

14

by
josé casas

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JOSÉ CASAS

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14 was premiered by Teatro Bravo in September 2003 at Playhouse on the Park in Phoenix, directed by Christina Marín and with the following ensemble:

Barbara Acker

Christina Marín

Christopher Miller

Adam Villalpando

this play is dedicated to my parents,
josé estanislao casas y magdalena wong casas

and

for all those who left the country they loved
to find a better life for their families
in el norte

14

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casting

four actors are required for this play to emphasize the two main cultural groups (whites and latina/os) associated with the issue of immigration in the areas along the border. the play calls for:

- one white actress
- one latina actress
- one white actor
- one latino actor

any production that seeks to cast these roles differently *must* get permission before doing so.

set

the setting consists of a variety of locales on different areas of the stage. a video screen located upstage center (or a barren back wall) is the only set piece location that is specific. the other set pieces are to be placed at the discretion of the director. some of these set pieces may be used for more than one monologue if needed (or desired). the set pieces/locales are:

a desert water station

consists of a large plastic barrel that is painted light blue and placed atop a makeshift stand. a water valve is located at the end of the barrel and above it are stickers spelling out the word “*agua*” and a cross scribbled on with paint or marker.

a makeshift altar

adorned with pictures, flowers and an assortment of candles and personal objects.

chairs and a desk

to indicate an office, restaurant, etc.

production notes

- i. a slide/video projection should be shown at the beginning of each monologue (interview) giving the name of the piece, the name of the character, the character's occupation and hometown (as shown in the script). there are also specific slide requests within the text of the script. slides can be used to suggest setting if setting requirements for specific pieces are too cumbersome.
- ii. throughout the play, there is extensive use of the (*extended beat*) stage direction. these are meant to give the characters unspoken dialogue. they can range from an extended pause to a character action, depending on the context in which they are inserted. actors are encouraged to experiment with these extended beats and explore their "true" meanings.
- iii. the play was written with no intermission, but productions seeking to use an intermission are allowed to do so at their discretion.
- iv. productions are not allowed to change the order of the monologues. if they wish to, they *must* get permission before doing so.
- v. translations of the pieces "virgencita linda" and "muñeca" are included with the script as a courtesy, but those pieces must be performed in spanish. no exceptions will be allowed.
- vi. producers wishing to use the specific music suggested within various scenes of the play *must* acquire the rights from the property holders.

introduction

Voices of the Frontera

by Ashley Lucas

My great-grandfather was born somewhere in Mexico—where precisely, we cannot say. His father died when he was 8 years old, and my great-great-grandmother took her son and crossed the river into Texas, where my family has lived ever since. She married a white man whose last name was Duncan. She and her light-skinned son took his name and learned quickly that it was easier to live as white people in Texas than as Mexicans. We lost the family name and all the stories of our family in their native land, save this vague outline of their border crossing. Though I long to know more of my Mexican ancestors, I am painfully aware that we are among the lucky ones. My family's crossing was likely not easy, but they survived and had children who never knew the the terror of being smuggled into a new country. Reading and seeing *14* reminds me of the strange blessings of my inheritance, the immigration story so safe in its distance from me that I can afford not to know quite how it happened.

The characters in *14*, a devastatingly accurate and moving play by Chicano writer José Casas, navigate a more troubled border than past generations of my family did. On May 19, 2001, a 20-year-old smuggler named Jesus Lopez Ramos abandoned 25 Mexican immigrants in a treacherous stretch of Arizona desert known as the Devil's Path.¹ Fourteen of those left behind died of dehydration. Casas' play is named for those 14 whose stories he could not tell. Their silence enshrouds the play and begs us to imagine a world in which we could have met them.

¹ There is some inconsistency in reports of the age of smuggler Jesus Lopez Ramos. *The Los Angeles Times* identified him as 20 years old in the article "Smuggler Pleads Guilty in Deaths of 14 Immigrants," while the *Tucson Citizen* reported that he was 21 in the article "Death in the Desert/One Year Later."

His play is peopled instead with characters from interviews he conducted with Arizona residents from a variety of backgrounds. The resulting cross section of the border population offers perspectives from those who oppose undocumented immigration and the border crossers themselves. We hear from the mother whose son was killed by an undocumented drunk driver and the father whose son helped to beat an undocumented teenager to death. We meet a wealthy Scottsdale socialite and a woman in her 70s who cleans rooms at the local Holiday Inn and has lived in the shadows since she crossed the border nearly 40 years ago.

All of these characters are given the dignity of meaningful representation. None are cartoons or shapeless representatives of particular groups. Because Casas spoke to actual Arizona residents, his characters feel fully embodied, and even those with an axe to grind have compelling ways of doing so. The Chicano actor who passes for white explains his pressing need to fit the types of roles in which agents will cast him. The Latino politician argues about the cost of bilingual education and insists that others should be able to learn English as well as he did in the public schools. These characters make arguments to which both the unseen interviewer and the playwright himself are quick to object, but the ideas and the characters who present them are given depth and precision. The play draws the audience toward these characters, even as it critiques their assertions, because the rich world of the play offers spectators complexity rather than easy answers.

Casas, who is my colleague in the department of theatre and drama at the University of Michigan, has said to me that he wished this play were no longer relevant in 2018. His grief chronicles the ongoing tragedies of lives lost in border crossings since the

play was written nearly two decades ago. Eighteen immigrants suffocated to death inside a trailer truck in Victoria, Texas, on May 15, 2003; the truck “showed signs that the trapped people had tried to punch holes through it so air could come in.”² In an eerily similar incident in July 2017, another 10 immigrants died in a truck near San Antonio, Texas, making them part of the 232 who died crossing the U.S.-Mexican border in the first seven months of that year. The continuing militarization of the border, plans for a border wall and the xenophobia stoked by the Trump administration only make such deaths more likely and the play more necessary.

When I think of the 14 who died on May 19, 2001, I wonder what drove them to place their trust, life savings and lives into the hands of another undocumented man, just 20 years old. Their desperation—because such danger cannot be confronted solely on the wings of hope—drove them to cross a scorched and barren stretch of desert where many of their predecessors had died on the same journey. They did this knowing that the promised future our nation would offer them was one of secrecy and underground economies, of manual labor and fear of deportation. They agreed to walk away from all they knew and all they loved, toward this uncertain and unquestionably difficult future. These 14 were not found to be smuggling drugs, and they bore no indication of being “criminals” or “rapists,” as President Trump would have us believe a great many Mexican immigrants are.

One of these 14, Lorenzo Hernandez Ortiz, left his wife and five children in San Pedro Altepepan, Veracruz, Mexico. He agreed to pay \$1,700 in U.S. currency to a smuggler, and a

² “Trapped in Heat in Texas Truck, 18 People Die,” by Simon Romero and David Barboza. *The New York Times*. May 15, 2003.

year after Ortiz's death, his wife Juanita was still struggling to pay his debt by selling tamales for 10 cents each at the school near her home. Ortiz had a family he hoped to better support with remittances from his meager wages from whatever job he could find in the U.S. He died trying to make life better for those who could not even attempt the crossing. His story does not appear in *14*, yet his life and its potential meanings are invoked by performances of the play.

The majority of my students at the University of Michigan struggle to picture Ortiz's life and even those of the characters who speak in *14*. Even as we sit on the northern border of our nation, many among us imagine immigration narratives as being far from our present reality. A startling number of my students have never been to Canada, despite living right next to it for much or all of their lives. My students from Dearborn, Mich., with Arab families from various countries expressed an immediate connection to *14*. Of course, the Dreamers know these stories all too well. When Casas produced the play on our campus on Feb. 22, 2018, the undocumented students in the audience wept silently throughout the play and stood shyly in corners at the reception afterwards, waiting patiently to be introduced to the only actors they had ever seen tell their stories onstage.

These Dreamers survived the crossing where those 14 did not, and still these students must be careful about how and when they tell their stories. In 2017, the Trump administration rescinded the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which was started in 2002 under President Obama to give undocumented students a legal path to attend college and earn a living. The Dreamers wait for the next decisions to be made about their legal status. If and when they are granted the right to

stay, they do not know what jobs in the U.S. an undocumented person with a college degree can hold. They still fear for their parents and families, both in the U.S. and abroad. They watched the one performance of this play on our campus with eyes that did not seem to blink. They already knew something about the 14 voices of the deceased that the play was missing and wanted to hear what the living had to say.

The final monologue in *14* belongs to Reverend Clay Nash, who maintains water stations in the desert. He has encountered quite a few dehydrated bodies in the desert and cannot know how many lives the water stations might save. He says, “Providing this water is nothing more than an act of faith and conviction.” He does something very simple but profoundly difficult and controversial because he believes that no one should have to die of thirst in the desert. He reminds the audience, “Regardless of which argument you side with when you see a person dead in front of your eyes, your thoughts should be on him or her. Honoring that person while, at the same time, being grateful that you get the chance to see another day!” Casas does not attempt to represent the bodies of the 14, and he never tells us anything more than their names and the way they died. They fill the play with their absence and demand that we all remember the accidents of birth or the fierce struggles that brought us to this moment.

14

prologue

(in the darkness, a spotlight shines on the back wall/video screen. the slide reads:

*may 19, 2001
a smuggling guide abandons
more than 20 mexicans crossing east of yuma.
dehydration kills 14.
their deaths trigger renewed binational debate
over immigration.
the dead are:*

the next series of projections are individual slides showing the names of each victim. there should be a beat between each slide. the names of the victims are:

*lorenzo hernandez ortiz
raymundo barreda landa
reyendo bartolo
mario castillo fernandez
enrique landero
raymundo barreda maruri
julian mabros malaga
claudio marin alejandro
arnulfo flores badilla
edgar adrian martinez colorado
efrain gonzalez manzano
heriberto tapia baldillo*

final slide of prologue:

*two others have yet
to be identified.*

extended beat.

*as the projection on the screen slowly fades into darkness,
guns n' roses' "welcome to the jungle," or something
similar; begins blaring.)*

part i: welcome to the jungle

welcome to the jungle

*roger tate and marta ramirez
business owner and secretary
yuma, ariz.*

(with the music still playing, two spotlights go up—one downstage right and one downstage left. located downstage right is a chicana in her mid-forties. her name is marta ramirez. she is sitting on a chair; behind a desk. a picture of her family sits prominently on the corner of the desk. standing downstage left is roger tate. a white man in his late forties.

it is apparent that he has not had much sleep. he is standing in front of his family-owned hardware store. the store has been vandalized, and roger is sweeping up broken glass. these interviews are taking place at different locales so neither of these characters knows of the other's presence onstage. marta ramirez begins to talk as the song slowly fades away.)

marta. the theme of this year's prom was "welcome to the jungle."

roger. yes, sir ... that's correct.

marta. i had never even heard of guns n' roses.

roger. they're being singled out.

marta. nice enough looking kids. the girls' dresses were beautiful,
and those boys looked so handsome in their tuxedos.

roger. their pictures on the front page of the newspaper.

marta. smiling and posing for the camera.

roger. they had their entire lives ahead of them.

marta *(annoyed)*. there they were. chests puffed out ...
beaming with pride.

roger. there are two sides to every story.

marta (*incredulous*). giving a white power salute in the middle of their prom photos ... thinking it was some sort of funny joke!

roger. they're teenagers

marta. their parents should be ashamed of—

(extended beat.

roger starts pacing around a bit and then rubs his tired eyes.)

roger. you'll have to forgive me. i haven't had much sleep lately. reporters have been calling me and my family all hours of the night. we changed our phone number to an unlisted one, but that still hasn't stopped them, though ... it isn't right, i tell you. all this attention is insane. (*beat.*) this hasn't been easy for my family. my little girls have had to stay at home because of all this commotion ... some other kids threatened them at school. my wife went grocery shopping the other day and was harassed by a mob of people. she had to have the police escort her home. (*beat.*) fortunately for us, we have some good neighbors. they've offered to take turns buying our groceries until this whole thing's blown over. i can't even go a single day without somebody wanting to talk to me ... a man can only— (*beat; angrily.*) a man deserves the right to some privacy!

marta. i don't understand why this had to happen ... or, how it ever got to this point.

roger. uhm, i don't much like reporters ... i was told you weren't one of them. i hope i can trust you to be fair.

marta. i won't sit here and tell you that there's no racism in this town. border cities aren't built that way. instead of

black versus white. it's mexican versus white ... same fight. after a while, you actually get used to it. that's not to say, you accept it. all i'm saying is that most of the time around here people's barks are worse than their bites. as long as it's just a bunch of people yelling at each other or shooting a dirty look now and again, things remain somewhat tolerable ... but, lately, it seems like this whole state has— (*beat; solemnly.*) those boys had to ruin what little peace there was here.

roger. no one knows exactly what happened.

marta. francisco and javier did nothing wrong.

roger. people want to make it out to be a race war; something to that effect. nonsense. they're painting a false picture. that's not the truth. my son and his friends were only doing what they felt they needed to do. are you telling me those kids should have let those boys walk all over them? the one mexican kid grabbed that girl inappropriately. no one seems to mention that ... and, what about that girl? what about concerns for her safety? who knows what could've happened! everybody knows that section of town isn't very safe ... my son and his buddies were protecting her. he was being a gentleman ... just like i taught him.

marta. all the jocks and their friends go to the peak to drink and smoke pot ... and whatever else it is that high schoolers do up there.

roger. they weren't out to hurt anybody.

marta. all because they smiled at a girl ... imagine that.

roger. that mexican boy and his friends—

marta (angrily). —friend!!!

(*extended beat.*)

marta. there were only two of them. two skinny little mexican boys against half a football team.

roger. they were defending themselves like anyone would in that situation.

marta. six football players ... three of them close to three hundred pounds.

roger. hell, i got into plenty of scrapes when i was younger. that's part of becoming a man.

marta. francisco and javier were held to the ground and kicked in the head while the other kids watched and yelled, "kill the beaners!" not one person lifted a finger to help them! five broken ribs and a depressed skull fracture. severe brain damage ... four operations later, and that boy is nowhere close to being normal. his life is over. *(beat.)* the other boy never had a chance. some say he was the lucky one.

roger. when did a little roughhousing become a crime? i feel sorry for those boys, i really do, but it's not my fault they couldn't finish what they started. why aren't folks blaming their—

marta. —parents!? *(beat.)* i have been part of the parent/teacher association for the last twenty years. i have never, once, seen those parents at a meeting. not a single one! but they were always at those football games. that's for sure! all those boys programmed for violence, but not the consequences. *(beat.)* did you know that when the police opened up their lockers, they found massive amounts of steroids and white power paraphernalia? a couple of boys even had loaded guns hidden away in their backpacks, but as long as the stands were full of people cheering for touchdowns—

roger. —i'm a respected man in this city—

marta. —people would look the other way.

roger. i'm a businessman, and i'm on the city council. my great grandfather, gerald xavier tate was considered one of the founding fathers of this area. there's no better place in this world to raise a family ... people trust me.

(extended beat.

roger looks at the sign.)

roger *(cont'd)*. take a peek at that name on the wall ... tate's hardware store. been in my family for generations. it's more than a hardware store. this is a place where townfolk can come to unwind. *(looking at the broken glass.)* they come here to relax and shoot the breeze. this building is a living piece of history. *(beat; unconvincingly.)* i'm a respected man.

(extended beat.

a look of pain crosses roger's face. he looks off into the distance. he sets his broom down; beat. he turns back towards the interviewer.)

roger *(cont'd)*. my son's also respected. honor society. captain of the football team. girlfriends left and right. he would always help a friend in need. he wasn't a follower. he was a leader. he was the most popular kid in yuma. he wouldn't do anything to damage that.

marta. especially, that tate boy. he always had this air of arrogance about him, like he was entitled. thought he could get away with murder. *(beat.)* who knows? maybe he will. the trial doesn't start for another few weeks.

(extended beat.)

marta *(cont'd, nonchalantly)*. i wouldn't be surprised.

roger. i'm getting him the best lawyer money can buy. i'll do whatever it takes to clear my boy's name. he has a bright future ahead of him. (*defiantly.*) he has a scholarship to play football at the university of utah. strong safety ... that's his scholarship. he earned it!

marta (*sadly*). i think about those boys. both groups. and i think to myself, every single one of these boys were once little babies ... with little fingers and little toes and flashed the kind of smiles that only babies can.

roger. jason is my son. he isn't guilty of any crime.

marta. i've met the tate boy's father on a couple of occasions ... he was cordial. seemed like a nice enough man ... but—

(marta picks up the photo of her family; stares at it.)

marta (*cont'd*). sometimes i wonder how i got so lucky with my kids.

(beat; marta puts the picture frame back on the desk.)

marta (*cont'd*). my kids are grown up. one works as a mechanic near gilbert; the other is studying here at the local community college, but i won't try to convince you that they were perfect angels. believe me, they were a handful. i'm sure there are things they did that i don't ever want to know about ... but, uhm ... but, i don't know. (*beat; contemplative.*) they seem to have turned out all right from what i see.

roger. i am not a racist. my son is not a racist. (*beat.*) some of my friends are mexican.

marta. those boys ruined two lives. two families. they need to be punished. they need to know that what they did was wrong ... everyone in this city needs to know!

roger (*pleading*). my son is a good boy! why can't people see that!?

marta (*defeated*). how did they manage to learn so much hate?

(spotlight fades off of marta.

extended beat.)

roger. people from all over town have been writing letters to the judge on his behalf. the principal and some of his teachers. all of his friends and family too. coach taylor even wrote the university to reassure them that this whole incident was just one big misunderstanding. (*beat; unconvincingly.*) in the end, i believe my son will be exonerated. then ... everyone will know that it wasn't his fault ... and that things just got out of hand.

(extended beat.)

roger (*cont'd, sadly*). that boys will be boys.

(spotlight fades on roger, then the stage goes dark.)

part ii: say a little prayer

... just

*denise hudson
unemployed
chandler, ariz.*

*(the sound of a woman crying can be heard in the darkness;
beat. lights up. denise hudson is a white woman in her
early forties. she has been crying. she wipes her eyes with a
handkerchief.)*

denise. thank you ... i'm so sorry. i didn't mean to ... uhm, it's
been almost three years.

*(she finishes wiping her eyes; composes herself, but not
entirely successful.*

extended beat.)

denise (*cont'd*). you never think you're going to get that
knock on the door or the late night phone call ... it's hard
to explain. it's not like in the movies ... and, no matter how
many times you see other people talk about their stories ...
you don't truly know. (*beat.*) until ...

(extended beat.)

denise (*cont'd, responding*). that's right ... michael wanted to
have some pizza with some friends. it was a school night,
but he had been doing so well in school. we were so proud
of him.

(extended beat.)

denise (*cont'd*). in a few months, he would have left for college. i wanted him to go to arizona state. i would tell him that it was a really good school and that he'd save money being at home, but he was leaning towards one of those california schools. kept saying he wanted to learn how to surf. (*beat.*) it was a school night ... if i had ... just.

(*extended beat.*)

denise (*cont'd*). it took place at the corner of ray road and mcclintock ... waiting for the light to turn green. (*beat.*) i can picture him singing alongside his music ... listening to the rolling stones. that's all he ever listened to. i blame that on his father. they were so close. (*responding; beat.*) uhm ... you can try to talk to him, but— (*beat.*) our divorce became final a couple of months ago. (*responding.*) how were you supposed to know?

(*extended beat.*)

denise (*cont'd*). michael never had a chance. alone in that intersection driving a dinged-up '92 hyundai ... a sports utility vehicle speeding at about ninety miles an hour. (*beat; angrily.*) those machines should be illegal! they're nothing but glorified tanks. they weren't meant for streets. they were meant for the wilderness. the outdoors ... but, i guess that's the thing nowadays ... the bigger the better.

(*extended beat.*)

denise (*cont'd*). a police officer at the scene had claimed it was a miracle that my son could've made it to the hospital alive, much less in one piece ... he was on life support for almost two weeks. (*beat.*) i thank god we were there with him at the end.

(extended beat.)

denise (*cont'd*). a second after he was pulled off life support i felt his hand gently squeeze my hand. the doctor said that was normal ... only an involuntary spasm. (*beat; upset.*) no, no, no ... he was wrong!!!

(extended beat.)

denise (*cont'd, quietly*) that was michael saying, “goodbye.”

(extended beat.

extended beat.)

denise (*cont'd, responding angrily*). the other boy?

(extended beat.)

denise (*cont'd*). he was a couple of months older than my son. he was running from the police. the car he was driving was stolen. they had been chasing him all the way from scottsdale. the impact of the crash tore my son’s car in half and scattered pieces of it as far as two hundred yards away. the other boy suffered two broken legs and a ruptured spleen, but nothing life-threatening. (*beat.*) at the time of the accident, i was working part time as a cashier at walgreens. it wasn’t much, but it was all i could find. my husband had just begun working at circuit city, but he hadn’t worked there long enough to earn any benefits. (*beat; desperation in her voice.*) we’re still getting hospital bills. my husband and i— (*stopping herself.*) i mean ... my ex and i were living from paycheck to paycheck as it was ... we had maybe a couple of hundred dollars in our savings account; not much more. (*angrily.*) we tried getting help, but couldn’t find any.

we went to the county welf— (*beat.*) we were told we made too much money to qualify for public assist— (*beat.*) my credit history has been destroyed. (*beat; embarrassed.*) i had to move back in with my parents ... they're on a fixed income ... i don't know what i'm going to—

(extended beat.)

denise (*cont'd, defeated*). i lost my only child.

(extended beat.)

denise (*cont'd*). he can walk again. the doctors fixed his legs ... he's not paying for what he did. (*beat; incredulously.*) and, he even had the audacity to sue the police because he claims that he'll be walking with a limp the rest of his life. can you believe that!?! he sued the police department. the chandler police department paid out millions in lawsuit damages! (*beat.*) that police chase, they say, killed my son ... that's all i hear: they say i should be suing for some money as well ... no! never! those police officers didn't kill my son. (*suddenly and angrily standing up.*) he did!!!! it's like he won the lottery!!! he was an illegal alien ... my son wasn't!!! where is the justice in that!!!???

(she realizes the timbre of her voice and the anger welling up within her. she realizes the power of her words; embarrassment mixed in with sadness. she looks at the interviewer almost as if to apologize. she slowly sits back down in her seat.

extended beat.

extended beat.)

virgencita linda

*luz ortiz
trabajadora domestica
guadalupe, ariz.*

(las luces suben. la entrivista esta llevando acabo en la yarda de luz ortiz, una mejicana de sesenta años. esta sentada en una silla. esta rodeada de estatuas de la virgen de guadalupe. es temprano en la tardesita. luz ha llegado del trabajo.)

luz. perdon que estoy tarde, mi hija tenia que ponerle gas al carro. normalmente camino al trabajo- ahi a una cuadra en el holiday inn hotel. el express, ahi en frente del mercado. *(responde al comentario de su hija; entretenida.)* oh, perdon, quise decir el mall. a mi hija le encanta caminar por horas ahi, pero como yo no tengo mucho dinero yo no voy. *(pausa.)* pero es no mas quince minutos al trabajo. una caminata corta. mi viejo o uno de mis hijos vienen por mi y me caminan a la casa. les digo que no tienen que, pero se preocupan por mi ... no quise estar tarde y cuando mi hija me dijo del gas ... aagh. gracias por ser paciente y me vas a tener que perdonar porque no tuve tiempo de cambiarme despues del trabajo. *(pausa.)* estoy muy emocionada de tenerte aqui. habla mucho de ti mi hija y dice que eres muy buen esscritor. *(responde.)* ay, muchas gracias, estoy muy orgullosa de ella. es mi niña mas chica y la tuve ya casi al los cuarenta. dice que quiere ser maestra. le pregunto si no quiere ser doctora o abogada como su hermano. eso paga mejor, pero dice que quiere ser profesora, que quiere ayuydar a los niños. siempre piense de los otros antes de pensar en si misma. *(pausa.)* tu naciste en arizona? eres de

los angeles? hmm ... yo fui una vez. se me hizo bonito. me gusto la playa, pero no me gustaria vivir ahi. se me hace muy grande y con mucha gente. estoy muy feliz aqui en arizona. (*pausa; entretentida.*) no te preocupes por tu español. no eres pocho. te entiendo bien. no te debes de avergonzar. yo entiendo que dificil es ser bilingue. mi hijo mayor siempre me contesta en ingles! siempre le tengo que decir, “en español, mijo” pero a el no le importa, no mas se rie. pero es bien hijo. y tus papas? en donde nacieron? ah zacatecas ... y tu mama? monterry. ay ya lo sabia! yo tambien soy de monterry. casi toda mi familia esta ahi. colonia metalurgica, colonia nueva aurora, colonia torreon jardin. no sabes de donde es tu familia? colonia vencedora? ay, si ... tengo dos tios que son de ahi. preguntale a tu mama que si no conce a la familia gallegos. juan carlos gallegos y edurado gallegos. (*pausa.*) trato de ir a mexico, pero se me hace mas dificil ahora que estoy vieja. todavia tienes familia en monterry? cuanto que no los ves? ay, mijo, hace mucho tiempo! tienes que ir a ver los, es tu familia. (*responde.*) si es dificil, pero ahorrate unos pennies para ir porque nos hacemos viejos y tienes que recordar que mexico es tu pais como de tu padres ... si extraño mexico mucho, pero me gusta la ciudad de guadalupe. es muy similar a mexico. no es muy bonito y al los gringos no les importa mucho de lo que pasa aqui. es lo que yo pienso, pero yo no te tengo que decir. mira nomas a la calle baseline. es como crusar de tijuana a san diego. el mall y todo. todo nuevo y bonito, hasta tienen un parque bonito y a ellos no les importa si guadalupe es bonito. no les importa si las escuelas estan mal. (*pausa; fastidiada.*) a los niños les hicieron un parque para que juegen al beisbol. es bonito y me alegro por los niños, pero es muy poco. al lado de la iglesia donde juegen los hombres es pura tierra y basura. asi es aqui. es como si estan riendo en nuestras caras, es casi

decir, “si quieres jugar en lugar bonito tienes que cruzar la calle, que tiene, vas a tener que volver a cruzar.” (*pausa; disculpa.*) ay, perdon, pero me hace enojar. no quiero ser maldita. soy una mujer muy catolica. yo creo en dios, jesus cristo y en la virgencita linda, pero no soy ciega ... pero con eso dicho, estoy muy agradecida. agradecida que tengo mi casa y comida que comer, una tele para ver a mis novelas. mi viejo me quiere mucho y tengo buenos hijos. guadalupe se ha portado muy bien con nosotros. la mayoria de la gente aqui no tienen mucho dinero, pero ahi seguimos dando le duro y siempre encontramos tiempo para convivir y tomar nos un cafecito. en guadalupe familia es familia. creeme, lo poco que tenemos aqui es mucho mas de lo que una gente tiene en mexico. nosotros somos contentos con cosas como el papel del baño y el jabon. esas son las cosas que les llevo a mi familia en mexico, cosas que mucha gente no les pone importancia. (*pausa.*) es porque la virgencita nos protege. somos muy afortunados de tener a la virgencita en nuestras vidas. por eso casi todas las casas en guadalupe tienen a la virgen de proteccion. tenemos que recordar que ella fue la que nos cuidó cuando cruzamos la frontera. (*pausa.*) yo tenia 16 años cuando me vine, yo sola con gente que no conocia. (*responde.*) no ... mi mama no queria me viniera, pero en mexico no le puedes decir a nadie que no se venga, no mas que vas a resar por ellos. (*cerrando sus ojos; pausa.*) la primera noche me dormi con mucho miedo porque podia oír a los coyotes y el calor estaba muy pesado. esa noche me dormi con mi virgencita bien cerca. era la noche mas larga de mi vida. (*pausa, emocional.*) unos dias despues cuando cruzamos, el coyote nos estaba empujando en una troca como si fuéramos animales. cuando me meti a la troca se me callo mi virgen. le pedi a el coyote que me la diera y me grito feo que me callara. cinco horas despues estaba

en una cochera en tucson. dos días despues estaba en una siembra de sandias en el oeste de phoenix. cuando tenia unos minutos para tomar agua, pensaba en mi virgencita que quedo pisotada y abandonada en el desierto como muchos que resan a ella. (*pausa.*) todavia reso por ella ... nunca me ha dejado, hasta cuando miro al otro lado la calle y veo a ese mall y a los carros nuevos y a las casas bonitas, todavia. (*pausa.*) ella esta conmigo.

part iii: a matter of priorities

a matter of priorities

omar castillo
state senator of arizona
flagstaff, ariz.

(this interview is taking place in the office of omar castillo. he is a latino in his mid-thirties. he is wearing a navy blue suit. the theme song from the classic television show “all in the family,” or something similar, can be heard. after a few moments, the song begins to fade away as the lyrics “didn’t need no welfare state; everybody pulled their weight” are heard.)

omar. no! i do not think latinos are being unfairly targeted in this state ... i don’t feel that bilingualism is a necessary component of the educational system. it is not the responsibility of our school systems to carry that load. it is an unfair burden to place on school districts ... tests scores are at an all-time low ... do you understand what i am saying!?! the more time and resources we dedicate to bilingual education the longer it will take to get our scores up ... if at all. *(responding; sarcastic.)* yes ... i am sure that your numbers say what you want them to say. you are not the first person to throw out statistics at me and you will not be the last, but i can throw out numbers as well as the next person. however, the reality of the situation is that bilingual education has not proven to be of any benefit to the general popula— *(interrupted.)*

(extended beat.)

omar (*cont'd, responding; irked*). and ... where does it stop? spanish, vietnamese, chinese, french? what next? maybe gaelic? or latin? just look at the problems in california. if we have to adjust for one group of the people then we must adjust for any and all groups of people. (*responding.*) these students are not studying in mexico. they are studying in the united states. they need to know the official language of this country. in the end, it will benefit everybody. (*beat.*) other countries have official languages. mexico ... has an official language. (*sarcastically.*) yet you are here ... in my office claiming racism against the government.

(*extended beat.*)

omar (*cont'd*). the hispanic community needs to learn to appreciate this country ... it needs to rely less on the kindness of others.

(*extended beat.*)

omar (*cont'd, responding; angrily*). anti-latino!?

(*extended beat.*)

omar (*cont'd*). i am anything, but that. i am not a traitor or some tio taco. i am not the walking embodiment of what others perceive us to be. i am an educated brown man, yet, so many of our gente treat me like— (*interrupted and responding angrily.*) do i agree with what governor brewer did? yes, i do ... but, that does not make me— (*reacting to being interrupted; incredulous.*) i understand that ethnic studies is a volatile topic of discussion, but i believe it does more harm than good. do not misunderstand. i think it is invaluable for a community to know their own

histories, but these classes are not about that. instead of uniting our students, it is dividing them. it goes out of its way to promote racial resentment. it teaches a one-sided and narrow perspective that is inconsistent with american values. *(beat.)* fundamentally, i think it is wrong to divide students by r— *(interrupted and responding.)* i am sorry if you feel that it is unfair, but that is the law. these school districts have ample time to adjust the new guidelines and if they choose to ignore them and lose a portion of their funding they will have only themselves to blame. we need to divert money into better school facilities, computers and better wages for our teachers ... are you telling me our teachers are overpaid? arizona's education ranking has been steadily decreasing over the past decade. we need to focus on the basic fundamentals which our students are sorely lacking. *(beat.)* we have a generation of children that feel at ease with every piece of technology on the face of the earth, yet, they cannot do a simple math problem or write a complete sentence. that needs to be addressed! *(responding; annoyed.)* you stand there scribbling in your little notebook about how unfair this situation is, but what are the alternatives? i doubt you have any to offer. cutting non-essential programs is not tantamount to ignoring our students' cultural roots. once again, and i am sorry if i sound like a broken record, but that is not the responsibility of our educators. eliminating these programs will not affect that. people entering this country need to acknowledge their roles. parents need to be responsible for the welfare of their children ... that includes their abilities to keep their stories and language intact. my mother understood the value of this. she would take me with her on her cleaning jobs. while she was working, i would be watching television. she would have me sitting in front of that thing for hours at a time.

always telling me to pay attention ... sesame street. soap operas. the price is right. you name it. (*beat; fondly.*) by far, though, my favorite show was all in the family. they would play reruns at two o'clock every afternoon on c.b.s ... i know it sounds simple and, believe me, more went into my upbringing than that, and i'm not trying to minimize it ... obviously, it represents, (*gesturing.*) in a very infinitesimal way, is the spirit of my mother's determination, of her desire to make a better life for our family. the point is ... (*beat.*) my mother knew what was needed of me to survive and be accepted in the united states.

(*extended beat.*)

omar (*cont'd, proudly.*) my mother did not know english, but ... i taught her. (*beat.*) and ... she taught me spanish. (*beat.*) look at me now: i am one of the youngest senators in the history of arizona, and one day i will be governor of this state. i firmly believe that. (*beat.*) you see, I have succeeded! there is no reason others should not be able to do likewise. it is a matter of priorities.

part iv: mirror mirror on the wall

a thin line

*michelle rodriguez
magazine editor
phoenix, ariz.*

(its four o'clock in the afternoon. michelle rodriguez is energetic and a little high-strung. she is an attractive chicana in her late thirties. she is multitasking throughout the entire interview as she speaks on her cellphone/bluetooth. she speaks quickly; hardly taking a breath. her desk is covered with other electronic gadgets and her computer is on.)

michelle. i'm glad we were able to connect. it's always so hectic around here, but i somehow manage. *(responding.)* that's right. you cannot believe the positive effect the world of technology has had on my life. i don't know where i'd be without it. *(responding.)* definitely. it allows me the opportunity to spend a good portion of my time back in the a-z. *(beat; responding.)* sure, believe me, i wanted to run my magazine from there, but it made more sense to start up in los angeles; me being young and not really sure of what i was doing. *(beat.)* oh i don't know, sables? l.a. will do for now. i'm not its biggest fan. obviously, there are parts of the city where i feel more comfortable, but, overall, there's this pervasive attitude of, como se dice, aye ... it's a very me kind of place. at times, i feel extremely insecure. just imagine multiplying scottsdale by fifty and then you got l.a. *(beat.)* for the most part, i enjoy my time here, but i prefer the calmness of arizona. having my familia around. eventually, if things go well and the company grows, i'll return to phoenix with *(airquotes.)* "my child" and run

it from there. sometimes i feel conflicted about running the magazine from here, but i feel fortunate that i have a magazine to run at all. this industry has never been a safe venture to begin with, but with the social network the way it is, things are constantly changing at a breakneck pace and if a company doesn't keep up, they're finished before they've started. (*responding.*) gracias. i appreciate that. yes. there was a time when i didn't think modern chicana magazine would see the light of day. being a woman is hard enough in today's society, but to be a woman of color trying to make it in a male-dominated industry, you can only imagine the difficulties i've had to endure. (*proudly.*) modern chicana celebrated its five-year anniversary a couple of weeks ago. something i'm very proud of. i hope it stands as a role model for chicanas to go after what they desire, that, through hard work and dedication, they can accomplish anything. pura chicanisma! (*beat.*) i apologize for being a bit self-indulgent, but this is my life's work and—

(the caller keeps cutting off. she pushes the redial button to call back the interviewer.)

michelle (*cont'd.*) hello? hello? can you hear me? (*beat.*) oh, i have you now. i'm so sorry. i suppose technology isn't always as convenient as we would like it to be ... (*responding.*) you and me, both. (*responding.*) yes, i heard that you were writing a play or something of that nature. i'm still a little confused. my assistant wasn't very clear about why you called— (*nods a few times; beat.*) the story ... so ... you've read it?

(extended beat.)

michelle (*cont'd.*) i wish it weren't the case.

(she begins to pace.)

michelle (*cont'd, responding*). that's right. el tepeyac. the one off evergreen and wabash. (*responding; amused.*) me, too. i love the food, and the different mix of people always amazes me. think about it. where in the world can you get yuppies, working class gente, cops and cholos in one place getting along? de veras! it's east l.a.'s own version of the united nations. (*responding.*) yes. i was waiting for a friend of mine, and i was getting a little worried because you know how it gets at that place during lunch time. it's a madhouse, and with my friend on chicano time, i was getting a little frustrated. manny was already out on the sidewalk handing out shots of the tequila. well, to make a long story short, my cellphone rang, and i knew that it was going to be my friend bailing on our lunch date and, at this point, i dashed all hopes of a decent lunch because the line in front of that place was like waiting in line for a ride at disneyland on a summer afternoon. oh well, another day going through the drive through at mickey d's, i thought so i began walking back to my car when i see a little group of girls hanging out across the street from the restaurant; cholitas on a corner como siempre. you know, putting on their make-up and talking chisme, (*beat.*) for some reason, i had the urge to strike up a conversation with them, maybe even promote the magazine a little. not one girl had ever heard of my magazine. not even glanced at it while they were in the grocery store. nothing. a little humbling, but i understood. i didn't need an explanation. i guess that's why i wanted to talk to them. you see, one of my main goals for this magazine is to reach as much of a cross section of the chicana community as possible and, apparently i wasn't doing as good a job as i had imagined, but i was truly enjoying my conversation with these girls—veronica, rosy, gladys y la

ginger. *(beat; excitedly.)* i just loved those names. loved the way they weren't afraid to express any feelings whatsoever. we talked about education, the lack of jobs, vatos with no game. you name it. it was refreshing, but it's not like i didn't understand what they were going through. i grew up in the same type of barrio in south phoenix. trust me, i can spray aquanet with the best of them but, for the most part, i was your typical catholic school kid, but some of the stories these girls were telling me. *(beat.)* reminds me that i've been spending way too much time with the suits and not enough time with, well, tu sabes. suffice it to say, i appreciate everything my parents have ever done for me. *(beat.)* i promised the girls i would send each of them a free subscription to the magazine. i didn't think it was that big of a deal, but they were totally psyched that i would do that. it meant so much to me that they were so appreciative of my offer. like i said, i didn't think it was that big a deal. *(responding.)* yes! of course i wanted to continue talking with them. i wish we could have had more of a gabfest, but i had a business meeting to go to in santa monica, and they had to get back to class they were already fifteen minutes late for. i wrote down their addresses, and we said our goodbyes. and as they began walking away, i told myself that this conversation would make for a great article for the magazine, and that's when—

(extended beat.)

(pulling the phone away from her ear. it is apparent that she is upset.)

michelle *(cont'd, disbelief).* i couldn't believe my ears.

(extended beat.)

michelle (*cont'd*). as the girls were entering the gate back to school, a little viejita was walking by them. you know the kind i'm talking about. the kind of woman who reminds you of your own abuelita. (*beat.*) this poor little woman accidentally bumped into gladys, and, gladys looks at her and says, "watch where you're going, wetback." a second later, as the woman crossed the street, the girls disappeared into the schoolyard. at that moment, my article suddenly changed. it was no longer about a group of girlfriends and the conversation we shared.

(*extended beat.*)

michelle (*cont'd, angrily*). when are we going to learn that there's a thin line between love and hate? a line that becomes even thinner when that hate is directed at ourselves. is that where our young gente are heading? i wonder sometimes. (*beat.*) with each new generation our raza becomes more assimilated. more separated from their past. they're not only forgetting their cultura, they are now beginning to resent it. that's why i started this magazine ... because i love la mujer. la chicana. i love my gente. i want them to love themselves.

(*extended beat.*)

michelle (*cont'd*). funny how a seemingly insignificant little encounter can—

(*the cellphone gets disconnected. beat.*)

michelle (*cont'd, as lights fade to black*). hello? hello?

type

matthew (mateo) logan
actor
phoenix, ariz.

(matthew “mateo” logan is a latino in his early thirties. he is an actor living in los angeles, but is visiting family and friends in phoenix, his hometown.)

matthew. phoenix is what it is. my family and some of my friends are still here, but i had to leave. seriously ... being an actor in phoenix. i think not. *(sarcastic.)* a life of bashas markets commercials? no thank you. any actor worth his salt would want to be almost anywhere else. i’m done with the desert ... anyway, l.a. suits me better. it’s home for me now, but i did grow up here so, sure, i have somewhat of an attachment to the place.

(extended beat.)

matthew *(cont’d, amused)*. you might as well ask. i know it’s killing you.

(pulls out a cigarette and a lighter from his pocket.)

matthew *(cont’d)*. you mind?

(lights the cigarette and puts away the lighter: he takes a puff; beat.)

matthew *(cont’d)*. my cousin warned me about you. *(beat.)* she told me you were one of those chicano power militant types. *(responding.)* nah, it’s cool ... we’re each entitled to our own opinions.

(extended beat.)

matthew *(cont'd, responding)*. no. i don't see any reason to feel guilty. why should i? i didn't grow up with visions of becoming a revolutionary. ever since i can remember, all i ever wanted to do was act. it's that simple. the way i go about accomplishing this is my business. *(responding.)* matthew, mateo. same difference? it's only a name; not who i am. *(responding; annoyed.)* of course, i respect my parents. do you respect yours!? *(beat.)* he's my father. i love the man, but the sanchez name doesn't sell very well in hollywood, but i'm not telling you anything you don't already know. *(beat.)* are you going to sit there and deny that? to tell you the truth, i don't even know why we're having this discussion. you jump through the same hoops that i do so give me a break ... and, if you're anything like me, which i'm assuming you are, then, i know you have to be sick of this nonsense. every damn year you read the same articles i do. the ones in the l.a. times or the washington post; the ones saying minorities are making strides in the film industry. you know how utterly bullshit those numbers are! how those numbers are manipulated! the kind of roles they're talking about? preaching about how this is the year of the latino. *(beat; increasingly upset.)* don't tell me you don't feel the same way ... how many times have you wanted to quit? how many times have you swallowed your pride? how many sofas have you slept on? *(beat.)* how many times have you had to borrow money from the people you most care about?

(extended beat.)

matthew *(cont'd, sympathetic)*. you pay any of them back yet?

(extended beat.)

matthew (*cont'd*). my father is brown and my mother is white, but she is just a much a part of me as my father or should i forget that? i'm proud of both sides of the family tree. if you have a problem with that, then that's on your conscience, man ... not mine. (*beat; annoyed.*) i look at that expression on your face, but you don't know the first thing about me.

(extended beat.)

matthew (*cont'd, responding*). no ... i don't know much spanish. (*beat; embarrassed and quietly.*) yeah, that was me on the commercial ... hey, what can i say? people have cheesy accents. it was a character. nothing more.

(extended beat.

he takes a long drag on his cigarette. he throws the butt to the floor; beat.)

matthew (*cont'd*). the righteous brown man fighting against the system ... good for you, but i need to pay the rent.

(extended beat.)

matthew (*cont'd, responding; smirking*). see ... that's the difference between you and me. you want people to acknowledge you. brown this. brown that. i'm not like that. all i want is for directors to look at me a see a good actor. i'm sick and tired of people ignoring that. i do shakespeare because it challenges me. chekhov. ibsen. i love them, and i don't want anyone to tell me i can't do those plays because of my ethnicity. (*beat; responding.*) luis valdez? (*sarcastically.*) ooh, how did i not see that one coming? (*matter-of-factly.*) no ... i've never done any of his work ... sorry to disappoint you, but i can't say it bothers me very much either.

(extended beat.)

matthew *(cont'd, responding; annoyed)*. dude, i'm tired of the gardener and gangbanger roles! i'm trying to fight those stereotypes. that's a good thing. i want to open this shit up for the rest of us. i'm tired of being a type so if i have to use my mother's maiden name and fake my smile a little more often then so fucking be it! life goes on.

(extended beat.)

matthew *(cont'd)*. this is the only thing i know how to do.

(extended beat.)

he pulls out his card and extends it to the interviewer.)

matthew *(cont'd)*. here's my card ... give me a call when you get back into town.

(extended beat.)

matthew *(cont'd)*. we both know we'll be running into each other.

part v: the war at home

very very

*dr. snezena kuftinic
emergency room physician
tucson, ariz.*

(lights go dark. spotlight downstage. dr. snezena kuftinic is a forty-year-old white woman. she is a native of bosnia who has been living in the united states for a couple of years. her accent is very much evident. the interview is taking place somewhere outside the back of a hospital, next to an emergency exit. it is night, but there is a full moon; the stars are shining. she manages to keep her same expression and tone throughout the entire interview.)

kuftinic. ... first detroit. eh, st. louis. then, i come here to arizona. a colleague from back home also works here. i came to visit and decided to stay. *(beat.)* i prefer the sun to the snow.

(she pulls out a cigarette and lighter. she lights the cigarette and puts away the lighter. she takes a first puff; stares at the stars.

extended beat.)

kuftinic *(cont'd, responding)*. yes ... many horrible stories. many injustices during the war. torture. rapes. i don't think my people will ever recover from what happened ... difficult to ask of anyone.

(extended beat.)

kuftinic (*cont'd*). i am the only one left in my family. my mother died when i was young. my father died of stroke during the war. my brother was a soldier. the last time i saw him was many years ago ... some people in my village tell me, “be strong. he may still be—” (*beat.*) i know the truth. i will never see him again.

(*extended beat.*)

kuftinic (*cont'd*). after my father passed away i joined a group of physicians traveling from city to city ... no reason to stay home. our war was very very bad. people hurt and ill. too many villages destroyed ... many landmines. (*beat.*) still many landmines at home. government has yet to take them away.

(*extended beat.*)

kuftinic (*cont'd*). i almost stayed, but ... eh, i went back to visit my borovica ... many years after i had left for my medical training. hoping to find my brother. hear some news. most neighbors were gone. the few who were there had heard rumors. nothing more. (*beat.*) people from other neighborhood used to be nice. the muslims convinced them to destroy our village. many of the older people refused to leave. they were tortured and shot. their houses destroyed. my father's house was also destroyed. nothing, but ashes ... i look around where it used to stand. i picked up my catechism book from when i was a little girl. my home was like ghost town (*beat.*) that was december, ten years ago. (*responding.*) differences? yes, i suppose, but many similarities, especially working near the border. so many people come into the hospital. very sick. near death. reminds me of the war. many i cannot help. i try, but by the time i see some of them, it's too late ... these poor people

have same look as people from my country. their eyes. very very sad. searching for a little peace, but knowing none. most unfortunate. too much like home. many times i hear people in this country speak of war in a casual tone. i do not understand how that is possible. i see children on the news ... in iraq. crying in pain. (*beat; momentarily staring at interviewer.*) the cry of a child who wants something very very different from the cry of a child in pain. i don't understand. many people live in constant war. palestine. africa. colombia ... many places. life is different. more precious. americans say the real war is in front of us ... in america. similarities. yes. i say that, but still not the same. my family. my home. bosnia. no longer exists ... that is war. this is not war. america is more peaceful. yes, a lot of pain and problems that need to be dealt with ... but, not the same. america is very very, how do i say it? (*beat.*) americans do not know the true meaning of war ... only what they see on c.n.n. or fox news. people don't want to leave their homes. war changes everything. the people in this hospital who come in ... those found in the desert ... all alone in the world. lying here thinking of their families ... of their country.

(extended beat.

extended beat.)

kuftinic (*cont'd*). their eyes ... very very similar.

(she takes a final puff of the cigarette and flicks the cigarette away.)

a man's home

*charlie clarkson
rancher
douglas, ariz.*

(lights slowly fade in. this interview is taking place in the early morning hours [dawn], outdoors on the ranch of charlie clarkson. a white man in his mid-seventies. he holds a remote control and in the distance [offstage], on the desert floor, is a drone; atop of it lies a tiny camera.)

charlie. this is the next wave of technology. *(responding.)* the fancy name for them is drones. it's plain to see that they're model airplanes ... but, these are amazing little things. they got these little cameras on top of them. complicated, though, they work off these sensors that have been placed in strategic areas and— *(responding to being interrupted; annoyed.)* i know this isn't a toy!

(extended beat.)

charlie *(cont'd)*. we need all the help we can get. times are changing. this country is under siege. the world isn't a safe place anymore ... or haven't you liberals been watching the news lately?

(extended beat.)

charlie *(cont'd)*. i started voices for a free arizona about five years ago. some of us in these parts got to the point where we were sick and tired of seeing our land destroyed. empty water jugs. food and candy wrappers. dirty clothes. human waste. you name it. there was trash as far as the eye could see. i spend most of my time picking up after them ... one

day i said, “enough is enough!” this is my land and i’m going to see that it stays that way. *(beat.)* we’re just a bunch of ranchers sticking together to maintain our way of life. i don’t see what all the commotion is about? this is my home. i paid for it. *(beat.)* if someone was breaking into your house, what would you do? *(responding.)* exactly ... no one would give you any gruff over it. you got to understand something. the need to protect ourselves is even greater now. *(beat.)* my wife and i aren’t getting any younger.

(extended beat.)

charlie *(cont’d)*. if we don’t protect ourselves, no one else will.

(a noise in the brush can be heard. charlie and the interviewer notice an animal running across the way from them. beat. charlie takes a bag of chewing tobacco out of his pocket and places some in his mouth. he offers some to the interviewer, but is rebuked. charlie shrugs it off. he places the bag back into his pocket. beat. looks out again. he begins chewing his tobacco, which he spits out throughout the rest of the interview.)

charlie *(cont’d)*. just a jackrabbit ... you hunt? shoot, next time you come for a talk, give me more of a warning. i’ll take you hunting. there’s some good hunting in these parts. *(beat.)* it’s a shame what’s happening to those people ... but, those are the chances you take, you know? you have to be brave to challenge mother nature. *(beat.)* the desert sun can do some vicious things to a man. destroys both his body and his mind. poor saps don’t know what hit them until it’s too late ... not much i can do about it. i don’t make the laws. if someone wants to test fate, let them. who am i to say otherwise? as long as they take it someplace else ... you enter my land, you’re

trespassing. you trespass, you get shot. no ifs, ands or buts ... i won't like it, but i'll shoot you down without thinking twice about it ... nothing personal. (*responding; annoyed.*) of course, i know why they come! i know they got families like me. they want to make a living. feed their children ... and, it's not just mexicans. it's all those other people ... hell, did you know that now they're smuggling those indian folk into our country? haven't they taken enough of our jobs over there? what else do they want? (*beat.*) let me ask you something ... who's to say that one of the people crossing isn't one of those drug dealers or terrorist fellas? how am i supposed to know, huh? i can't assume they aren't. logic tells me i got to protect what's mine. (*beat.*) people crossing the border got to know these things. it's only common sense. you walk into a man's home you don't— (*beat.*) you don't litter. you don't treat another man's home like it's your own personal toilet. you respect a man's home as if it were your own!

(*extended beat.*)

charlie (*cont'd, responding; defensive*). no! we are not the minutemen. do you hear me!? they do not represent us. they do not represent me. i am not shawna forde. i am charlie clarkston. responsible american citizen. i don't break the law! (*angrily.*) my friends and i are not vigilantes!!!

(*extended beat.*)

charlie (*cont'd, calmly*). listen, i won't shoot at anyone during the day. if i catch them on my property i'll call border patrol and they come and pick them up. shoot, other ranchers aren't as generous as me. but, like i was saying ... during the day, i'm cool as a cucumber ... at night ... that's a totally different story.

(extended beat.

*charlie turns on the remote control and turns on the drone.
the sounds of it flying can be heard. he looks up at the sky.)*

charlie (*cont'd*). watching these things soaring through the air
brings me a sense of calmness.

(extended beat.)

charlie (*cont'd*). i'd probably do the same thing. a man has to
be strong for his family ... needs to be able to provide for
them. if a man can't do that then he ain't a man. (*beat.*) can't
say that i blame them. (*defiantly.*) just not on my property.

right here

*jose reynosa
private, first class, u.s.m.c.
goodyear, ariz.*

(jose reynosa is a private first class in the marine corps. he is a chicano and twenty-one years old. he has an athletic build; wearing camouflage pants, a t-shirt and boots.)

jose. ... they do that for every solider in combat. it's just that, in this case, they had to go to zacatecs to do it. it took them a couple of weeks to locate his sister and her husband. they knocked on her floor at three o'clock in the fucking morning. i don't want to imagine what she was thinking because who's to say my sister or my 'ama aren't going to be hearing the same thing real soon. i don't know.

(extended beat.)

jose (*cont'd*). luis and his sister were real tight. vato got more mail then anybody in his unit. his sister was always so worried and shit. homeboy would send as much money as he could spare, and he would always try to send her a picture of himself to make sure she knew he was all right and he would even send pictures of all of us hanging out ... he dreamed of becoming an architect one day. he wanted to make something of himself ... help his sister and her husband get into the states anyway he could. (*beat; solemnly.*) he can't do anything about it now.

(extended beat.)

jose (*cont'd*). him and his sister were orphaned when they were little kids. vato used to tell me stories about him and

his sister working at a steel factory at the pinche age of ten. that's some fucked-up shit, ese. he decided that when he was eighteen he was going to go to el norte and find some work. they hid his ass in this truck carrying chickens. there was a fake bottom underneath the chicken pen. he paid a thousand dollars to nearly suffocate to death in that truck. over a hundred degrees and the smell of that chicken shit driving him crazy; some of it dripping into where he was hiding. he had to lie there for hours ... after a couple of weeks, though, the border patrol caught his ass and were about to send him back, but he told them that he was a minor with no family. shit ... vato was a true babyface so they stuck him with a foster family in central california. he said they treated him real good. *(beat.)* even though he was close to being twenty-three, he made it through high school. he learned english, played soccer and drew a lot ... vato did all right ... after graduation, he joined the marines to pay back a little of what he'd gotten from the u.s.

(extended beat.)

jose *(cont'd)*. the more and more we watched the news, the more we knew that the shit was gonna hit the fan, but he was proud to be in the service so he was ready. you see, i ain't like that. i'm too pissed off to feel that way. but, this vato ... this vato wanted to prove himself. he wanted to throw down some chingasos.

(extended beat.)

jose *(cont'd)*. he died a week after he was shipped off. a sniper shot him in the side of the neck as he was helping his unit rescue these iraqis from a burning building ... he never knew what hit him. the bullet shredded his vocal

chords and hit pretty much every artery you could find ... he didn't even have a chance to fight. *(beat; angrily.)* i don't understand why he loved this shit so much! he gave up his life for a country that didn't give a fuck about him! *(defeated.)* fighting for something that wasn't his ... say what you want, but that's what i believe. *(beat.)* over here, there's a couple of paragraphs about his death in the local rinky dink paper, but in mexico ... in mexico, he's received a chingon of attention ... those were his gente. they cared what happened to him. do you think people in this country truly appreciate what he had to do to get here? honestly, vato ... what do you think? *(responding; beat. nods his head.)* simon ... that's what i'm talking about.

(extended beat.)

jose *(cont'd, angrily)*. now, they're calling him a hero! for what!? because he managed to stand in the way of a fucking bullet!? because fools holding up posters telling everyone to "support our troops" say so. *(facetiously.)* hell, vato ... it's great now. his death has ensured democracy for these pendejos, but when he was up crossing the border he was nothing but a fucking wetback to them!

(extendend beat.

he looks down at the floor. it seems like he doesn't wish to continue. he continues looking down at the floor, shaking his head. he responds to a question, not bothering to look up.)

jose *(cont'd)*. fuck, holmes ... it was a stupid thing for me to do, but i didn't know what else— *(beat.)* you see, my girl was pregnant and her parents kicked her out of her house. *(embarrassed.)* my parents have been real cool about it. she's living with them, but she isn't their problem. she's my problem.

(realizes his last comment may have come off as insensitive. he raises his head and looks at the interviewer.)

jose *(cont'd)*. hey, vato ... i didn't mean it like that. i love my girl. i love her with all my heart. what i meant to say was that she's my responsibility, not my parent's ... that's all. *(beat; responding.)* what other choice did i have? i went to a fucked-up school, man. all they cared about was getting me out and it's not like they taught me anything. i ain't got no skills ... you see, ese. that's the thing. they look at me as just another cholo with nowhere to go ... the army, navy and pinche calvary depend on that shit. those recruiters practically lived on campus; promising us all types of shit ... and, it ain't no coincidence that you almost always find recruitment centers near unemployment offices ... man, that's like sticking candy in front of a baby. *(beat.)* these young vatos ... uhm ... i didn't know any better.

(extended beat.)

jose *(cont'd)*. they said the war ended months ago and that our duties have changed ... we're like supposed to be peacekeepers or some shit like that ... pero, every fucking day, our soldiers are dying. ain't nothing peaceful about it, ese.

(extended beat.)

jose *(cont'd)*. we're still getting sent to the front lines. still casualties of war ... but, what burns me is that we have a fucking war right here in our own house and we don't deal with the shit. fuck saddam! i hate him as much as the next motherfucker, but this country shouldn't be playing daddy to a kid that doesn't belong to him!

(extended beat.)

jose (*cont'd*). george w. calling out a country on the nightly news because they have weapons of mass destruction ... the last time i checked, so did we, so who is the fucking evil empire here!? motherfucker almost loses the election because of the fact that one dumb-ass state didn't know how to punch a hole in a card ... and, that state is governed by his brother. if that's not some political incest, i don't know what is ... but i guarantee you one thing, ese. if that mess had happened someplace else, you know we'd be the first ones to raise our hands and say, "that shit ain't right!"

(extended beat.)

jose (*cont'd*). the life of a brown man in the u.s. of a. is predestined, vato ... my homeboys been killed left and right ... here or across the ocean, dead is dead. dead brown kids belonging to us and dead brown kids belonging to someone else. does it really matter anymore? i mean, war is business nowadays. i, mean, just the other day, one of the president's buddies just asked congress for billions of pinche dollars to fight this war. dude! why not build some schools with that cash? create some jobs. make sure people have health insurance. shit like that. fuck, vato ... my ass is going to be in the desert soon enough. i'm preparing for it. i'll go fighting if i have to, but it's a shame. i'll be protecting and serving for this country yet my girl isn't even sure how we're gonna afford to raise our baby. hell, vato ... pampers and formula cost money.

(extended beat.)

jose (*cont'd*). i saw the news the other night and the pro-war vatos were arguing with the peace vatos. the pro-war were

yelling “you’re against our troops!” i yelled at the tv screen, “fuck you, carbon! you’re the ones who don’t support us!” those vatos don’t want to see us dead. i don’t want to see us dead. shit, anytime one of us dies, all they do it shed a tear a write a country song to commemorate it. naw, naw ... those people want us home with our familias. they don’t want us killing innocent children. they want the government to start thinking with their heads and not their dicks. you want to support the troops? go get a gun, sign up and be one yourself, pendejo!

(extended beat.)

jose (*cont’d, quietly*). i’m scared, vato ... i don’t want to go, but I know it’s only a matter of days. i can feel it.

(extended beat.)

jose (*cont’d*). i gotta a kid to think about, but when i really think about it, i realize that i didn’t think about it at all. (*beat.*) i regret the day i signed my name on the fucking dotted line ... if i don’t come back, my kid ain’t gonna have a daddy. that’s another familia that the pinche republicans are gonna bitch about when elections come back around.

(extended beat.)

jose (*cont’d*). like i said, we need to deal with the war right here at home because the fact is, ese ... this country is losing that war, too.

part vi: de colores ... !!!

no different

alexis franco

artist

sedona, ariz.

(alexis franco is an artist working on a mural. she is in her mid-fifties and is a native new yorker with a heavy east coast accent; animated and lively. the mural should be projected onto the back wall. paint supplies litter the area around her. the art depicts children from all different nationalities having fun and enjoying the nature that surrounds them. it is highlighted by a young smiling latino [boy] in the center of the mural.)

alexis (*animated*). c.c.sabathia had twenty-one wins, a 3.18 e.r.a. and 197 strikeouts. you can't be serious? (*responding*.) i know i know ... better earned run average, more strikeouts. i'm not saying the kid isn't a good pitcher, but hernandez was thirteen and twelve ... thirteen and twelve! that's barely a winning record. (*responding; defensive*.) hate on the yankees all you want, young man ... it doesn't change a thing.

(extended beat.)

alexis (*cont'd, amused*). when your teams wins twenty-seven world championships ... then talk to me.

(alexis begins concentrating on the mural and "touches up" a small area; beat. she reacts to a question.)

alexis (*cont'd*). well ... uhm ... no, i mean, you see, i— (*beat*.) the move out west was for my husband. i love the

big lug, you know ... and the doctors made it all too clear that his arthritis wasn't getting any better so we had to go someplace where the weather was ... what did he say, uhm, to slow down some sort of degenerative process in his joints ... so ... we're ... y'know, here. (*beat.*) when we made the decision to move we narrowed it down between taos, new mexico, and sedona, arizona. people back home figured we'd go to california or someplace like that but, let's get one thing straight, there is no way in hell a self-respecting yankee fan would ever live within shouting distance of the dodgers ... uh-uh, no way! (*beat; responding.*) my husband and i try to visit as much as we can, but it's not nearly the same thing. to me, new york is like no place else. different types of people and flavors ... that east coast attitude. (*beat; cleaning her paint brush.*) i know phoenix is supposed to be like the seventh or eighth biggest city in the country, but it doesn't feel like a big city. to tell you the truth, i don't think it's that interesting. the only times i drive down to phoenix is to see the occasional ball game or to go to an art gallery. (*beat.*) you see, i had been to sedona before for an art exhibit about ten years ago ... i mean, i'm not too hip on the new age hippy vibe, but i like the fact that it's quiet. a different kind of quiet than phoenix ... peaceful, not boring.

(*extended beat.*)

alexis (*cont'd, responding*). no ... that's the one thing i don't get about this place. all the fuss about people coming over here; crossing the border. it's all about fear ... fear of the unknown ... fear of the other ... the people who live here fear they will be displaced ... i suppose it really doesn't matter. (*beat.*) in the end, everyone in this freaking state, in this freaking country, is from someplace other than here. we're all chasing after the same dream.

(extended beat.)

alexis *(cont'd)*. we would be doing the exact same thing if we were in their shoes. those who deny that don't want to admit the truth ... and that, my friend, is bullshit! when a person goes to the market, they like the fact that they can buy a head of lettuce for about a buck, though, most people don't really think past that. people don't do that because then they would have to deal with their own insecurities and biases. the ones that tell them that they don't want those people in their communities but, at the same time, they don't want to have to pay more for veggies and fruits than they already have to. they want to believe that that head of lettuce magically found its way into the markets. they want to believe that those hotel beds never get messy. they want to believe that toilets automatically clean themselves overnight. *(beat.)* they want to believe that if they don't think about it ... it doesn't really exist.

(she kneels down and begins mixing some paint.)

alexis *(cont'd, fondly)*. you know ... i would see the statue of liberty every day while i was commuting on the staten island ferry ... as an artist, it was the best way to start off the morning; sipping on my dunkin donuts coffee and being amazed all over again by my favorite piece of art. *(beat; amused.)* i sure miss that broad.

(extended beat.)

alexis *(cont'd, pensive)*. give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free.

(extended beat.)

alexis (*cont'd, standing back up; solemnly*). we act like we're homeowners, but if you think about it, we're only renters.

(*extended beat.*)

alexis (*cont'd*). it isn't right that most images around this piece of desert are of "just" cowboys. we need to create art that reflects the demographics of this city. (*pointing up at the mural.*) kids ... the environment ... unity. (*beat.*) the mural is called: a new green world.

(*extended beat.*)

alexis (*cont'd, responding; annoyed*). for two months, the other artists and i had to deal with those racial slurs ... two freaking months of voices from cars shouting at us. (*beat.*) for god's sake, we had children painting alongside us and here are these idiots cursing at these made-up characters on a school wall. some people called it graffiti or liberal propaganda. others claimed we were shoving diversity down their throats. (*incredulous.*) even some board members who commissioned the project started in on us.

(*extended beat.*)

alexis (*cont'd, attempting to end the interview*). i don't know how much more insight i can give you. it was on the news and you can still read the newspaper articles about— (*interrupted and responding; touching a nerve.*) ah, yes ... the tom henderson show! tom henderson!! the conservative voice of america!!! (*sarcastically.*) he and his lovely radio show will always hold a place in my heart.

(*extended beat.*)

alexis (*cont'd*). he went on and on about how the main focus of the mural was a response to our president. (*to herself; laughing sadly and shaking her head.*) our president.

(*extended beat.*)

alexis (*cont'd*). he spouts off this nonsense about how this mural doesn't tie into this community. he says the focus doesn't need to be on a minority all the time and he pondered why artists always have to point out the differences. he said (*beat.*) "why does the biggest picture on the wall have to be a black person?" and, suddenly ... there is this upsurge of emotion. people stood up for our rights as artists, but just as many people stood up for that racist asshole. (*beat.*) now, the board demands lighter shades on the children's faces, but for artistic reasons, claiming it has nothing to do with race. they tell us they want the children's faces to be happy and radiant.

(*extended beat.*)

alexis (*cont'd, mood change; as if tracing the image of the boy*). they want us to lighten the boy's complexion ... his beautiful cheeks ... his beautiful forehead. (*beat.*) his beauty.

(*extended beat.*)

alexis (*cont'd*). they want us to make him seem like he's coming into the light ... as if somehow that meant he was coming in from the darkness.

(*extended beat.*)

alexis (*cont'd, resentful*). tanya and mel are going to start lightening the piece on thursday. i don't want any part of it ... i don't need the money that badly. i want to keep my soul intact.

(she begins walking around for a moment. she picks up a rag and begins cleaning her hands of paint. she begins staring at the paint can around her.)

alexis (*cont'd*). the colors ... they're no different. just paint; splashed over ... old ... red ... brick.

(extended beat.)

alexis (*cont'd*). by the way ... (*pointing up at the mural.*) that little black kid on the wall? the one supposedly causing all the drama? (*beat.*) he's actually latino.

(extended beat.)

alexis (*cont'd, defiant*). you might want to share that fact with mr. henderson.

color

*antonio loera
law school student
tempe, ariz.*

(the interview is taking place in a coffee shop outside the law school building on the campus of arizona state university. the sounds of people talking and cellphones ringing can be heard lightly in the background throughout the interview. antonio loera is in his mid-twenties and is a law student.)

antonio. ... like i was saying. there's no way around it. it's about color. those who choose not to believe that should stay in their utopian little world and shut the blinds.

(beat; antonio blows into his coffee and then slowly takes a sip. he responds to a comment.)

antonio (*cont'd*). believe me, i'd rather not deal with the issue of color altogether. it's too time-consuming, but— (*beat.*) that's not living in the real world.

(extended beat.)

antonio (*cont'd*). i'm labeled by the way i look. (*beat.*) in arizona ... well, in arizona, brown is ... let's just say, arizona would benefit from catching up with the times. as my friend likes to say, "arizona is the south without the humidity."

(extended beat.

antonio looks around at the other students; responds to a question.)

antonio (*cont'd*). this issue of color ... you see, that's the problem with most discussions on the topic of race. it all begins with the physical. how could it not? it's the first thing people see ... they look at you and automatically want to define you as something, even in spaces of higher education where students of color are continually being forced to justify their positions within these systems, systems entrenched in centuries of institutional racism, having to defend their academic backgrounds in the name of affirmative action. take a look at all the affirmative cases that have materialized throughout the years: university of california v. blake, farmer v. ramsey, tompkins v. alabama state university, grutter v. bollinger and those pendejadas at the university of michigan. go to a library and check that craziness out. look beyond the words and ask yourself what the fight is truly about. (*beat; animated.*) do you honestly believe the majority is going to let it go!? all of a sudden they're complaining that they're being denied equal opportunities, yet, i didn't hear those same people speaking up when we weren't being admitted and we weren't being offered the same opportunities. who are we kidding? call a spade a spade. we have no choice in this matter. our world is a world of distinctions ... from the moment we're born until the moment we die, a continual barrage of applications and surveys where our existence is contingent on what box we check. black, white, latina, latino, asian-american. (*sarcastically.*) and, of course, the ever-popular ... other.

(*extended beat.*)

antonio (*cont'd*). me, being in law school at a.s.u., i consider myself somewhat fortunate. if you look at statistics, the law program here is actually one of the better schools when it

comes to diversity. (*beat; defiantly.*) but ... let's get one thing straight! that's not enough of a reason to view the world with rose-colored glasses. i'm more than sure there are a few people walking around this campus who believe i'm at a.s.u. solely because of the color of my skin. forget the fact that i was at the top of my program at berkeley. doesn't matter. in their minds. they don't ask the questions because they've already come up with their own answers. what is fascinating to me is how people deal with race. to tell you the truth, i have a small sense of admiration for blatant racists. i mean, when i see news footage of the klan it's not like i jump up for joy or anything like that, but, at least they're honest about the way they feel. it's the other type of bigots i have more of a problem with. (*animated.*) the type of people who deal with race like cowards. people who whisper their bigotry behind your back; never face to face ... i have no tolerance for that type of person. the worse part is those bigots wear three-piece suits and own this country. they (*sarcastic air quotes.*) "ain't" the ones driving pick-ups covered with confederate flags.

(*extended beat.*)

antonio (*cont'd, smirking*). but ...

(*extended beat.*)

antonio (*cont'd*). the other type of people who drive me nuts are those people who want to go beyond the call of duty, so to speak. the polite ones who think they're helping the plight of the disenfranchised. people who think they're doing the right thing when all they're really doing is perpetuating some sort of fucked-up cultural melodrama as a way of coming to terms with this whole notion of

white guilt. here at arizona state, that's what it's all about. color isn't dealt with on a personal level, but as different compartmentalized boxes filled with words like ideology and pedagogy as they go off into the distance to publish some journal article full of pretentious musings; saying in fifty pages what they could have easily said in ten. i mean, really, do you think the average everyday homeboy gives a fuck about perspectives in critical theory? i say, "talk to me in a language i can understand." (*beat; amused.*) then again ... you are talking to a future lawyer.

(extended beat.)

antonio (*cont'd*). but, for once, i would like one of these academic types to actually relate to me as they would anyone else. i'm tired of professors automatically turning to me when questions of ethnicity pop up in class discussion. they should be buying me a beer and talking about the world series, instead of poking and prodding me like some sociological guinea pig ... if you think i'm kidding, just look around. i wouldn't know the exact number, but i would say that, easily, seventy-five percent of all theses and dissertations at this university deal with either the native-american and or the latina-latino community and since i know these two cultures don't make up seventy-five percent of the student population ... well ... i think you can do the math (*annoyed.*) it's like don't do us any favors.

(extended beat.)

antonio (*cont'd*). sometimes, i get so annoyed that i wasn't able to go up to a person, shake them, and say, "hey! aren't there any poor coal miners in west virginia that you can make a case study of?" (*beat.*) they just don't get it.

(extended beat.)

antonio (*cont'd*). once ... while i was talking to one of my white law professors during her office hours, she says to me, with this enlightened look on her face, “antonio, is it possible for me to be a chicana?” (*angrily*.) what the fuck is up with that!?! (*beat; irked*.) you have those bleeding hearts. (*beat*.) i swear, this country ... they want to love us or hate us, but either way, they fail to truly ... understand us.

(extended beat.)

antonio (*cont'd, responding; seething*). their sb 1070 way of viewing the la vida only serving to make us targets ... fuck apairo. fuck brewer. (*beat; angrily*.) fuck them for turning my tierra into a police state!!!

(extended beat.

antonio calms down. he finishes his coffee with one long final sip.)

antonio (*cont'd, pensive*). man, i don't know how i could survive without my coffee. (*beat; tired*.) i tell you, though. i can't remember the last time i had more than five hours of sleep. my professors weren't lying when they said law school would be tough. (*beat*.) you do know that the first year of law school is intended to weed out as many students as they can, right? it's about the numbers. between you and me, we both know this world has too many lawyers. law schools know that, too.

(extended beat.)

antonio (*cont'd, solemnly*). like i said, man ... it's about color.

part vii: everybody has a story

skewed

*lacey williams
boutique owner
scottsdale, ariz.*

(lacey williams is a white female in her mid-thirties; stereotype of a sorority sister grown up, but fancies herself as being upper-class. she runs a jewelry boutique in the heart of downtown scottsdale. this is where the interview is taking place. she is sitting in a chair.)

lacey. ... a play! that sounds exciting! (*proudly.*) i go to the scottsdale center for the performing arts to see shows as often as i can. have you been to the scottsdale center for the performing arts? how silly of me to ask. of course you have ... you know, if you're not too busy you should head straight down there. i saw the newest production of late night catechism. (*amused.*) i can't get enough of that crazy nun and her— (*responding; insulted.*) oh, yes ... the interview. (*beat.*) what was your play about again? (*responding.*) border issues? race? why would you want to write about that? you have to understand one thing ... it isn't a question of race. it's a question of economics. arizona is already in a budget crunch as it is. add them. yes, that's right. them! the immigrants you were talking about. (*beat.*) add them to the equation and you'll see that the solution to this problem is nowhere in sight. we have our families to think about. if we want a future we need to plan for it right now and i don't see how that's possible if we keep allowing those people to enter this country illegally. it's not like there aren't legal ways of getting in. other people have gotten in legally. i

don't see why they can't. we can't take care of everybody, especially, if we're having trouble taking care of ourselves.

(extended beat.)

lacey *(cont'd)*. i read stories all the time about the cities in southern arizona. all the difficulties they're dealing with ... and, i know firsthand. my brother did his medical residency in tucson a few years ago and he— *(beat; responding.)* firsthand, secondhand, same difference. like i was saying, the problems at my brother's hospital were neverending. the hospital was in debt beyond belief. they needed extra medical supplies. nobody had insurance. they even needed to hire a staff of translators. not translator, but ... translators to accommodate so many people. the money used for those positions could've been used better in other areas. *(beat.)* is it wrong to believe our citizens should have first right to the amenities entitled to us as taxpayers? education, social services, etc. is it fair that some foreigner has access to our resources? my husband and i have worked hard for what we have. this boutique shop has made a name for itself in scottsdale and my husband's accounting firm is very well respected in this community ... and, you see, this is what scottsdale is ... it's a community. a community of like-minded people. *(responding; fake apology.)* pardon me ... what i mean is that scottsdale is a very refined place to live. we have an image to uphold. we want our property values to remain high. we want our children to attend the best schools. *(responding; not realizing the sarcastic comment.)* exactly! you're starting to get the picture. there is no desire to relive the days of the wild wild west ... we don't want what's happening to places like tucson and yuma to happen here. that wouldn't be acceptable. *(responding.)* no! you're

still not understanding what i mean ... just listen to what i am saying. this isn't about me disliking mexicans or anything like that. i love the mexican culture. i practically live at baja fresh. and ... my nanny, rosa, is like a member of the family ... when i was a student at arizona state, my sorority sisters and i spent every spring break in mexico ... my husband and i even went there for our honeymoon so, you see, it's not about disliking another group of people. it's about the fact that there is not enough money to go around.

(extended beat.)

lacey *(cont'd)*. i know that scottsdale has a reputation for being exclusive, but that's just not true. no one is being excluded from living here, albeit, living here does require a certain level of success, but that's not a question of exclusivity, but of hard work. if you reach those levels, no one is going to stop you from coming here, regardless of what race or religion you belong to ... *(proudly.)* we want people to feel welcome in scottsdale; north scottsdale, to be precise ... and, i am a proud member of the scottsdale chamber of commerce so i know what i'm talking about. people want to come to scottsdale. that's why we try so hard to pamper them. all the high-end shops are intended to attract high-end clientele, but also to give other people an idea of what might be possible if they work hard enough. we have only the finest restaurants and hotels. plus, there's a reason why scottsdale has more spas than anywhere in the world. it's because we want people to feel comfortable. in a world full of problems it's a blessing to be able to lose one's self in a body treatment or a round of golf and, at night, this town is electric. *(beat.)* seeing that i have a family now i don't go out as often as i would like, but, on those rare occasions,

there's nothing better than dancing the night away with friends. the clubs here are so inviting. they're so the place-to-be. *(beat.)* this isn't mesa, that's for sure.

(extended beat.)

lacey *(cont'd, responding; embarrassed)*. you live in mesa? uhm, well ... i'm sure that suits you just fine. *(beat; changing the subject.)* did i mention the weather?

(extended beat.)

lacey *(cont'd)*. you can't beat the weather. eight months out of the year, i dare you to find another more beautiful and charming locale. it's picture-perfect. i can't say that i have an answer for the heat, but that's what air conditioners and pools were made for and, really ... a little heat never hurt anybody. *(responding; confused.)* no, i don't think so. what do you mean? *(beat; responding; unsympathetic.)* yes, yes ... people dying in the desert. *(beat; responding.)* simple ... they should have brought along some more water.

(lacey responds to the interviewer furiously writing away in his notebook.)

lacey *(cont'd)*. is everything all right? what's the problem then? *(responding; shocked.)* what do you mean by that!? *(responding; angrily.)* no ... i don't agree! i don't believe i'm ignorant at all. honestly, i think you should be ashamed of yourself for saying something like that. i agreed to do this interview for your little play and i wasn't expecting to be chastised for my opinions. *(beat.)* you're just like the rest of them with your skewed sense of who we are. you talk about how we stereotype people when you're no better.

i don't know you anymore than you know me, but i agreed to have this conversation anyway. unlike you, i try to look at people as people ... and not race. *(beat.)* nothing i've told you today has anything remotely to do with that. it's about maintaining standards. there's no sin in that.

(extended beat.)

lacey *(cont'd, standing up)*. this discussion is over. furthermore, i'm going to have to ask you not to use any of this interview in your project. i don't feel you've portrayed me in a very positive light and the thought that you would put this up onstage disturbs me. i am very serious. i will take legal action if you decide to go through with using this interview.

(extended beat.)

lacey *(cont'd, pointing towards the door)*. please leave!

our song

*monica flores
kindergarten teacher
chandler, ariz.*

(the heatwave's "always and forever," or something similar, is playing. after a few moments, lights go up and we see monica flores. she is a chicana in her mid-twenties. located onstage is an altar: it contains candles and pictures of monica's deceased husband, pedro. she is lighting a candle. monica crosses back to her chair: the song plays for a while and as it slowly starts to fade away, monica begins to talk.)

monica. he dedicated that song to me during our senior prom. *(beat.)* i knew right then, that he would be the man i would marry.

(extended beat.)

monica *(cont'd)*. he was the nicest guy you would ever want to meet. he was smart ... funny ... polite. *(beat; fondly.)* and, he had this smile that, i don't know, there was something about his smile that was just so perfect.

(extended beat.)

monica *(cont'd, responding; pensive)*. he wanted to make sure he did something positive with his life. you see, for him, it was more than just about getting a job. to him, anyone could do that. that's not what he wanted. *(beat.)* he had gone to college for a couple of years to sort things out in his mind, you know, try to find himself. but, all along, i knew he'd do something i didn't want him to do. i figured he'd be a fireman or a policeman; something of that nature. i think

he just went to school to make me feel better. to show me that he was making an effort to explore his options, but it wasn't in his nature to sit behind a desk shuffling papers and crunching numbers.

(extended beat.)

monica *(cont'd)*. from the first moment they met, pedro and my father had had a great relationship. since my two sisters and i were the only children my parents had, my father took to him as if pedro was his own son ... and, for a while, it was the greatest relationship you could imagine ... then, one day, things ... changed.

(extended beat.

extended beat.)

monica *(cont'd)*. my father couldn't even look at pedro in the eyes. it was as if my father had his heart ripped out ... to make matters worse, it felt like the rest of my family was following his lead and i was caught in the middle. *(beat.)* i didn't agree with pedro's decision and he knew i wouldn't, but it didn't stop him from going through with it and that caused problems between us because i knew there was no way i was going to be able to convince him otherwise.

(extended beat.)

monica *(cont'd, near tears)*. and ... and, uhm ... the thing is ... a few years ago during the i.n.s. raids in chandler ... my father had been one of those taken into custody. when they stopped him ... he was kept in a cell for three days *(beat.)* for pedro to stand there in front of my father and tell him he had applied to work for the department of immigrat—

(extended beat.)

monica (*cont'd, quietly*). i had to stand behind pedro ... he was my husband.

(extended beat.)

monica (*cont'd*). i remember when he began his training and how it would affect him. i can't tell you how many times we would have conversations where he was on the verge of quitting. i could hear it in his voice and every time it killed me but, at the same time, it gave me hope that he would go onto something else. (*beat.*) i remember this one night, he told me about this thing called tonking ... he was instructed that tonking was the sound one of those heavy metal flashlights makes when it's smacking someone's head, but it wasn't necessarily seen as a bad thing ... only part of the job. this was the type of thing my husband was learning!

(extended beat.)

monica (*cont'd*). growing up, my father used to say that the only good border patrol agent was a dead one ... so, i asked him if he still felt that way knowing that pedro was working for them ... without the slightest hesitation, he said, "yes." (*beat.*) that was my husband he was talking about! the future father of my children ... of his future grandchildren.

(extended beat.)

monica (*cont'd, sad coldness*) i haven't spoken to my father since.

(extended beat.)

monica (*cont'd*). i'd yell at pedro. "why is this job so damn important to you!? don't you see what you're doing to this family! don't you care about your people!?" he'd yell back, "don't you ever tell me what i'm thinking! i've told you the stories of my father crossing the border. the shit he had to go through to get here. what? you think this is just one big fucking game i'm playing!?" (*beat.*) and, he stopped for a moment ... because he has realized he had been yelling at me, then he pulled me towards him. he kissed me on my cheek and held me for what seemed forever. like he didn't want to let go ... and, he whispers to me, "would you rather have some racist white dude dealing with our people. (*beat.*) or ... me ... someone who's going to make sure they're treated like human beings."

(*extended beat.*)

monica (*cont'd*). you hear stories all the time about latino border patrol agents who are worse than the white officers ... they're so afraid of appearing weak that they go to the extremes to build a reputation. in the process, not only do they lose their souls, but they lose their dignity. (*beat.*) pedro wasn't like that. he treated every single person he stopped with respect. didn't matter what color they were ... because of that, he was respected by most, resented by others.

(*extended beat.*)

monica (*cont'd*). it almost never failed. pedro would catch someone and a few days later he would catch them again. the funny thing is, believe it or not, some of them didn't mind being caught ... as long as it was pedro, that is. they would even greet him with a friendly "hello." it wasn't like

they didn't know the routine. they get caught. processed and given a happy meal from mcdonalds ... then, tomorrow would roll around.

(extended beat.)

monica (*cont'd*). after a few years, i came to understand that pedro wasn't there to hunt down people crossing the border. he was there making sure they would have another chance to try again. (*beat.*) i once remember him joking around one day ... he said, "if they get past me, the more power to them." i didn't think much of it at the time, but now that i look back at those words, i realize that he meant them. he knew people living in this neighborhood who were here illegally. didn't matter. he'd strike up the conversation with them. maybe, share a story or two. but ... he never turned them in. you see, the borderline was his workplace. anyplace other than that ... wasn't.

(extended beat.

extended beat.)

monica (*cont'd*). he was having some drinks with some of his softball buddies at this bar. nothing unusual about that ... he was just relaxing. after his friends had left, he had struck up a conversation with some other guys at the bar and, from what i was told, they seemed to be nice guys. apparently, during their conversation, pedro had mentioned to them that he was an agent for the border patrol.

(extended beat.)

monica (*cont'd*). they found his body a few feet away from the border. he was murdered execution-style. authorities told

us that they think those guys might've been drug dealers or coyotes and, that when they found out my husband was an age— (*emotional; beat.*) they didn't take anything from him. he had all his money and his keys. (*near tears.*) they found his badge laying on top of his chest ... for everyone to see.

(extended beat.)

monica (*cont'd, angrily*). i don't care what any goddamn person has to say ... even my father!

(extended beat.

extended beat.)

monica (*cont'd, sadly defiant*). my husband was a good man.

part viii: may 19, 2001

muñeca

oscar garcia

obrero

mesa, ariz.

(es medio dia. la entrevista esta llevando acabo en una calle en la ciudad de mesa con mucho trafico donde obreros buscan trabajo. oscar garcia, treinta años, es mexicano. es flaco y por los afectos del sol tiene el piel más oscuro que normal. su ropa esta acabad por lo viejo y lleva un cinturon de herramientas. su lonchera enseguida de el en el piso. al fondo esta el letrero HOME DEPOT. se puede escuchar los ruidos de hombres hablando en español.)

oscar. asi es, yo conocia enrique, era muy bueno ... muy amable. esque el era camarada de mi primo y siempre que iba a visitar a mi primo ahi estaban pistiando y sacando curas. como dije, era muy payaso.

(pausa largo.)

oscar *(cont'd)*. no, no supe ... ni cuando vi las noticias. era la misma historia cada dia. asi es, todos lo sabemos, siempre hay chanse que no lo logremos. eso esta muy gacho pero no hay de otra. mexico es un pais muy pobre como su gente ... me sali de la escuela, hmm ... a los siete años. mi familia necesitaba mi ayuda para chambiar. asi es alla unos pocos pesos ni al caso. *(mirando al piso.)* seremos pobres, pero no pendejos. sabemos que la muerte nos persigue ... ni modo. pero me siento mal por ellos. la cosa es ver tanta gente muerta en un solo lugar, nunca me habia tocado ver eso. y si, ese dia

me senti rete feo porque ellos tambien venian de sinaloa, chin ... sinaloa es mi tierra. ellos eran mis camaradas. *(pausa.)* yo no supe de enrique hasta unas semanas despues. yo sabia que se iba venir, ya habiamos platicado de eso, pero me habia dicho que se iba a esperar un rato porque su vieja estaba embarazada y el queria conocer a su bebe. tampoco queria que su vieja estuviera sola. el era ese tipo de muchacho. *(pausa; triste.)* cuando recibi la carta de mi primo me dijo que enrique era uno de los catorce ... creo que no aguanto esperar y su mujer acaba de tener su bebe la semana pasada ... lo nombro enrique. *(cambiando el tema.)* pinchi calor! verdad? quieres refresco? tengo extra por si quieres.

(oscar se agacha y agarra una soda para el mismo y le ofrece una soda al entrevistador.)

oscar *(cont'd)*. seguro? bueno, pero aqui de confiansa. lo que es mio es tuyo.

(oscar se pone de pie. abre la soda y practicamente toma toda la soda. un poquito se la cae de la barba y se lo limpia.)

oscar *(cont'd)*. yo? varios meses. desde agosto. *(le contesta.)* agosto es el mejor mes nomas porque es el mes mas dificil. el clima es mejor en el invierno pero es cuando hay mas migra. ellos saben que es el tiempo en que nosotros mas tratamos de cruzar. pero yo no. you trate de hacerlo mas dificil para cacharme asi como fue dificil para llegar aqui. alomejor suena raro pero asi soy. *(hablando con los otros obreros.)* que no compas?

(se escucha el ruido de los hombres de acuerdo. oscar empieza hablar en voz alta para comunicar sus pensamientos al grupo y al entrevistador.)

oscar (*cont'd*). ellos odian el calor igual que nosotros ... nomas hay una diferencia. para nosotros es pensar en vida o muerte y para ellos es solamente una pinchi inconveniencia. ellos nomas se queman y dicen es la culpa de los mojados. se pican con un cactus y es la culpa de los mojados. (*carcajeandose.*) no encuentren vieja para casarse y es culpa de los pinche mojados.

(se escucha la risa de los obreros. cuando se baja la risa, oscar se queda pensativo.)

oscar (*cont'd*). oye eso? lo chistes ... es lo unico que tenemos. cuando batallas tanto para sobrevivir ... en una manera ya estas muerto. por eso es bueno reir y es una risa buena ... pues ya sabes.

(oscar termina su soda y lo aplasta.)

oscar (*cont'd*). extraño la risa de mi niña. mi niñita presiosa ... estrella. ella es niña de navidad. es bendecida. gustas ver una foto de ella?

(oscar saca un foto de su hija y lo enseña al entrevistador.)

oscar (*cont'd*). esta foto es de ella recién nacida. lo acuerdo como si fuera ayer ... es tanto como su madre. no es la bebe mas bonita que has visto? sí, ya se que todos los papas hablan así de sus bebés pero en este caso es en serio.

(oscar pone la foto en su cartera.)

oscar (*cont'd*). empeso la escuela la semana pasada y tiene ya seis años y es mas inteligente que su papa ... quiero que ella si vaya a la escuela. no quiero que ella—

(se escucha el bocina de una troca. tambien se escucha el ruido de los obreros buscando trabajo. oscar brinca para agarrar el atención del chofer. después de unos momentos, oscar se para y mira como se va la troca; pausa.)

oscar (*cont'd*, *avergonzado*). perdon, no quise ser gacho. seguro que no quieres nada de tomar?

(pausa largo.)

oscar (*cont'd*). guarde un poco ... varias bolas. esta navidad podria mandarles algo chiquito a mi familia. tengo suficiente para un colchon para mi vieja y niña para que lo compartan. lana para comida y otras cosas, alomejor me sobra hasta para un radio chico. nuestro radio viejo ya no sirve para nada. a ellas les gusta oír la radio juntas.

(pausa largo.)

oscar (*cont'd*). el año que viene ... aunque me mate ... voy a darle un regalo de navidad a estrella pero va ser de los buenos y tambien un regalo de cumpleaños muy bueno tambien. *(pausa.)* esque mi niña siempre tiene su muñeca fea. es de plastico chafa. esta casi bichi y no tiene un brazo. mi niña se merese mejor. le voy a comprar una barbie americana, pero no es todo. le voy a completar todo la barbie. el novio de barbie. la casa grande. el carro. todo el set. ya saque la cuenta a como me va salir todo ... 15 bolas cada barbie. la barbie y el novio. 20 bolas para el carro y la casa 80 bolas. lo puedes creer tanta lana para una casa de barbie!? *(haiendo cuentas en su cabeza.)* otro, creo pues pienso debe de salir o no se alomejor 50 bolas para enviarlo ... casi 200 boloas. *(procupado.)* 200 bolas! *(pausa.)* no me gusta la muñeca que tiene. esta sucia. esta quebrada. muñecas deberian de estar bonitas.

(pausa largo.

oscar mira alrededor para unos momentos con la esperanza de un trabajo. pausa. orgullusamente.)

oscar (*cont'd*). yo chambeo duro. estos son mis herramientas que uso para hacer y arreglar cosas, yo no soy ratero ni nada así. yo soy un hombre honesto. no es justo lo que piensan de mis camaradas. nos tratan como animales! y eso no es cierto. ellos no saben como nos sentimos ... cuando extrañamos nuestras familias. yo amo mexico pero no hay chamba en mexico. yo solo hago lo que debo hacer. no estoy lastimando a nadie. asegurate a decirle eso a la gente. no somos criminales!

(pausa largo.)

oscar (*cont'd, seriamente*). criminales no compran barbies americanas.

agua/water*reverend clay nash**pastor**tucson, ariz.*

(in the darkness, america's "horse with no name," or something similar, is playing. after a few moments, the lights go up. the interview is being held in the desert outside of tucson. reverend clay nash is a white man in his late fifties and has a texas drawl. a cross necklace hangs from his neck. he is putting up a water station. it is the afternoon and the temperature is easily over one hundred and ten degrees. clay wipes his brow with a handkerchief. the song slowly fades away as clay begins to talk.)

clay. oohee ... i'd say it's about one-twelve maybe, but the day is still young.

(extended beat.)

clay *(cont'd)*. the day those fourteen people died, the temperature was well over a fucking 117 degrees.

(clay places his handkerchief back in his pocket.)

clay *(cont'd)*. this area is classified as a "high risk zone" by authorities ... no surprise there. right at this second, there's some agent wandering around "the devil's road" looking for some poor souls. *(beat.)* immigration is changing their policies; rerouting immigrants so that they have to travel the most treacherous geography you can imagine ... now these poor folks are being forced to travel to god knows where ... only to die ... not to be apprehended. the powers

that be know that all too well. (*looking at the water spigot.*)
you don't mind if i check this right quickly, do you?

(*clay checks the water spigot.*)

clay (*cont'd, angrily*). damn coyote stole their money and left them out there to die.

(*extended beat.*

extended beat.)

clay (*cont'd*). there were over thirty people in that group. did you know that? the youngest survivor was sixteen. (*beat.*) think about that for a second. a sixteen-year-old.

(*extended beat.*)

clay (*cont'd*). think about this even more ... two weeks earlier, agents found the body of a ten-year-old girl ... a ten-year-old ... still just a baby.

(*extended beat.*)

clay (*cont'd*). when the survivors reached the hospital, they were burned black and were covered in cactus spines from the cacti they were trying to eat for food ... one doctor at the hospital described the survivors as looking like mummies ... you spend enough time under these conditions and your kidneys are liable to explode ... and, i definitely mean that in the literal sense.

(*clay walks around. looking for immigrants.*)

clay (*cont'd, to himself*). pretty quiet on the warfront.

(extended beat.)

clay (*cont'd*). these people really have no idea what it's like. no one can really. you hope for the best and you hope god is carrying you, but unless god is carrying jugs of water you're shit out of luck ... there's no habitation, no ranches, no roads, no water. (*beat.*) they start off their journey, if they're lucky, with one, maybe, two gallons of water. they think it's going to be all they need, but it gets real clear real soon that the shit isn't going to last.

(extended beat.)

clay (*cont'd, pointing*). over there ... about thirty miles southeast from here we found the body of a woman, a mrs. juanita ramos, near a creek bed. her body had been picked clean by animals and her bones were spread over an area of about fifty feet. the woman had tried to cross with two of her children. she was a heavyset woman which, in and of itself was a horrible idea ... but she wanted to be with her husband in texas. (*beat.*) the things people will do when they're in love, y'know?

(extended beat.)

clay (*cont'd*). you married, son?

(extended beat.)

clay (*cont'd, responding; hopeful*). one day ... maybe.

(extended beat.)

clay (*cont'd*). this poor woman fell ill and couldn't continue. the coyote took her young daughter who made it safely across. her

teenage son stayed with her as long as he could before getting help, but he was caught and sent back home. her father got permission to find his baby girl. he asked us to help and we helped ... we spent twenty-one days looking for her. during that time we found the remains of another seven people.

(extended beat.)

clay (*cont'd*). señor dominguez identified his daughter by the necklace lying near her remains. it was a necklace he had given her for her quinceañera. (*beat.*) at least, juanita is at peace now ... not many of these poor souls can say the same ... if they're lucky, they'll be sent home in a wooden box. for the ones that are never found, well ... a person should die amongst the living ... not the dead.

(clay picks up a rock and throws it out into the distance.)

clay (*cont'd*). most people don't think about water ... even when there's a drought going on, they don't think about it. how many times have you left the sink on when you're brushing your teeth? and ... what about when you shower? ten ... fifteen minutes. do you realize how much water that is? that's more water than some families in this world have in a week ... probably even longer in most cases. water is life. without it ... you ain't nothing but a heap of fucking ashes ... that's why i decided to put up these water stations. too many brown faces dying.

(extended beat.)

clay (*cont'd, responding*). yep ... i can go on and on about the policies and, trust me, there isn't one politician in arizona who doesn't know me. i'm a texas preacher with a big mouth and i know how to use it.

(extended beat.)

clay (*cont'd*). not like i have much of a choice. hear what i'm saying? i don't do this for publicity. i'd prefer y'all just leave me the hell alone ... i only live to serve the lord.

(extended beat.)

clay (*cont'd, responding*). hmm ... let me see. the first two that we built were in the organ pipe cactus national monument. the others were placed on some private land south of tucson and just north of rio rico. but that was just the first of many to come ... there are going to be plenty more. believe you me. (*beat.*) there's no way of knowing exactly how many people are being saved, but it's helping. that i know for sure ... providing this water is nothing more than an act of faith and conviction.

(extended beat.)

clay (*cont'd*). what irritates me are those people who criticize what we're doing ... saying that we are not only contributing, but encouraging illegal immigration and, i use the word illegal loosely. that word should be reserved for those who are truly breaking the law ... rapists ... murderers ... that isn't the case here. the only thing these people are about is survival.

(extended beat.)

clay (*cont'd*). it boggles my mind to see how desensitized civilization has become ... the sight of fourteen deceased bodies on a dried up riverbed and the only thoughts that pass through their hollow minds is "we got to do something about illegal immigration. it's getting out of hand."

(extended beat.)

clay *(cont'd)*. regardless of which argument you side with, when you see a person dead in front of your eyes, your thoughts should be on him or her. honoring that person while, at the same time, being grateful that you get the chance to see another day!

(extended beat.)

clay *(cont'd, angrily)*. i doubt that people are risking their lives for a sip of hot water in the middle of the desert! nothing you or i—

(extended beat.)

clay *(cont'd, composing himself)*. we can't forget that these people are our brothers and sisters. children of the lord. they're human beings, people with dignity, dreams and desires who have enriched this country with their work and talent. for every penny they've taken out of this country, i believe they've put two pennies back in ... and, there are some realities, that as a people, we are going to have to face. we can no longer look at ourselves as two nations divided by a river. we must try and discover concrete solutions to our problems instead of building a fucking wall; a wall that ain't worth a pot to piss in. *(beat; emotional.)* we have to look at ourselves as a region that's going to live together, that's going to work together, that's going to make some damn progress together.

(extended beat.)

clay sees a person in the distance and waves him down.)

clay (*cont'd, yelling*). aqui, señor ... agua., aqui!!!

(clay looks off in the opposite direction.)

clay (*cont'd*). john ... over there! see him. bring him on over to the station!

(extended beat.

clay stands silent for a moment, then begins to quietly say a prayer, ends it with a sign of the cross.

extended beat.

clay looks back towards the interviewer.)

clay (*cont'd, solemnly*) looks like today's your lucky day ... care for a cup of water?

(extended beat.

extended beat.

lights go dark as a spotlight hits a screen that is either located upstage center or on a back wall. the final slide appears. it is a quote that reads:

*"a man's dying is more the survivor's affair
than his own."*

—thomas mann

lights fade to black.)

end of play

translated pieces

virgencita linda

*luz ortiz
maid
guadalupe, ariz.*

(the interview is taking place in the front yard of luz ortiz, a mejicana who is sixty years old. she sits near a makeshift altar that her family has created; the virgen de guadalupe being prominently displayed. the time is early evening. she has just returned from the hotel where she works as a maid.)

luz. forgive me for being late. mijá needed to put gas in the car. i usually walk to work. it's just down the street. the holiday inn hotel. el express ... right down the street, across from that big market. *(responding to her daughter's comment; amused.)* oh, forgive me. i meant to say "el mall." my daughter loves to spend hours walking around that thing. me? i don't have much money so i don't bother. i don't see the point in it? *(beat.)* but, it's only fifteen minutes to walk to work. short walk. at night, my viejo or one of my kids will come and and walk home with me. i tell them it's not necessary, but they worry for me ... i wanted to walk home tonight, but i didn't want to be late tonight. when mijá told me about the gas ... aagh. i just want to thank you for being patient and to apologize about my appearance. i didn't get a chance to change out of my work clothes. you sure it's all right? *(beat.)* i'm so excited to have you in my home. my daughter goes on and on about you. she says you're a very good writer. *(responding.)* thank you so much. yes, i am proud of her. she is my youngest and i had her so much later than my other child. i was almost forty when i had her. she says she wants

to be a teacher. i ask her if she would rather be a doctor or a lawyer like her brother. something that pays better, but she just want to help children. she's always thinking of others before herself. (*beat.*) tell me something about yourself. were you born in arizona? los angeles? hmm ... i've been there once. i thought it was nice. i very much liked the beach, but i wouldn't want to live there. no offense. i just think it's so big and there are so many people there. i'm happy where i'm at. (*beat; amused.*) don't worry about your spanish. no eres pocho ... i understand you just fine. it's nothing to be embarrassed about. i know how difficult it is to juggle two languages. i'm always running around in circles with my oldest son. i'll talk to him in spanish, but he usually answers me in english. i constantly have to remind him, "en espanol, mijo" but he jokes it off like it doesn't matter. i know it does, but he's getting better at it. he's a good boy, though ... and, your parents? were they born here? ah, zacatecas ... and, your mother? monterrey. i knew it. there is something familiar about you. i couldn't pin it down, but now i can. i grew up in monterrey. most of my familia still lives there throughout the area: colonia metalurgica, colonia nueva aurora, colonia torreon jardin. do you know which one your familia lives in? colonia vencedora? aye, yes ... two of my uncles live in the exact place. next time you talk to your mother ask her if they know anyone from the gallegos familia ... ask her if that name sounds familiar. juan carlos and eduardo gallegos ... ask her. (*beat.*) i try to visit mejico every few years, but it gets more difficult as i get older. do you still have familia there? how long has it been since you've seen them? aye, mijo. that's much too long. you need to go and see them. they are your blood. (*responding.*) yes, things cost money. it's an expensive world, but if you get the chance, start saving your pennies because your familia won't be around forever. none

of us will. plus, you shouldn't forget that mejico is as much your home as it is your parents'. please don't ever forget that ... i know that i miss mejico sometimes, but i love guadalupe. it's the closest thing to mejico that you can find here. it's not as nice as other places, but it's home. the white people. they don't much care about what happens here. at least, that's what i think. i don't have to tell you. i know you know that. you can see it yourself. look at baseline street. look at the other side and look at the guadalupe side. it's like crossing from san diego to tijuana. el mall y todo. all nice and new. lots of places to spend. down the street there is this beautiful park that is so green. but, they don't care if guadalupe isn't green. they don't care if the schools are bad. (*beat; annoyed.*) around the corner they just made a place for the little ones to play baseball. it's pretty. i am happy for the children. it's green like the big park, but one little piece of land still isn't enough ... guadalupe is still nothing but dirt and rocks. next to the church where the older men play sports, that's all it is. dirt and rocks. sometimes broken pieces of glass and trash. there are many open areas like that. it's almost like they are laughing in our faces ... as if to say to us, "you want to play somewhere nice, then cross the street to do so. we don't care ... eventually, you have to cross back anyway." (*beat; apologetic.*) forgive me. i am angry, yes, but i don't want to come off hateful. i am a good catholic. i believe in god and jesus and la virgen linda, but i am not blind ... but, with that said, i am thankful. thankful that i have my small little house and food on the table. a television to watch my novelas on. my viejo treats me good and my children are good people ... guadalupe has been good to us. to most people here. i mean, there isn't a lot of money, but we go on because we must. even with all the bad around us, we still find the time to share our stories and cafecitos. in guadalupe familia means

familia. believe me, what little we have is a world's more than what most people in mejico have. We appreciate the little things like soap and toilet paper. those are the things i bring to mejico to give to my familia ... the little things other people don't think twice about. (*beat.*) it's because la virgencita protects us. she looks over us. we are lucky to have her in our lives. that is why almost every house in this neighborhood has la virgencita standing guard over them. we must always remember that she was the one that watched over us as we crossed the border. she protected us. she held us when nobody else would. (*beat.*) i was only sixteen when i crossed ... alone with people i didn't know. (*responding.*) no ... my mother didn't want me to go, but in mejico you can't tell anyone not to cross, you can only tell them that you will say a prayer for them. that is all. (*closing her eyes.*) that first night with the coyotes howling and the heat unbearable. i can still remember how tightly i was holding onto my tiny little statue of la virgencita; nearly crushing her. it was the longest night of my life. (*beat; emotional.*) a few days later when I snuck across, a coyote was herding us into the back of this big truck like cattle and i slipped as i got on ... i dropped my little virgen onto the ground by accident, but i didn't see her until i was all the way inside. i sat down with the others when i noticed. i yelled for the coyote to please pick it up. "please give her to me," i said ... but he just yelled for me to shut up and with those words he slammed the door in our faces ... five hours later i found myself in the back of a garage in tucson. two days later i found myself in a watermelon field west of phoenix ... when i found a few minutes for myself to get a drink of water, i would think of my virgen linda ... being stepped on ... forgotten in the desert ... like so many of the pobrecitos who prayed to her during their journeys.

(extended beat.)

luz (*cont'd*). i still pray to her because she has never left me ... even when i look out across the street to el mall and the new cars and the nice houses ... even now. (*beat.*) she is with me.

muñeca

*oscar garcia
day laborer
mesa, ariz.*

(it is the middle of the day. the interview is taking place on a busy intersection where day laborers gather around, searching for employment. oscar garcia, thirty, is mejicano. he is slight of build and the effects of the arizona heat have his skin looking darker than it usually would be. his clothes are worn and he carries a weathered tool belt. his [mini] ice cooler/lunch box lays next to him. in the background an out-of-focus but, definitely recognizable, HOME DEPOT sign can be seen and the sounds of men talking spanish can also be heard.)

oscar. that's right. i knew enrique. he was a good guy ... very friendly. you see, he was my primo's friend so whenever i'd visit my primo he was usually there talking shit, making jokes, sharing his beers. like i said, he was a stand-up guy.

(extended beat.)

oscar (*cont'd*). no, i didn't know ... not even when i saw the news on t.v ... same story different day. that's the way it is. we all know that. there's always a chance we won't make it. the shit is fucked up, but there is no other way. mejico is a poor country, like its people ... i quit school when i was

like, uhm, seven. my familia needed me to help. everybody's story is the same, you know? *(beat.)* a few pesos isn't enough. not even close. *(looking down at the floor.)* we may be poor, but we're not stupid. we know that death is following us ... ni modo. i can still feel bad for them. *(looking back at the interviewer.)* the thing is to see, uhm ... all at the same time. i had never seen that before. so many people dead at one time. in one place ... yes, i was especially sad that day ... and, the fact that they were from sinaloa. damn, man! sinaloa is my land. those were my brothers. my compadres. *(beat.)* i didn't know about enrique until a few weeks later. sure, i knew he was going to make the crossing. we all had talked about it. i knew that, but he had said he would wait a while. his wife was pregnant and he wanted to be there to see the child be born. he didn't want his wife to be alone. he was that kind of guy. when i finally got my primo's letter, he told me that enrique was one of the fourteen— *(beat; sadly.)* i guess he couldn't wait long enough. *(beat.)* his wife had her baby last week. a son ... she named him enrique. *(beat; changing the subject.)* fucking hot! you know? want a soda or something? i have an extra one if you'd like.

(he bends down and grabs a soda for himself and also offers one to the interviewer.)

oscar *(cont'd)*. you sure? all right, then, but don't be afraid to ask. what's mine is yours.

(he stands back up. he opens the soda can and practically drinks the whole can in one motion. a little bit of soda run down his chin. he wipes it off.)

oscar *(cont'd)*. me? a few months ... ever since august. *(responding.)* august is the best month because it's the most

difficult month, my friend. the weather is better in the winter. more migra patrol then. they know more of us will try when the weather is cooler. not me, though. i wanted to make it as hard for them to catch me as it was for me to get here. i know that sounds crazy, but that's just me ... isn't that right, fellas?

(the sound of men agreeing can be heard. oscar begins talking in a louder voice to communicate his thoughts to the whole group as well as the interviewer.)

oscar (*cont'd*). shit. la migra hates the heat as much as we do ... only difference is that for us it's a matter of life and death. for them, it's a pinche inconvenience. they get a sunburn. it's those damn mojados. they get pricked on a cactus. it's those damn mojados. (*chuckling.*) they can't find a woman to marry them. it's those damn mojados.

(laughter erupts from the group of day laborers. as the laughter dies down, oscar becomes a bit more pensive. beat; to the interviewer.)

oscar (*cont'd*). hear that? the laughter. that's the only thing we own out here. when you struggle so much to try and survive you're already dead ... in a way, that is, but a good laugh ... well, a good laugh ... well, you know.

(he finishes his soda. he stands the can on the floor and crushes it. he, then, places the smashed can in his cooler.

extended beat.)

oscar (*cont'd*). i miss my daughter's laugh. my little baby girl. estrella. she was a christmas baby. she's blessed ... would you like to see a picture of her?

(the interviewer agrees to see the picture. oscar pulls out the picture and shows the interviewer; pointing.)

oscar *(cont'd)*. this was her when she was born. i remember it like it was yesterday ... she's so much like her mother. look at her. isn't she the most beautiful baby you've ever seen? i know. every father talks like that but, in this case, it's true.

(he puts the picture back in his wallet.)

oscar *(cont'd)*. she just started school last week. six years old. *(smiling.)* already, she's smarter than her father. i want her to go to school. i don't want her to—

(a truck horn can be heard. the sound of men responding can be heard. oscar; instantly, forgets that he is being interviewed and begins jumping up and down, hand waving in the air; trying to get the truck driver's attention. after a few moments, oscar stops his actions. he watches as the truck drives away. beat; embarrassed.)

oscar *(cont'd)*. sorry. i didn't mean to be rude. *(beat.)* sure you don't want anything to drink?

(extended beat.)

oscar *(cont'd)*. i've saved a little bit ... a few dollars. this christmas i'll be able to send a little something to my familia. i have enough to get a simple mattress for my wife and child to share. money for food and other things. there might even be a little cash left over for a small radio. our old one is no good anymore. *(beat.)* they like to listen to the songs on the radio together.

(extended beat.)

oscar (*cont'd*). next year, though ... even if it kills me ... i am going to get estrella a real christmas present. a real birthday present. (*beat.*) she carries around this ugly little doll. cheap plastic. practically naked and missing an arm. my little girl deserves better. i'm going to get her one of those american barbie dolls. but, not just that. i'm getting her the whole setup. the girl barbie. the boy barbie. the big dollhouse. the car. the whole thing. i already did the math. fifteen dollars for each barbie doll. the boy and the girl. twenty for the car and the house is eighty dollars. can you believe that? so much money for a doll's house? (*tabulating in his head.*) another, i guess, i mean, i think, it should be another, i don't know, fifty maybe ... to mail it. that's almost two hundred dollars. (*to himself; worried.*) two hundred. (*beat; to interviewer.*) i don't like the doll she has now. it's dirty. it's broken. girl dolls are supposed to be pretty.

(extended beat.

he looks around for a few moments, hoping to see a prospective employer. beat; proudly.)

oscar (*cont'd*). i work hard. these are my tools. tools that i use to build and fix things. i don't steal or nothing like that. i am an honest man. it's not fair what people say about me and my friends. they treat us like we're animals. that's not true. they do not know how we feel. how much we miss our familias. i love mejico. soy mejicano ... but, there are no jobs in mejico. i am only doing what i need to do. i'm not hurting anybody. you make sure to tell people that. we are not criminals.

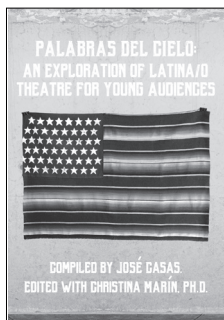
(extended beat.)

oscar (*cont'd, solemnly*). criminals don't buy american barbie dolls.

NOTES

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