico; and
- introduce people to a Mexican police officer and a shelter worker in southern Mexico.

ROLES: Police Officer, Mexican Shelter Director

SCRIPT:

Our teacher from Cameroon made it across multiple countries by plane, boat, and foot. The Haitian couple has made and remade their lives too many times but know they must keep pushing. The Nicaraguan student has just made it to Guatemala. Like the others, they will need to navigate governmental corruption for the remainder of their journey. They encounter people in Guatemala who threaten and rob them.

9 Police Officer

Questions for storytellers: Are you going to seek asylum in Guatemala? If so, where would you stay? If not, it is likely you will need to pay a bribe to advance. What do you have of value that might be accepted so that you're allowed to pass?

Helpful facts for this station

- *The gangs that operate in Honduras are also present in Guatemala; they have sophisticated intelligence networks and cooperate with each other. So, you can't really be safe in Guatemala.*
- *Guatemala has really stepped immigration enforcement through militarization of its borders.*
- *In April 2021, President Biden negotiated agreements with the governments of Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras to deploy their national security forces at their borders to deter irregular migration.*
- *Under these agreements, security forces attempt to impede migrants of every nationality from continuing their journey. If they are fleeing violence, they generally have the option of filing an asylum claim in the country they're in. If not, they will be sent back to their country of origin.*
- *We know that the Guatemalan asylum system is in its infancy. Guatemala receives very few asylum applications and approves even less.*

Transition to the next station

Our migrants have now trekked across rivers, deserts and mountains. They have witnessed serious human rights violations and violence inflicted on migrants. They've found a shelter in Mexico where they shower and sleep. Let's see what we can learn from the shelter director.

10 Mexican Shelter Director

Questions for storytellers:

- To the Mexican Shelter Director: How do you feel when you see these individuals, families, and children come this way? How do you hope that people will remember their experience here at your shelter?
- To migrant storytellers: In a simple phrase, what do you feel when you see the shelter director? Why?

Helpful facts to know for this section:

- *In addition to the dangers of hopping on a train or walking long distances, migrants say they encounter kidnappings, killings, theft and many forms of violence as they journey through Mexico.*
- *Sexual and gender-based violence is a common way that women are attacked. Rape is so common that doctors in Central America report that most women & teenage girls get birth control before they make the journey.*
- *Mexico has increased enforcement along their southern border with Guatemala, both at the urging of President Biden, and because it has been tightening its borders. Mexico's National Guard, a civil force, that was created to go.*

after drug cartels, has been used primarily for immigration enforcement activities. Leading up to May 11, the expiration of Title 42, Mexico's president deployed even more personnel Mexico's southern border to restrict migration.

- *Many of the shelters that provide services to migrants in Mexico are faith-based and have been providing food and shelter to migrants for many years. They have had to adapt in the last few years because so many people are requesting asylum (refugee status) in Mexico. Migrants who have filed asylum claims need a place to stay for weeks/months while their claim is being processed by COMAR (Mexican Commission for Assistance to Refugees).*
- *In 2022, Mexico granted some kind of international protection in 63% of cases. In that same year, Mexico rejected 80% of asylum applications from Haitian nationals [Source: [COMAR](#)]*

Suggested transition to the next station

Temporary shelters generally have a two-day maximum for people to stay, so you still have a long road ahead of you.

You have used your money to pay for a coyote and possibly a boat to cross the river. You still need to get through almost all of Mexico with no money. You hope another police officer doesn't stop you before you reach the U.S. border.

Let's continue the journey.

Station 4: U.S.-Mexico border

In this station you will:

- teach people the process of applying for asylum in the United States;
- talk about the process for children and families who arrive at the U.S. border; and
- dispel myths about border security.

ROLE: U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agent

SCRIPT:

We are now at the U.S.-Mexico border. In your journey you have likely seen or experienced different types of violence and discrimination. While in years past many migrants tried to avoid law enforcement, today children and families generally turn themselves in to authorities to begin a legal process.

You are going to meet a Border Patrol Agent.

11 U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agent

Questions for storytellers:

- To U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agent: How do you feel about the number of children and families arriving at the border? Do you think you can tell if they left their homes out of fear and should qualify for asylum?

- To migrant storytellers: How do you feel about being sent back to Mexico if you file an asylum claim? What are you going to do?

It is important to highlight that it is legal under U.S. and international law for the migrants we have followed to enter the United States and ask for asylum (or refugee status). Asylum laws were formalized after World War II. The process for unaccompanied children, adults or families is a little different. Because the United States has a law that says that the U.S. government will ensure that children in its custody are not the victims of trafficking or other types of abuse, unaccompanied children (except for UAC from Mexico or Canada) are evaluated by specialists and likely end up in a U.S. community awaiting their legal case to go to court. During the Biden administration, families with children may spend a few days in CBP custody, but they are not supposed to be detained for long periods of time in immigration custody. Instead, many families are enrolled in an alternative to detention program, such as an ankle monitor. Public opinion often considers the trafficking laws for children and asylum laws as loopholes, but they are, in fact, staples of our immigration system.

Helpful facts for this section

- *There are approximately 700 miles of fence on the border. Areas that do not have a fence are either private property, a river or a wildlife preserve.*
- *Existing U.S. law says that the U.S. government will ensure that children in its custody are not the victims of trafficking or other types of abuse; children and families from Central America are supposed to be evaluated by a specialist. In the past, after initiating an asylum claim, they waited for the legal case to go to court either in detention (mother and child in a jail-like setting) or released with an alternative to detention such as an ankle monitor.*
- *Being granted asylum is difficult. Individuals must prove they were targeted, have reasonable fear of future persecution and that their country could not protect them. They must also prove they were targeted because of their race, religion, national origin, political opinion or membership in a social group. Asylum applicants must wait on average 4.2 years before a final decision from an immigration judge.*
- *While there are backlogs in the immigration system, quickly processing people without enough time to gather evidence for their cases is also dangerous.*
- *Under the Biden Administration's latest asylum rule many call an "Asylum Ban", asylum seekers who have not applied for and been denied asylum in another country on their way to the United States, or who did not utilize "lawful pathways" such as the scheduling app CBP One, are then considered presumptively ineligible for asylum. They are quickly deported to their home country or Mexico, which has agreed to receive deported Venezuelan, Nicaraguan, Cuban, and Haitian migrants.*
- *If someone does not have an appointment through the CBP One App, they will need to prove they meet an exceptional compelling circumstance or couldn't use the app due to illiteracy, a language barrier or technological problem. The asylum ban is rebuttable under "exceptionally compelling circumstances" like acute medical emergency in the family or imminent, extreme threat to life, or if meets the legal definition of a "victim of a severe form of trafficking in persons." Unaccompanied children are exempt.*
- *The communities on the Mexican side of the border are extremely dangerous because of the presence of notorious drug cartels and other forms of organized crime.*

We're nearing the final destination of our migrant storytellers, but just the beginning of yours.

STATION #5: U.S. COMMUNITIES

ROLES: School Teacher, Senator Hugh, Ranking Member of the Senate Homeland Security Committee

SCRIPT

Many migrant children and families live in communities throughout the United States while awaiting their immigration hearing. Although we might encounter unaccompanied children and families in our schools or communities, they are likely still awaiting an immigration decision and face deportation if they do not get approved for asylum.

There are numerous proposals in Congress attempting to repeal trafficking laws for children and make life harder for children and families like the ones we have met during this journey. The ELCA adopted the AMMPARO Strategy for its members to advocate, accompany and create awareness about what we learned today. We will meet a schoolteacher now, as well as a member of Congress who has a say in how immigration laws are written.

Let us hear from the School Teacher.

12 School Teacher

Let us pay a visit to Senator Hugh in his legislative office. First, we'll hear what his position is on all of this.

13 Senator Hugh, Ranking Member of the Senate Homeland Security Committee

Questions for storytellers & group:

- To the School Teacher: How do you feel about having these children in your classroom? What are some of the barriers they face to success?
- To Senator Hugh: What are some practical solutions to the issues you've heard about?
- Final questions for the group: What do you think of the Senator's position? What do you want to say to your U.S. Representative/Senators?

Helpful facts for this section

- H.R. 2
- Threats to the Flores Settlement Agreement
- Increasing funding for harmful immigration detention and enforcement

REFLECTION AND WRAP UP

Sample script for reflection and wrap-up

What was the most surprising thing for you?

What would you like to know more about?

In 2016, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly passed the AMMPARO Strategy for its members to advocate, accompany and create awareness about what we learned today. We are all included in work that addresses the drivers of migration in countries of origin, upholds the basic rights and safety of migrant children and families in countries of transit and destination and works toward just and humane policies. Through its public witness, the ELCA lives out a core Lutheran belief that governments can help advance the common good. With AMMPARO, the ELCA is committed to advocate toward just and humane policies affecting migrants in and outside the U.S.

In the US, congregations accompany migrants in their communities through welcoming and sanctuary congregations and synod task forces, accompany migrant children and families as the physical presence of the church in the immigration courtroom and pray for justice. Did you know that there are 92 verses in the bible that talk about welcoming the stranger? Take the 40 day Bible and Prayer Challenge on this bookmark and see what God is calling you to do!

On a scale from 1-10 would you recommend this experience? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Explain:

Are there changes that you feel would make this experience more powerful?

ROLES**1** **Cameroonian mother/teacher**

I am a teacher in Cameroon, an ethnically diverse country with two official languages, English and French. Five years ago English-speaking teachers and lawyers protested non-violently against the government who continued to send only French speaking lawyers and teachers to work in the English-speaking region. Protesters were killed and many were arrested put in prison with no charges. Larger protests were started and the situation has continued with brutal military action with force as a response. I have been threatened by both sides of the conflict because I won't take a side and am afraid for my life. First, the protesters came to me and told me since I spoke English I needed to join the protest. I didn't want to but I did go to a protest and barely escaped without being harmed by the military and shortly afterwards. My neighbor who is connected to the military told me that her husband told her that I was on the list of persons to be disappeared and killed by the military.

I have no choice but to leave my partner and two children ages 9 and 6 behind to go to the US where I hope to be safe and be able to use my English skills to teach to support my family. Shortly after I left Cameroon, my partner left my children and went to the city. My children are left with no support and living with neighbors.

2 Haitian husband

My wife and I have been on the road for more than 2 years. We spent some time in Brazil, then made the treacherous journey through the Darien Gap where we witnessed the murder of a Haitian man who tried to intervene while his wife was being gang raped by armed gunmen in front of all of us. In Panama, we spent some time in a refugee camp and then reached Costa Rica.

In Costa Rica, we took refuge in the migrant shelter of the Costa Rican Lutheran Church (ILCO) for 2 months. While living there, we realized that my wife was pregnant. I was going to be a father! To our dismay, the racist treatment of Haitian migrants continued. I couldn't get work in Costa Rica because of the color of my skin. But I didn't give up. I was driven by the desire to create a better life for my wife and our baby who was on the way.

We moved from San Jose to Limón province which has a large population of Afro-Caribbeans. We thought it would be easier to find work there and to live in a less racist environment. Two months later, we lost our baby when my wife suffered a miscarriage. Just when our life was getting better, we suffered this unbearable tragedy.

As soon as my wife recovered, we left Costa Rica and headed north. We've made it halfway through Central America but are hearing that the trip across Mexico is really dangerous. Also, Mexicans are known for treating Haitian migrants just as badly as the racism we already experienced in Panama and Costa Rica.

We're not sure whether to keep going in hopes of making it to the U.S. border; or go back to Costa Rica where we'll always have to live with the memory of the loss of our baby.

What should we do?

3 Haitian wife

My husband and I have been on the road for more than 2 years. We spent some time in Brazil, then made the treacherous journey through the Darien Gap where we witnessed the murder of a Haitian man who tried to intervene while his wife was being gang raped by armed gunmen in front of all of us. In Panama, we spent some time in a refugee camp and then reached Costa Rica.

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What should we do?

4 Venezuelan mother

I'm married with two teenage sons. Life has become extremely difficult for our family in the part of Venezuela where I was born, grew up and started a family. The economic situation has gotten so bad that we no longer have enough money to pay for food, even if we only eat vegetables which is the cheapest food we can buy here. My husband and I skip meals so that our sons can eat. Like most growing boys, they eat more but they also like school.

That creates a major dilemma for us: If we buy food so that they can eat, there's no money for school. If we buy what they need to go to school, there's no money for food. It's as simple as that.

It got so bad that, six months ago, my husband left Venezuela and crossed the border into Colombia. Thanks to a relative who lives in a town on the other side of the border, he is working and sending money back so that I can pull together all the documents that my sons and I will need to join him later. That was our plan when he left, but I'm having second thoughts now. Being separated from my husband for the past 6 months has made me realize how hard it will be to be separated from my parents and my sisters (the three of us are triplets), if all four of us emigrate to Colombia. We're a close-knit family and have always lived near each other. I can't bear the thought of leaving my parents and sisters behind. On the other hand, my husband and I want to provide a more dignified life for our sons.

I just learned that he will be returning to Venezuela soon. My husband expects us to go back to Colombia with him, but I'm not so sure. This is the hardest decision that I've ever had to make. What should I do?

5 Central American mother

My husband left our family a few years ago. I've been the sole supporter of our family, 3 children & aging parents who live with us. I have a small grocery store at the front of my home. The income from the store has helped me earn money to care for my family. My neighborhood borders another neighborhood that is controlled by the MS-13 gang, and its members are frequently seen in my neighborhood. In fact, these gang members have tried to get my son and his friends to join the gang! About 6 months ago, the gang started collecting money (or quotas) from all the neighborhood businesses, including mine! These payments, which must be made every 2 weeks, have gone up so much that I can hardly pay my store expenses & feed my family. There is no longer money for anything! I'm also getting scared! My brother in the US wants us to come there. Should I? I'm now thinking about this and considering how to do this.

6 Central American youth

I am a 13-year-old who lives in a neighborhood that is controlled by the MS – 13 gang. I sometimes see the gang members walk around our area. In fact, the gang has made several attempts to get me and my friends to join the gang. So far, I have resisted. One of my friends recently decided to join the gang. Now I've been told that I can't say "no" if I want to live to see another day! What should I do? I can't contact the police. Our friends have told my mom and me stories of how people, who have gone to the police to report a crime, are then visited by gang members the next day! The gang members know that the police were contacted! What should I do? I'm frightened.

7 Central American youth

I am a 14-year-old girl who has lived in the same community since birth. My neighborhood has always been part of gang territory, but I have always felt safe because I live near my school. Recently one of the gang leaders has been staring at me. He wants me to be his girlfriend! I don't want anything to do with him! I have been told by other girls that saying "no" is not an option! They have told me stories of girls who were raped and even killed because they refused! My parents want me to go north to my uncle in MA and they are talking about hiring a coyote, someone who would help me make the journey. They are checking to see how much this would cost. I just don't know. What should I do?

8 Nicaraguan university student

In April 2018, I was 20 years old and attending a private university in Managua. When the anti-government protests broke out at the National University (the country's largest), students at nearby universities – including mine – were outraged by the violence employed by police & security forces to break up those demonstrations – dozens killed, hundreds injured & imprisoned. In solidarity, we joined some of the protests at the National University. They broke up the protest that I participated in. I wasn't captured that day, but they started looking for me. To protect my family, I moved to another neighborhood where I lived in hiding for several weeks, together with a few other students in the same situation. Eventually, agents of the National Policy found me. I was taken to the infamous "El Chipote" prison where anti-government protesters were detained. For three days, they interrogated me. The interrogations included beatings and torture; I was also sexually abused. Then, I was taken before a judge. There was no trial. The judge sentenced me to 20 years in prison for "terrorism"; I was ordered to serve my sentence at home rather than in a jail ("casa por carcel") which meant that our house would be under constant surveillance. After three months of house arrest, I realized that I could not live the next 20 years of my life this way. What should I do? Stay in Nicaragua under these circumstances? Or try to figure out a way to escape to Costa Rica? Or flee north to the U.S. along with thousands of other Nicaraguans who are doing the same?

9

Mexican Police Officer

I work in a town on the Guatemala-Mexico border. I'm not sure how to feel about the increase of families and children traveling alone from other countries in Central America. While seeing children traveling alone and hanging out in the town center breaks my heart, I have also seen an increase in crime on the highway that passes through town. Migrants are often the victims of crimes; they are also sometimes the perpetrators, and I feel they have made the town more unsafe. The pay I receive as a police officer is not enough to feed my family so I ask migrants to give me money to let them continue their journey. I feel that I am giving them a break while also making some extra money to feed my family.

10

Mexican Shelter Director

I am the director for an organization that provides services for migrants in Mexico. While the organization has been a migrant shelter since the 1990s, it had to begin providing legal representation and housing outside of the shelter a few years ago when more people began seeking asylum in Mexico. While I used to do a lot more office work, the shelter is so swamped that I now assist in cases and provide psychological support. The work has taken an emotional toll on me because I don't always find out what happens to the people when they leave the shelter, but I am committed to my work because my faith calls me to it. I began working with migrants as a volunteer through my congregation 25 years ago.

11

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agent

I am a first-generation U.S. citizen from Mexico. My parents came to Arizona long before I and my brothers were born. I have always wanted to be a police officer but were frustrated with the hiring practices in my city, and someone suggested that I'd be a great Border Patrol officer. My skill in Spanish helped me get the job, and I am proud to have been an officer for two years. Recently, the job became even more stressful as many children and families were apprehended and processed. While I feel sorry for the children, I don't think their parents should be bringing them. I think people should come via legal means.

12

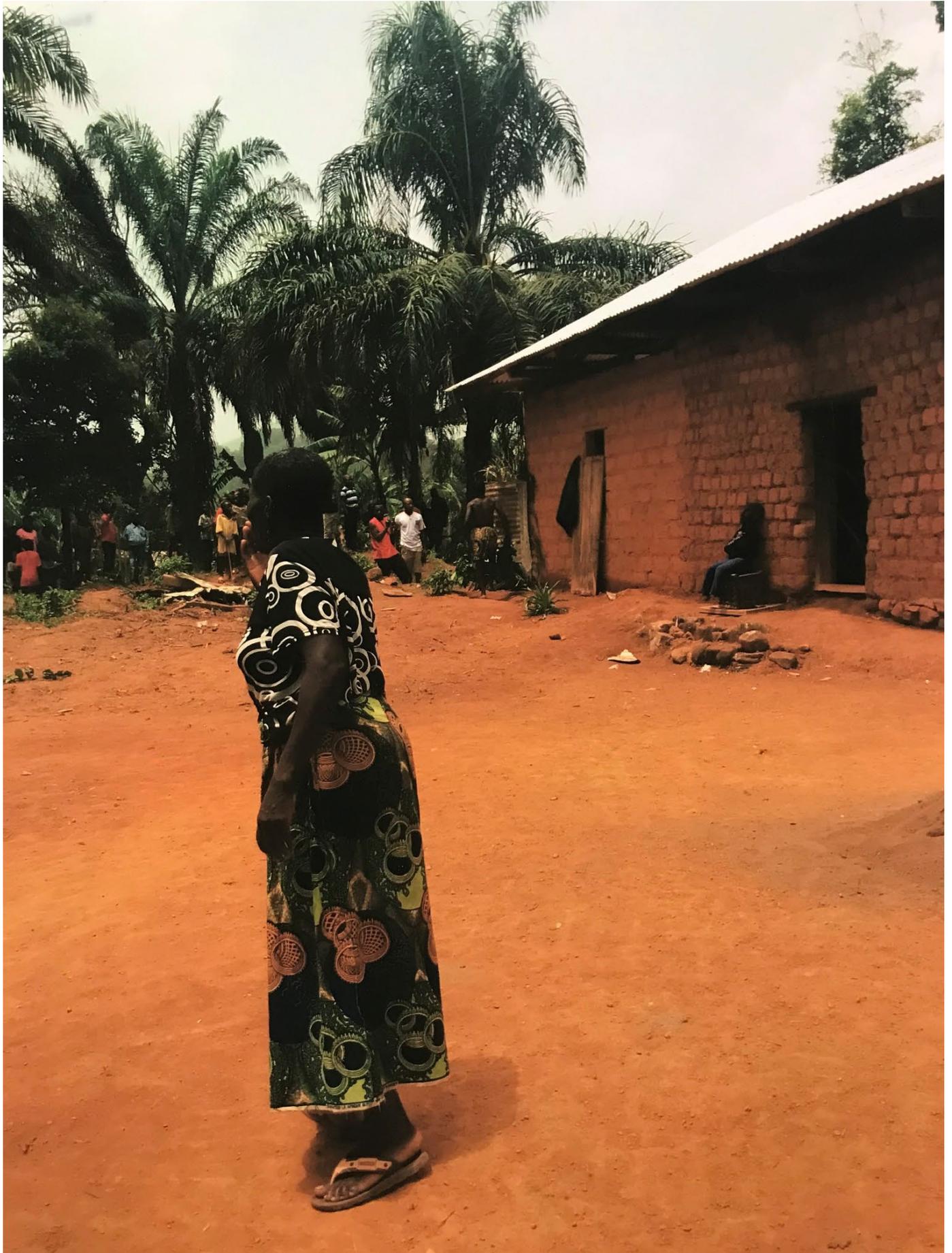
School Teacher

I am a teacher at a school in the United States that has seen the number of English as a second language students double in the last few years. While I don't completely know why, I know that most of them have had to miss school to go to immigration court. As a teacher, I am unsure how to effectively teach these students since I don't know how to keep them engaged in the classroom. In addition, their parents miss parent-teacher conferences, and I suspect that's because they don't know when they occur

13 Senator Hugh, Ranking Member of the Senate Homeland Security Committee

Last year, I voted for a bill to expand the detention of families from Central America. It seemed like the right thing to do at the time to pacify many of my anti-immigrant constituents before the election. While I think that it is heartbreaking to see families traveling together, I think that resources are better spent to help U.S. families. I know many of the families are seeking asylum, but I wonder if these families are just saying that so they can stay in the country. I know that asking for asylum when you arrive in the United States is legal, but I can't imagine things are bad enough in Central America to merit receiving asylum. I even vacationed in Guatemala a few years ago! I hear from faith-based groups that we have the responsibility to protect vulnerable children and families and, while my own faith-community has led me to be sympathetic to the migrants' stories, I don't think that my constituents would support immigration reform.

**Station 1:
Africa and South America**



1 Cameroonian Teacher



2 Cameroonian Man



3 Venezuelan Family



4 By the Darian Gap

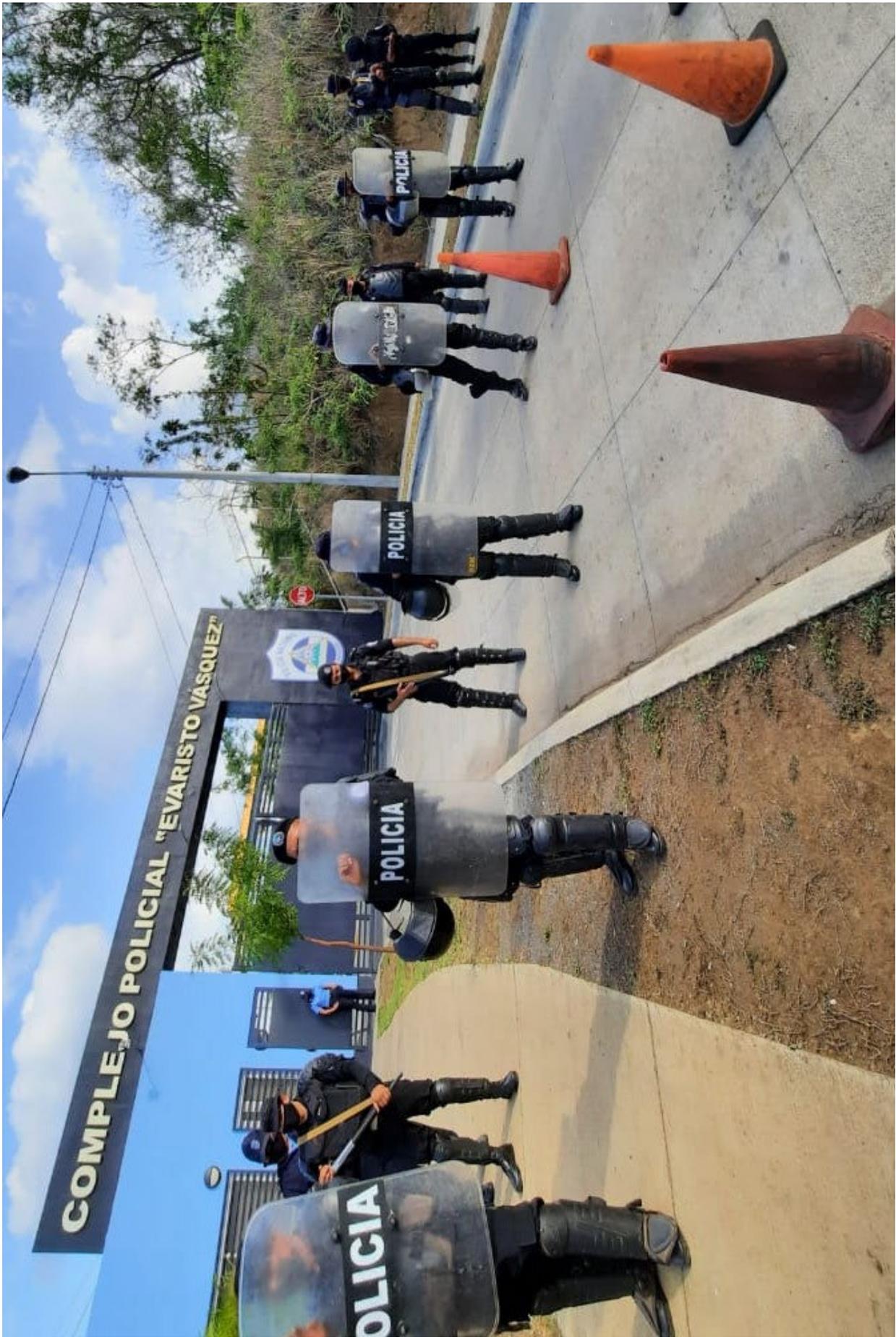


5 *The Darian Gap*

**Station 2:
Central America**

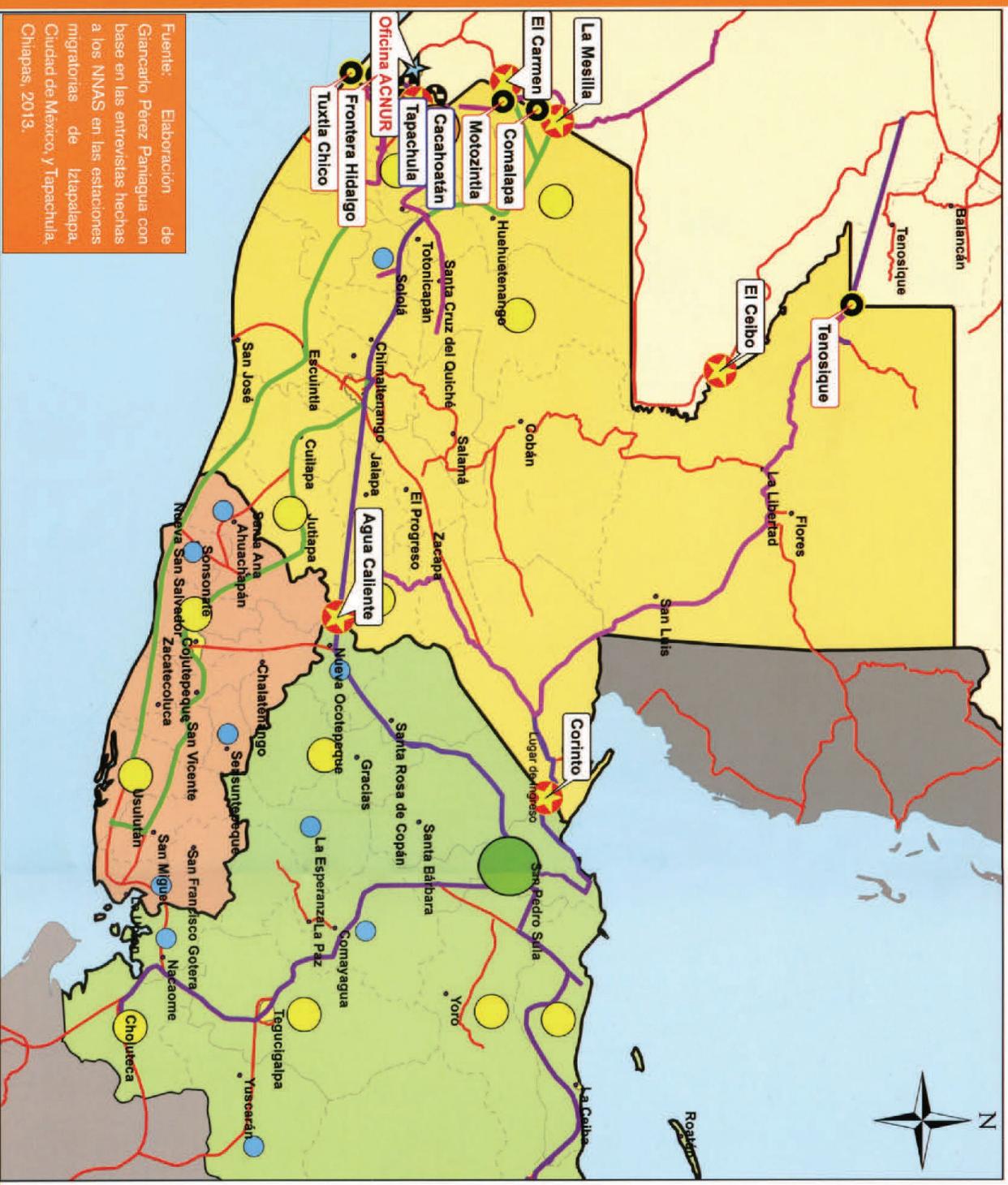


Central American Mother



Nicaraguan Police

Rutas que siguen los niños, niñas y adolescentes de Centroamérica en su desplazamiento a México

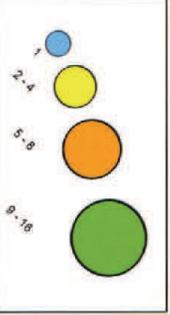


Fuente: Elaboración de Giancarlo Pérez Paniagua con base en las entrevistas hechas a los NNMS en las estaciones migratorias de Iztapalapa, Ciudad de México, y Tapachula, Chiapas, 2013.

Simbología

- Lugar de ingreso
- Aduana
- Lugar de destino
- Rutas niños/as de Gua.
- Rutas niños/as de Hon.
- Rutas niños/as de El Salv.
- Carreteras
- Limite adm. estatal
- Belice
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Honduras
- México
- Nicaragua

Rango de edades de niños/as migrantes por estado/departamento



Localización



CRISIS QUE ORIGINAN EL DESPLAZAMIENTO TRANSFRONTERIZO DE NIÑOS, NIÑAS Y ADOLESCENTES NO ACOMPAÑADOS: VÍO SEPARADOS DE CENTROAMÉRICA Y SU NECESIDAD DE PROTECCIÓN INTERNACIONAL

**Station 3:
Mexico**



Guatemala Mexico crossing by river



Migrant Shelter

**Station 4:
US-Mexico Border**



ROBERTO

MONTIEL

AÑOS

30

O
A
X
A
C
A

SERAFIN

RIVERA

AÑOS

17

O
A
X
A
C
A

LOPEZ

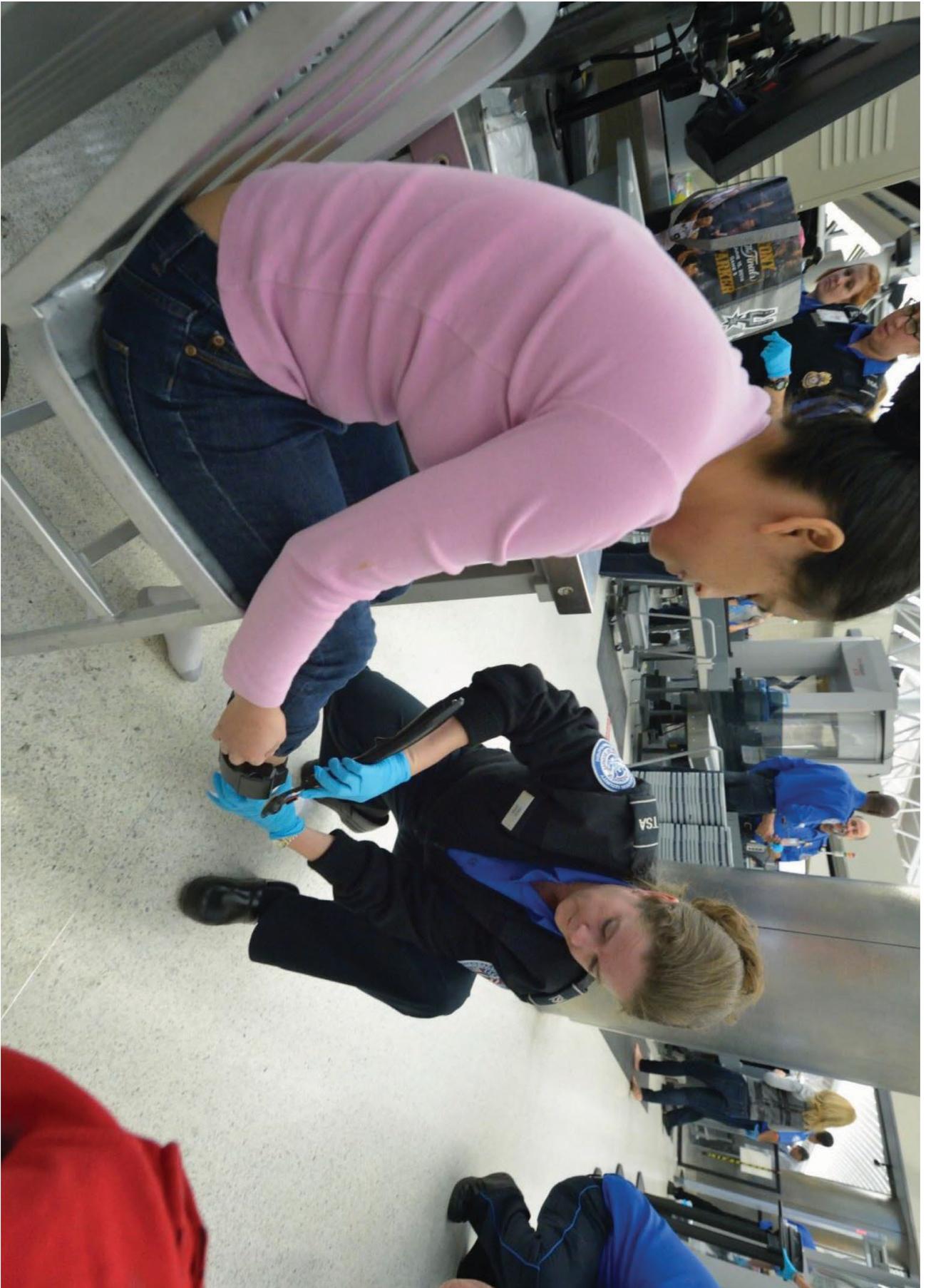
MARCELO

NO

IDENTIFICADO

IDENTIFICADO







Feet of a migrant woman arriving at the US border

Station 5:
US Communities



Migrant Family in the US, Mother wearing ankle device

