

R. Aída Hernández Castillo

# DIGGING *for* HOPE

*A Feminist Ethnography in the Land of Mass Graves*



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
ARIZONA PRESS  
TUCSON

# CONTENTS

|                                                                                         |               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <i>List of Illustrations</i>                                                            | <i>ix</i>     |
| <i>Acknowledgments</i>                                                                  | <i>xi</i>     |
| <i>Sorographic Overture</i>                                                             | <i>xv</i>     |
| <i>List of Acronyms</i>                                                                 | <i>xxxiii</i> |
| <br>                                                                                    |               |
| Introduction                                                                            | 3             |
| 1. Las Rastreadoras: Searching in Occupied Territory                                    | 27            |
| 2. Regresando a Casa Morelos: Politics of Care for the Deceased                         | 69            |
| 3. Memory Healers: Self-Representation, Resistance, and Sorography                      | 122           |
| 4. Denouncing the Genocide of the Poor: Massacres as Forms of Disappearance of Migrants | 162           |
| 5. By Searching, We Find Ourselves!: Community-Building Through Solidarity              | 198           |
| 6. The Strength of Spirituality in the Searchers' Journey                               | 228           |
| Final Reflections                                                                       | 257           |
| <br>                                                                                    |               |
| <i>Notes</i>                                                                            | <i>267</i>    |
| <i>References</i>                                                                       | <i>297</i>    |
| <i>Index</i>                                                                            | <i>323</i>    |

# SOROGRAPHIC OVERTURE

During almost a decade (since 2016) of walking alongside searching collectives in Mexico, I have often listened to the relatives of the disappeared claim that in order to be in solidarity, one must put one's body in the search. Anything else is lip service. Churches, government officials, political parties, and the academic community have publicly addressed the phenomenon of enforced disappearances and the need to stop violence and promote a culture of peace. Nevertheless, most of the time, these speeches are performed on the sidelines, by people who have never picked up a shovel, wheatpasted a disappeared person poster, or helped someone submit a police report. When we approach their fights, these collectives invite us to "make a path by walking" (*hacer camino al andar* . . .), to walk alongside them on the streets, to join them in their searches, to be willing to learn from them.<sup>1</sup> In this shared walk, a sense of community is built. It transcends families and embraces anyone who is willing to "put their body in it."

Sometimes, this walk also implies witnessing tensions and conflicts, agreements and disagreements. Sharing risks, but also findings; disappointments, but also hope . . . In this text, I use the concept of "sorography," originally developed by my friend and colleague Lucy Bell to refer to ethnographic writing as a political act that contributes to the construction of *sororal communities*.<sup>2</sup> She uses this term to describe the political project of the *Hermanas en la Sombra* (Sisters in the Shadows) editorial

collective. This is a form of sorority that does not deny differences but acknowledges the multiple intersections of violence that mark the lives of female searchers, a form of sorority committed to the possibility of building a community based on diversity. With said commitment, I have “made a path by walking” alongside them, going down ravines and wandering into territories controlled by organized crime, all while taking care of each other.

During the final revision process for this book, my friend Angélica Rodríguez Monroy, with whom I share one of the strongest bonds I have encountered during this social struggle, invited me to walk the streets of Guadalajara along with her, joining the alive-search for her daughter, Viridiana Morales Rodríguez, who disappeared on August 12, 2012.<sup>3</sup> After overcoming many bureaucratic obstacles, Angélica managed to get the State of Mexico Public Prosecutor’s Office (an institution from the state where her daughter disappeared) to promote a coordinated search with the Jalisco Search Commission, an institution from the state where certain evidence suggested her daughter was abducted as a victim of trafficking. While the General Law on Disappearance established the right of relatives to participate in the searches, the logistical and financial support to make this possible depends on the families’ persistence and ability.<sup>4</sup> Angélica’s thirteen-year experience looking for her daughter has transformed her into a professional searcher who has traversed the labyrinths of judicial and forensic bureaucracy multiple times.

This was not the first time that Angélica and members of her collective traveled from Cuernavaca to Jalisco to search for Viridiana. With the support of a sensitive official from the Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (National Human Rights Commission, CNDH), a search caravan was conducted in Jalisco. Persons in prison mentioned they had seen a young woman similar to Viridiana, describing certain details and body marks. A window of hope opened, hope of finding her alive. When plans for a third trip—which I was invited to, alongside other searchers close to Angélica—were just beginning, we could not have imagined that our visit would coincide with the discovery of a forced recruitment and extermination camp in the Teuchitlán municipality, an hour and a half from Guadalajara.

The news was divulged by the Guerreros Buscadores de Jalisco collective on March 7, 2025. Human remains, marks left by incinerated bodies,

and hundreds of shoes and clothing items were found at a hacienda called Rancho Izaguirre, evidencing the government's complicity in, or at the very least indifference to, the phenomenon of disappearance.<sup>5</sup> The information gathered by the collective suggests that this place, like similar facilities discovered around the state, had been used as a training center for young men forcibly recruited to serve as *sicarios* (gunmen) for the Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG).<sup>6</sup>

The ranch is located on a 100,000 sq. ft. lot of land where the Mexican army had conducted a raid in September 2024, capturing ten members of organized crime, rescuing two victims of kidnapping, and retrieving the body of a murder victim. Nevertheless, the findings collected by searching families showed the world that the place kept operating after the army and judicial authorities' intervention. Due to complicity or indolence, the investigation did not continue, and the place was not thoroughly explored; cremation ovens were not even mentioned, let alone chemically analyzed. They did not even bother to figure out who owned the ranch. The families that comprise Guerreros Buscadores de Jalisco had to come there to reveal the stories of death and horror that deficient police investigations had covered up.

Photos of the hundreds of shoes found by the families became a symbol of all the lives obliterated by violence. On March 15, 2025, the Huellas de la Memoria collective issued a nationwide call to action, promoting marches, sit-ins, and vigils.<sup>7</sup> Parks and town squares were flooded with shoes, and a cry that proclaimed "Teuchitlán, never again!" was heard in streets from Tijuana to Yucatán. The press noted that Teuchitlán was Claudia Sheinbaum's Ayotzinapa, a reference to the paradigmatic case of human rights violations that evidenced the complicity between the state and organized crime during Enrique Peña Nieto's administration (2012–2018).<sup>8</sup>

In the context of these protests, amid a political climate that placed enforced disappearances at the center of the national debate, we traveled to Guadalajara in search of Viridiana. We arrived at a house used to accommodate searchers, opened by a Catholic order, where tension and uncertainty over the findings at Teuchitlán could be felt. Even those who had come to Guadalajara for other bureaucratic procedures related to the investigation files of their relatives could not avoid asking themselves if some of those clothes found at the hacienda had belonged to their sons or

daughters. The same tension could be felt at the offices of the state-level search commission, where a team of three coordinated the search operations while most of the personnel had been sent to the proceedings at Rancho Izaguirre. Public workers from the State of Mexico National Search Commission who were supposed to join Angélica in the proceedings did not show up, without prior notice. It was not the first time they had done so, which demonstrates the limited interest the case holds for them. For almost two years, Angélica has been waiting for a search warrant from the Republic's Office of the Attorney General, in order to access a building that had been singled out in the investigation as a place where trafficking victims could be held hostage. In an act of ineffectiveness or complicity, the police officers pasted posters with information about Viridiana, which also included her photo, in the building's surroundings. During the second visit, Angélica could confirm the house was empty; its door had been boarded up. To this day, the research warrant has not been issued.

In this context, the search for Viridiana consisted of visiting addiction rehabilitation centers, homeless shelters, and support center for women who have suffered violence, as well as walking through the streets of Guadalajara, wheatpasting posters with Viridiana's photo and information. Security measures taken in coordination with local police made the search almost impossible, as we were surrounded by heavily armed officers who intimidated homeless people, who have been crucial for obtaining information about victims of disappearance. The strategies followed by the collectives and the Brigada Nacional de Búsqueda (National Search Brigade, BNB) for alive-searches, which include approaching street vendors, homeless people, and sex workers, do not work when a search is conducted surrounded by armed men.<sup>9</sup> Walking through the streets of Guadalajara under the scorching March sun, flanked by police officers, turned out to be an exhausting, frustrating experience for Angélica, whose face lost her usual calmness. It was not clear if these security measures were put in place to protect us or to intimidate those who could give us information. Beyond intentionality, the result was the simulation of a search that did not contribute any new clues that could lead to Viridiana.

At the same time, another simulation took place in the Hacienda Izaguirre at Teuchitlán. In a political maneuver designed to attack the state-level prosecution and blame it for the mistakes in the investigation,

Attorney General Alejandro Gertz Manero invited collectives formed by relatives of the disappeared in Jalisco's neighboring states to visit the hacienda. The real purpose of this invitation was not clear, and it had revictimizing consequences. When the families arrived, nobody was waiting for them, and no one was willing or able to provide information on what was happening. The clothes, shoes, and human remains were already in the custody of the Attorney General's Office; the premises were closed and empty. Under the sun's merciless rays, the relatives demanded information, the right to explore the ranch where they thought they could find the remains of their children, who had been forcefully recruited or murdered. But nobody deigned to talk to them face-to-face, to provide information or explain the lack thereof. Once more, searching mothers became chess pieces in a political match that was not theirs.<sup>10</sup>

The existence of multiple national- and state-level laws against enforced disappearances, the forensic bureaucratic apparatus, specialized attorney's offices, and search and victims commissions has not led to finding 127,000 victims of disappearance, 7,800 of whom disappeared during the first six months of Claudia Sheinbaum's administration.<sup>11</sup> Neither state-level legislations nor federal ones, nor multiple search protocols have curtailed the bureaucratic violence that still revictimizes the families of the disappeared. This was confirmed by the searchers in Teuchitlán and by those of us who roamed the streets of Guadalajara.

On the third day of fruitless searching, Angélica asked to extend the proceedings to the Jalisco Institute of Forensic Sciences, which shares facilities with the Jalisco Attorney General's Office. These are precisely the institutions that have stored the findings of Hacienda Izaguirre. Angélica asked to look at the photographs of all unidentified female bodies that matched her daughter's age range, found during the last five years (she had already conducted a similar search of evidence from previous years). There were hundreds of photographs of entire or mutilated bodies, of skeletons or recent corpses. In a small room, hot and poorly ventilated, the forensic officer, a young, thin woman with an expressionless face and little empathy, projected the photographs on a giant screen one by one. It was a routine she had probably repeated countless times in front of the shocked faces of searching mothers. Angélica, with a gaze that reflected her pain, tried to find in those deformed faces, damaged bodies, or ossified teeth a sign that could point toward her daughter.

In the ten years I have walked alongside the families, I had never witnessed so much accumulated death, so many mutilated bodies, not even when observing the discovery of clandestine burial pits. I felt drowsy; a severe headache prevented me from thinking. Hours of what I considered psychological torture passed. I saw my friend sitting with her eyes locked on the screen, and I wanted to hug her, to get her out of that place of death, to convince her to keep searching, even if it meant aimlessly roaming the streets of Guadalajara. The emotional pain of my sister went deep into my skin; I wanted to protect her, to take her to a place of light where she could spiritually feel Viridiana's presence. Sadness turned into indignation, and indignation into impotence. The only thing I could do was sit beside her and squeeze her hand when a painful image shook her.

Three companions had joined Angélica, and as we did not fit in the small room, we took turns sitting by her. As we waited, we shared the waiting room with the mothers, sisters, and wives of the disappeared who came to see the clothes found at Hacienda Izaguirre. Many of them were convinced that, in pictures shared on social media, they had recognized clothes worn by their relatives. Without planning it, we were now supporting them in their search at the Attorney General's Office's platform. A black T-shirt with a bunny print, orange-soled shoes, size 28 beige pants . . . they described the clothes, and we plunged into a database with photographs of approximately thirteen hundred items found in the hacienda.

Several of the women burst into tears as they described the clothes they had last seen their sons and daughters wearing. Paola Clerico, the Catholic sister who has become a spiritual companion and solidary sister to hundreds of women around the country, hugged them and tried to provide them emotional support with the affectionate style that characterizes her. Some of them believed they could recognize the pants worn by their children the last time they had seen them in a blurry photo of generic jeans. We were surprised and outraged when we found out that, in interviews with workers of the Attorney General's Office, they were told that it was very likely that their loved ones had been incinerated in the crematory ovens of Izaguirre, and that there was no way to perform DNA testing that could certify their death. While pro-government media and government officers denied the existence of crematory ovens, the workers of the Jalisco Attorney General's Office recommended the

families conclude their searches, presume their relatives were dead, and take solace in the identification of clothes that could have belonged to them. One of the mothers we helped, the one who was searching for a graphic T-shirt with a bunny, exited the premises convinced that her son was dead, already planning a funeral mass. No argument could convince her that she was being deceived, that an item of clothing was not enough to confirm a death. She was ready to put an end to the uncertainty of disappearance and to close the cycle of continuous torture. Her son was dead, a forensic bureaucrat had said so, and her heart had accepted it.

After almost ten hours of eyes locked on a screen, seeing thousands of photographs of unidentified female bodies in the government's custody, Angélica asked for DNA testing to be run on two sets of teeth with similar canines to Viridiana's. Now, a new stage begins: waiting for these tests to be performed and the results to be shared with her. There is always the possibility that the results get lost along the way, as has happened with hundreds of investigation files of victims of enforced disappearance.

During all these hours, we faced two parallel realities, divided by a wall: on one side, Angélica contemplated the possibility of her daughter being dead, while remaining hopeful of finding her alive. On the other side, a mother was willing to end the cycle of mourning because a T-shirt found in the extermination center of Hacienda Izaguirre looked similar to the one her son was wearing when disappeared. Only these women knew the paths they had already trodden, the sleepless nights, the spilled tears, and the conviction that made them either keep searching or stop altogether.

While respecting the pain and motives of those who have decided to stop searching, or who have never denounced the abductors of their children, this book is dedicated to those who have not lost hope and have become the conscience of Mexican society, both to those who search for their sons and daughters and to the thousands of sons and daughters who are sorely missed. It is a sorography that sets out to document that in Mexico, disappearance is not an issue between individuals, exclusively produced by the hidden interests of organized crime, an argument espoused by those who seek to deny the state's responsibility in this human rights crisis.<sup>12</sup>

The military and police personnel that allowed Hacienda Izaguirre to continue operating as a recruitment and extermination center, even

after conducting arrests and confiscations there, are part of the state. The Attorney General's Offices that lose the files of victims of disappearance, or the forensic officers who misplace bodies or hide them in mass graves, are part of the state; the police officers who detain young people without an arrest warrant and hand them over to organized crime are part of the state. Although there is not a state policy to abduct political dissidents, like there was during the so-called Dirty War (1964–1982), the *disappearing device* created during these decades has persisted and is used for other purposes. This device is part of a global economy of death, which some analysts have dubbed *gore capitalism* (Valencia 2010) or *necrocapitalism* (Girardi 2019), in which impoverished and racialized bodies are used as merchandise to be sold, bought, and discarded, according to the market's needs. The U.S. government is also directly responsible for the preservation of this disappearing device, which is upheld by a firearms market that goes from north to south (Jusionyte 2024), through networks of transnational macro-criminality that are not limited to Mexican cartels.

This book is a denunciation of the continuing existence of this disappearing device, but it is also a sorography of hope, a reminder that even under the harshest emotional and social rupture, it is possible to build communities and care for life.

## **CHAPTER 1**

---

# **LAS RASTREADORAS**

### *Searching in Occupied Territory*

When I first delved into the topic of enforced disappearance in Mexico, one of the first collectives I worked with was Desaparecidos de El Fuerte y zona norte A.C., an organization known nationwide as Las Rastreadoras de El Fuerte (Trackers of El Fuerte), which took me back to my ancestors' homeland.<sup>1</sup> As a member of the GIASF, I took part in an interdisciplinary team that supported processes of training, database generation, and memory workshops with Las Rastreadoras.<sup>2</sup> They were my first teachers in the practices of searching and the analysis of macro-criminality and its local impact. Most of all, they taught me the knowledge and appreciation behind everyday acts of care, through which they reaffirm their collective bonds. These experiences made me think about the phenomenon Veena Das (2008) describes as a “descent into the ordinary”—that is, the routines and everyday practices used by people to face social suffering. In contrast to the masculine models of heroism and resistance, these women develop quotidian ways of dignifying life and death, which allow them to keep searching or, in their words, “to keep fighting.”

During the two years I worked with Las Rastreadoras, I developed close relationships and sisterly bonds that I have maintained by visiting them in northern Sinaloa or hosting them in my house, as well as constant communication via electronic devices. Ever since my first meeting with the collective, back in February 2017, I identified with their cultural

style, their open way of speaking, their loud voices, and their sense of humor—filled with slang and double entendres. After working with Mayan peoples in southern Mexico for two decades, I was returning to my roots. Upon leaving El Fuerte during the 1930s, my grandparents denied their Yoreme identity, due to the racism that permeates Mexican society to this day. When I heard Las Rastreadoras speak, I could identify the local idioms that my mother used. I could not help but feel surrounded by my aunts, my grandmothers, my matriarchs. Among Las Rastreadoras, there are Yoreme and mestizo women; women of rural and urban backgrounds; illiterate women and schoolteachers; housewives and street vendors. Most of them come from low-income households, with little formal education. For most of them, this collective is the first organization they have ever participated in. Their learning has taken giant steps: not only have they assimilated human rights discourses, they have also become self-taught forensic researchers. They have learned a new language, filled with technical terms: *genetic testing*, *DNA*, *exhumations*, *antemortem*, *postmortem*, and so on.

The start of this collective journey was almost parallel to the disappearance of the students of Ayotzinapa on September 26, 2014, although it did not garner the same media attention.

The seed of what would become one of Mexico's most specialized collectives in forensic search was sown by Mirna Medina, a retired teacher and street vendor, whose son, Ricardo Corrales Medina, disappeared on July 14, 2014. On July 19 Mirna took part in the excavation of a clandestine burial pit for the first time and found a body. Thus began a forensic vocation that has defined her life for the last eleven years. That first discovery was reported by the local press and made its way through social media. Several women sought her for support in the search for their loved ones. That same year, in September, she led the first protests in the municipality of Ahome, forming a pioneering group of women that journalist Javier Valdez would later christen as Las Rastreadoras.<sup>3</sup>

After said protests, mothers from nearby ejidos, residential neighborhoods in Los Mochis, and towns taken over by drug dealers—such as San Blas and Batamote—joined the cause. The collective currently comprises around eighty women who reside in rural and semiurban areas in the municipalities of Ahome, El Fuerte, Guasave, and Choix. Although some



FIGURE 3 The author with Las Rastreadoras de El Fuerte in search activities in San Carlos, Sonora. Photo from author's personal archive.

men sporadically participate in their activities, women lead the collective and make up most of its ranks.

Most of the time, their search work is carried out in territories under the control of criminal organizations, so searching for those who have been disappeared means putting their own lives at risk by challenging the cartels' territorial hegemony. These are regions where organized crime has established local power structures, infiltrating police forces and controlling municipal authorities through fear and bribery. Economic and political control has been achieved through state corruption, gun violence, recruitment of young people, and fear among the local population.

Conducting an ethnography of the collective's experiences in searching, as well as of their meeting places, means placing one's body in occupied territory. It implies learning the security and self-care measures they must take in order to carry out their everyday work. Developing a feminist perspective and sensibility to join them and document these processes entailed a recognition of their knowledge, learning from their

experiences and placing them in the wider context of patriarchal violence that frames both their lives and those of their communities.

In this chapter, I first reconstruct the genealogy of the disappearing device in order to understand its specificities in northern Sinaloa. I approach the forms of territorial control established by the drug cartels in this region, discussing the geography of disappearance through the case of the village of Batamote in northern Sinaloa and the surrounding Mayo-Yorem communities. The ethnography of a day's search with Las Rastreadoras allows me to analyze the practices and rituals with which they sacralize the clandestine graves, combining their local knowledge with their forensic knowledge. Based on the concept of necro-governmentality, I analyze the way in which the collective's forensic searches dispute the state's control over the dead bodies and confront the pedagogy of terror with their practices. I document the practices of care for the dead that they have developed as expressions of a pedagogy of love manifested in their treatment both of the bodies found in clandestine graves and of unidentified bodies in the custody of the state. Finally, I analyze the political importance of memory as a tool for struggle and community-building based on the experience of the book *Nadie detiene el amor*.

### *The Origins of the Disappearing Device in Sinaloa*

In Sinaloa, as in the rest of the country, enforced disappearance has been used as a form of continuous torture and a strategy of control since the so-called Dirty War. In this specific context, it was used for the repression of a political and military movement known as Liga 23 de septiembre (September 23rd Communist League). This organization, active from 1973 to 1976, comprised militants from different urban and rural areas, who conducted public protests and procured weapons from security forces for their armed activities (Sánchez Parra 2011). The 1968 student movement and the repressive response to it influenced the politicization of broad sectors of Mexican youth, who opted for different resistance strategies to confront the Mexican state's authoritarian policies (Zermeño 1985). Simultaneously, peasant movements underwent a process of radicalization, demanding and reclaiming lands. There was a student movement too, led by the Federation of University Students, at the Universidad

Autónoma de Sinaloa (Sinaloa Autonomous University, UAS), in which a group known as “Los enfermos” (The Sick Ones) fought for the internal democratization of the university. Most of these movements were led by men; although women were also active in mobilizations and were usually responsible for meeting logistics, their involvement in decision-making was minimal.

The 1970s saw a wave of repression against leftist militants (both armed and unarmed), which resulted in a yet-to-be-determined number of disappeared people, many of whom were tortured and last seen at the Military Camp no. 9 in Culiacán, Sinaloa.<sup>4</sup> According to reports compiled by the Commission for Access to Truth, Historical Clarification, and the Promotion of Justice, this period marked the start of “death flights,” a method of disappearance used by the army and the Federal Security Directorate, in which the regime’s opponents—dead or alive—were dropped into the ocean. This method became popular in South America and evidences the development of a militarist death culture that has been globalized. In this culture, the disappearing device plays a crucial role, not only as a way to erase evidence but also as a means for sowing fear and controlling the population. Authors such as Óscar Loza Ochoa (2004) estimate forty-two cases of enforced disappearance in Sinaloa between 1975 and 1979, while other journalistic sources claim there were more than one hundred cases by the 1980s. Although women did not have leadership roles in the political and military movements of the 1970s and 1980s, after the counterinsurgency campaigns, the balance shifted: they became the main seekers of justice and truth in the wake of their relatives’ disappearance, as well as the main source of support for political prisoners.

In this context, relatives of victims of enforced disappearance created their first collective. Founded in April 1978, at the Central Daytime High School of Culiacán, it was known as Unión de Padres con Hijos Desaparecidos en Sinaloa (Union of Parents with Disappeared Children in Sinaloa). Just like Las Rastreadoras, these pioneering organizations acted as the conscience of a society that remained indifferent toward political violence. Organizing their own search efforts, they denounced the existence of the Brigada Blanca (White Brigade), a paramilitary group that held activists captive in safe houses, located in different cities around the state. As this unacknowledged war went on, another conflict, in which

the military would play a crucial role, emerged: the “war against drugs.” This new campaign against production and consumption was promoted as a security policy across the whole continent during the presidency of Richard Nixon (1969–1974), who prioritized criminalization against producers and consumers over prevention and public health policies. The army played a very important role in this war, while the North American government promoted collaboration agreements, military aid, and security forces training. Many of the young soldiers who were trained in counterinsurgency operations would become, decades later, high-ranking officers of an army directly involved with criminal organizations in the so-called war against drug cartels.

The cultivation of natural drugs, such as opium poppy and marijuana, by small-scale producers, known as *gomeros*, was transformed by the rise of the first cartels in the 1980s, led by the Caro and Fonseca families. They monopolized the production and sale of drugs, building a network of collusion with the state that remains active to this day.

The policies implemented during the “war against drugs” led to the state’s militarization and, paradoxically, to the establishment of a deep bond between members of the army and criminal organizations. Amid antidrug operations, the army ended up working for one or other cartel, depending on the historical moment. The same happened with state and local governments, allowing criminal organizations to extend their influence over different regions. Such was the case of Governor Mario López Valdez, popularly known as Malova (2011–2016), and his support for the Sinaloa Cartel.<sup>5</sup>

Locally, the 2010 political campaign is remembered as the starting point of the violence and disappearances that would characterize the administration of López Valdez. A journalist who has covered police sources noted the following:

When Malova won, he negotiated with the Sinaloa Cartel, Chapo Guzmán’s people, causing this massacre. For me, it was nothing more than a massacre, the cruel and excessive assassination of young people, police agents and even government officials [. . .] Those that held the *plaza*, Beltrán’s people, the so-called Mazatlecos, reacted to Malova’s negotiations, which empowered the Sinaloa Cartel, Chapo Guzmán’s people. It was then that the Mazatlecos revolted and began to kidnap and murder people.

Afterward police officers began to kidnap people too. They have never accepted this, but there is evidence that 90% of the perpetrators were police officers that started to kidnap young people, taking away their freedom and making them disappear.<sup>6</sup>

During Malova's administration, a public security network that worked for the Sinaloa Cartel was created. Its members were directly involved in the disappearance of several of the daughters and sons of Las Rastreadoras (Hernández and Robledo, 2020).

It is impossible to understand the disappearing device's expansion without acknowledging the importance that the so-called narco-state has had in its reproduction (Solís González, 2013). Although political dissidents have not been the main victims of said device, unlike the case of South American dictatorships or the Mexican Dirty War, there is a historical continuum in the oppressive practices, techniques, and institutions that enable disappearances. In some cases, the very same agents who perpetrated these acts reproduced them in the context of the "war against drugs."<sup>7</sup>

### *The Contemporary Geography of Disappearance in Northern Sinaloa*

The first time I visited the region where Las Rastreadoras conduct their searches in northern Sinaloa, I could visually recognize the implications of an entire territory being under control of criminal organizations. Hummer trucks with polarized windshields roamed through the main highways and dirt roads; young men with military-grade weapons drank beer or soda on the sidewalks, fully visible to police officers, who passed by without asking any questions.

I first saw these young men, almost teenagers, carrying an AK-47 in one hand and a bottle of Gatorade in the other, during a visit to the village of Batamote, which has earned the nickname of "Matamote" (Killamote) due to the number of young people who have died or disappeared in this small community of eight hundred inhabitants. They stood at the town's entrance, exchanging jokes, without a trace of malice in their faces, unlike the sicarios I envisioned in my fantasies. If not for the weapons they

carried, one might have mistaken them for a group of students taking a day off in sunny March. The first question that invaded me was “How did these youngsters, children of peasants who lived by working the land, become sicarios?” As an old man in Ocotepec remarked, “When did they hijack their minds, turning them into killing and kidnapping machines? What responsibility do we hold as a society for this transformation? And what responsibility do we hold over the hundreds of young, poor, and racialized bodies that appear in burial pits?”

The history of Batamote is the history of many communities in northern Sinaloa that have become occupied territory. Over the past two decades, this village has transformed from an agrarian community to a semi-abandoned town, occupied and controlled by a cell of what used to be the Beltrán Leyva Cartel. Fausto Isidro Meza Flores, known as Chapo Isidro, is the region’s top authority, with many municipalities under his control. His functions are manifold: he finances the town’s patronal festivities, mediates marital conflicts, and assists at baptisms as godfather; he also kills and disappears those whom he deems enemies, for not obeying him or for accidentally stumbling upon his men.<sup>8</sup> In executing his “dirty work,” he is supported by the municipal police, formerly led by Commander Gerardo Amarillas, director of Public Security and Transit in the municipality of Ahome, whom victims’ mothers have accused of orchestrating several disappearances.<sup>9</sup> Such was the case of Juan Carlos, son of Feli, a member of Las Rastreadoras whom we visited during the first trip to Sinaloa in the spring of 2017.

Juan Carlos and his cousin were arrested by municipal police agents in Batamote after a transit accident. He was arrested in front of many neighbors from the village while trying to flee the scene. When his mother went to the police headquarters to look for him, the agents denied having arrested him. In her account, Feli describes the hours that followed her son’s disappearance:

When we went to look for our arrested son, there was no report of his detention and no one wanted to give us information about the case. My husband asked to speak to the police chief, but he refused to see us. I could not believe the nightmare I was living and I kept asking myself, why did his cousin come for my son, why did he have to bring Juan Carlos into this, when he was a hard working young man who did not get into trouble [. . .]

The young man they took prisoner and who was a minor was released a few months later and he did not want to talk to us either. Everyone is afraid and no one involved wants to tell us what really happened. If they were detained by the police, why didn't they charge them and make them pay for their crime, if there was one? [...] There is no one to answer my questions, there is no authority to respond to so much impunity. Since the authorities do not do their job, we ourselves have had to look for them. There were rumors: that they did this or that to them, that their bodies were thrown here or there [...] One day, with other family members and friends, we decided to hold a sit-in in front of the Deputy Attorney General's Office demanding the clarification of this case, and it was there that I met Mirna and joined Las Rastreadoras. It had been a little over a month since my Juan Carlos had been taken, and meeting other mothers like me gave me the courage to keep searching.<sup>10</sup>

In her shared journey with Las Rastreadoras, Feli learned a specialized language filled with terms such as *genetic testing*, *DNA*, *exhumations*, *antemortem*, and *postmortem*, to mention a few. Her life was transformed as she found a new community of sisters with whom she could share her pain. Alongside them, she found the remains of her son on August 31, 2016, in a zone known as Las Bolsas de Tosalibampo, in the municipality of Ahome. She exhumed the remains herself, with other members of Las Rastreadoras. She did not realize that they belonged to Juan Carlos until the Public Prosecutor's Office confirmed, eight months later, that the genetic tests of the retrieved bones matched her son's DNA.

His body now rests in the Batamote graveyard, which has become a visual reminder of the *juvenicidio* (youthicide) taking place at these occupied territories. In one of my visits, I helped Feli tidy up Juan Carlos's grave. We went to a small cemetery, just near the town's entrance. There, I found dozens of graves that displayed, behind their crosses, plastic sheets with printed photos of young people riding horses, motorcycles, or Ram trucks, smiling and looking straight into the camera, which felt as if they were looking straight into our eyes. I went through the graves reading the names, birth dates, and death dates. Almost none of them made it to thirty. Juan Carlos's photo was surrounded by a frame of plastic flowers. He also looked straight at us, with a serene countenance that confirmed the calm character his mother had described to us.

Printing the photos of the deceased on giant plastic sheets has seemingly become a local tradition. As evening fell, the solar-powered lamps placed at the base of the photos were turned on and lit up the cemetery. I felt surrounded by their spirits. As their glances grew alight, I tried to figure out what are they telling us. Feli told me a little bit about every single one of them; she knew them all. With profound sadness, she described their violent deaths, their truncated lives, and the mourning that has taken over the entire community.

Living under the constant siege of police and criminal violence is not life. Those who have not joined the ranks of organized crime have migrated, crossing the border in search of the American dream. *Juvenicidio* (youthicide) is a concept rarely used in the context of Mexican politics; however, what I found in Sinaloa fits the term coined by José Manuel Valenzuela Arce: the consummation of a process that begins with the impoverishment of young lives, an ever-widening economic and social vulnerability, as well as an increasing defenselessness; the classist criminalization of certain identities and the reduction of available options for the development of feasible life projects in a reality defined by a precocious and dangerous flirtation with death (Valenzuela Arce 2019, 62).

The reconstruction of the life stories of these young people in northern Sinaloa involved documenting how patriarchal violence distinctly affects men and women, shaping the way in which disappearances take place and bodies are disposed of. The young men recruited by organized crime had already been formed as “specialized laborers,” experts in violence who, due to impoverished life conditions and the lack of job opportunities, form a “reserve army” within organized crime. Feminist philosopher Sayak Valencia (2010) characterizes these new identities as *endriago subjects*, human-monster hybrids spawned by a system that simultaneously impoverishes life, promotes hyper-consumption, and turns violence into a commodity. The patriarchal violence in which these young men have specialized is also felt in the lives of Las Rastreadoras, not only because it was a key element in the disappearance of their loved ones but also because it has left a mark on their personal stories, before, during, and after the disappearance.

In the interviews I conducted with seventeen members of this organization, there were recurring allusions to domestic and family violence. Nevertheless, when going over this material for the elaboration of their

life stories, most of them asked for those episodes to remain unmentioned in the collectively authored book. In my field diary, I described this process of self-censoring and “sanitizing” one’s family history:

From the graveyard, we go to L.’s house, to work together on her life story. We review what we have written so far, and she asks me to remove the parts that mention the violence that her father exerted over her mother, which was the reason they returned from Tijuana to Los Mochis. We keep reading and she tells me that, while everything she shared with me is true, she wouldn’t like for her children and other people to know what she and her mother endured, “spoiling the memory of the family’s men.” We go over the part of the story in which she told me about her father’s other family. Her mother was in the “casa chica,” that is to say, the second, unofficial household. She also regrets telling this and asks me to erase it. Then, she asks me to remove all references to a violent incident that M., her husband, perpetrated against her. Finally, she also censors the criticism toward her son-in-law, for the violent way he treated her disappeared daughter. In the end, she jokingly remarks “they owe me a big one, I am sanitizing their memory.” Although I do not insist on keeping the censored fragments, I find it ironic that, despite suffering so much with these violent men, she still protects them. Her decision is respected and, thus, patriarchal violence is casted out from her life story.<sup>11</sup>

Although analytically it is important to recognize the continuum of violence that marks the lives of the women who searched, which includes domestic violence, for them it was important to leave it out of their life stories, perhaps as a strategy to control the memory of their family history and erase the daily violence. However, these manifestations of patriarchal violence, undocumented in the life stories we published, have intensified due to an increase in arms trafficking. The sexist confrontations that formerly ended in a beating now often end as homicides or even massacres, depending on the context. This violence is also an important part of the disappearing device and leaves marks in the bodies that Las Rastreadoras find. Paola Alejandra Ramírez González (2022) describes the harsh treatment endured by these bodies as “unsayable and unlookable.” These “bodily technologies” are also part of a globalized death culture that is being exported, just like firearms. Anthropologist

Carolyn Nordstrom has pointed out that the very concept of “local wars” is a fiction, as all contexts of war are linked not only by the arms industry but also by the globalization of a culture of militarization and violence. I would add the adjective “patriarchal” to the aforementioned culture, which includes several forms of torture:

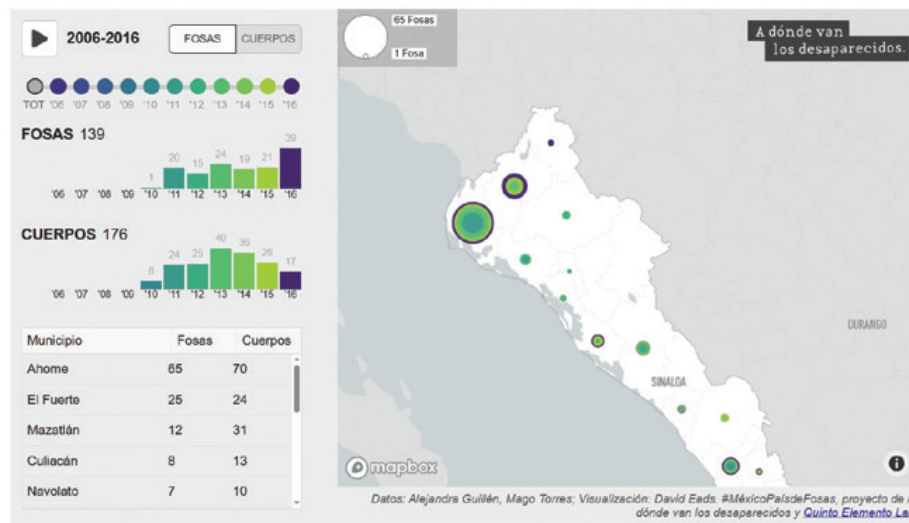
This global flux of information, tactics, weapons, money and personnel brokers tremendous power throughout the warzones of the world. The examples supporting this are legion. To give but one, when a new torture technique is introduced in a country, that same technique can be found throughout the world in a matter of days. Obviously, transmitted with the physical techniques of harming bodies is a complex culture that specifies who can and should be targeted for torture, how and for what reasons and to what end. (Nordstrom 1997, 5)

The bodies found in clandestine burial pits by Las Rastreadoras, which frequently bear the “unsayable and unlookable” marks of torture, are mostly brown-skinned and young. Their virtual exposition is a way of showing off territorial control; when they remain completely hidden, their “bad death” is a punishment that precludes them from being exhumed and returned to their families.

Burial pits thus become part of the semantics of terror (Segato 2013) that marks territories and chastises bodies, families, and communities. It reproduces the silence surrounding the networks of complicity that enable these deaths and disappearances. This silence was broken by the exhumations performed by Las Rastreadoras, a process they ritualized by blessing the land that hid the bodies and by taking action for them to be identified and returned to their homes.

Joining Las Rastreadoras as they mapped the location of burial pits allowed us to show the spaces in which the violence of organized crime and territorial disputes is concentrated. The workshops we conducted gave recognition and visibility to their knowledge about the territory.

This geography of disappearance, reflected in clandestine burial pits, has been systematically mapped by the independent journalism project “A dónde van los desaparecidos” (Where do the disappeared go?). By 2016 clandestine pits had been found in fourteen out of eighteen of Sinaloa’s municipalities. Ahome, with sixty-five pits, had the highest



MAP 1 Map of Clandestine pits in Sinaloa. Data from Alejandra Guillén, Mago Torres; map by David Eads. #MéxicoPaísdeFosas, Proyecto de A dónde van los desaparecidos y Quinto Elemento Lab (Translation: #MexicoCountryofGraves, a project by Where Do the Disappeared Go and the Quinto Elemento Lab). Source: A dónde van los desaparecidos (2018).

figure, followed by El Fuerte (twenty-five), Mazatlán (twelve), and Culiacán (eight). The large green circles in the map signal the pits found in Ahome, rendering visible the violence that marks this territory, similar to the lights in the Batamote graveyard.

By 2023 Las Rastreadoras had found six hundred clandestine burial pits in northern Sinaloa, out of which 628 bodies have been retrieved. Two hundred eighty-six bodies have been successfully identified and returned to their families.<sup>12</sup>

As I have pointed out in other texts, the existence of armed men in positions of power and contexts of impunity creates a reality in which anyone could disappear. Nevertheless, the violence exerted by armed men—legally and illegally—has concentrated in certain territories. The bodies found in clandestine pits by Las Rastreadoras tend to belong to young, brown-skinned men who led lives of poverty.

In a racist and racialized society like the one in Mexico, Indigenous identity is a factor that duplicates the probability of suffering violence. In other texts, I have alluded to the various kinds of absence endured by Indigenous victims of disappearance. Not only are they physically absent



FIGURE 4 Workshop at the office of Las Rastreadoras in Los Mochis, Sinaloa. Photo from author's personal archive.

from their communities: until recently, there was no acknowledgment of their ethnic identity in official statistics, and silence surrounded this topic in Indigenous mobilizations (Hernández Castillo 2019). Many of their bodies end up in state-managed mass graves, without forensic records that allow their families to find them. The stories documented by the Mayo-Yoreme Indigenous people in northern Sinaloa evidence a continuum of forms of violence. Structural violence, for example, precedes enforced disappearances and later magnifies the grievance.<sup>13</sup>

Racism contributes to the concentration of violence and disappearances in the country's most marginalized and impoverished regions. By this, I do not mean that young Mayo-Yoremes are disappeared for the mere fact of being Indigenous; however, the colonial structure that prevails to this day places certain bodies in certain territories. These territories tend to receive fewer resources and are not usually the focus of public policies. Authors such as Lisa Marie Cacho (2012) have shown how racism dehumanizes and distorts the value of bodies located in racialized territories. Accordingly, Cacho posits the concept of "social death," which in contexts like northern Sinaloa is equivalent to physical

death, as racialized illegality and the criminalization of the less privileged renders their human value invisible.

Some members of Las Rastreadoras self-identify as Mayo-Yoreme; however, most Indigenous families affected by enforced disappearance endure the grievance in isolation. In many cases, they do not even denounce the crime due to fear of retaliation. This is the case of the Yoreme de Capomos Ceremonial Center, a small village of around six hundred inhabitants, where we attended a ritual staging of the Baile del Venado (deer dance). We also had the opportunity to document seven cases of disappearance that took place in this village over the last five years.<sup>14</sup>

In many cases, dispossession and displacement preceded the disappearance or murder of their relatives. Such was the experience of Don Paz Quiroz, a Mayo-Yoreme peasant and one of the few men who participates in the activities of Las Rastreadoras:

My grandson José Manuel Luna Quiroz disappeared on April 4, 2017, and his body was found on the banks of the river on July 12 of the same year. As soon as he disappeared, I contacted Mirna, the leader of Las Rastreadoras, because I knew that only they would understand my pain and give me support. The day we found my grandson's body, I promised that I would continue to support them until we found them all. My grandson Jose Manuel, whom we called Kalucha, was a very cheerful and respectful young man who grew up with us. More than a grandson he was a son, so his story is part of a longer story that began when my grandparents, the Yoremes trunk people of this town, arrived in Tetamboca displaced by the construction of the El Mahone dam, on the northern tributary of the El Fuerte River, at the beginning of the last century [. . .] At that time the distribution of land was beginning and my grandfather and his brothers requested land, they waited for more than half a century without being given any answer. [. . .] It was with Caro Quintero that they began to come for the boys to take them to work in Búfalo, Chihuahua.<sup>15</sup> But it was a respectful treatment, they took them and returned them after the harvest. They would take trains full of workers, and at the Sufragio station they would pick them all up. Some were also taken by plane from Guasave. But there was no fear, it was just another job in the fields, they were well paid and they returned home without any problems. But about ten years ago things started to go bad, when cocaine and then crack came in. Then, they

began to introduce drugs in the schools, drugs that made us kids blind, deaf, crazy. They began to work with the government and to raise the kids, many of them did not come back and some of them came back crazy. They get them addicted so that they will work for them, and when they are no longer useful, they kill them.<sup>16</sup>

Forced displacement and dispossession have played an important role in the history of the violence continuum that the Mayo-Yoreme people have endured. Although the Mexican Revolution promoted agrarian distribution (1910–1917), it did not benefit all regions of the country equally. In several states, it was not until the government of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–1940) that a more comprehensive agrarian reform was carried out, putting an end to latifundism. However, in the Mayo-Yoreme area, this agrarian distribution implied the arrival of non-Indigenous peasants to their communities, who were included in the distribution of land.<sup>17</sup>

In Don Paz's memory, forced displacement and the decades-long wait for agrarian distribution are part of the grievances of his people, now joined by the violence of organized crime. To the historical structural violence is now added forced recruitment for the cultivation of illicit drugs, as well as the disappearance, and in many cases the death, of young people. All of this is having a profound impact on the social fabric of his communities. Don Paz's account is not an isolated case; the violence unleashed by organized crime and the so-called war on drugs has affected many Indigenous communities around the country. The few studies that have dealt with this topic demonstrate how the effects of structural reforms applied in the last decade have caused an economical debacle for Indigenous peasants, contributing to mass migration, the cultivation of illicit crops—such as marijuana and opium poppy—and the recruitment of young Indigenous people by drug cartels.<sup>18</sup> The Indigenous regions of the states of Guerrero, Sinaloa, Michoacán, Veracruz, Jalisco, Oaxaca, Chihuahua, Chiapas, Durango, and Sonora have been particularly affected by militarization and the violence of the war on drugs. One of the reasons for this is that economically marginalized regions are isolated, a characteristic required for the cultivation of illicit crops. Norberto Emmerich points out that “the production of illegal drugs is an activity that occurs in confined territories, with low social integration, poor road infrastructure, an aggressive and exuberant

geography, high levels of poverty and low state penetration” (2013, 20), a description that in many cases fits the current state of Indigenous territories.

The topic of enforced disappearance is not always linked to illegal economies; in each region, disappearance as a social phenomenon takes on specific characteristics. However, in northern Sinaloa, we cannot understand the geography of disappearance, or the strategies of search and care developed by Las Rastreadoras, without acknowledging that these are occupied territories where security forces work hand in hand with drug cartels.

### *From an Ethnography at the Foot of the Pit to a Salto de mata Ethnography*

Our collaborative research work with Las Rastreadoras could be partially placed in what some authors have called the “forensic turn” in anthropology.<sup>19</sup> The context in which these exhumations have occurred is substantially different from the one described in the literature inspired by what Francisco Ferrándiz has called “ethnography at the foot of the pit” (Ferrándiz 2014; Sanford 2003; Rojas-Pérez 2017). It is not a context of transitional justice in which exhumations can be used in judicial processes related to human rights violations, like in the cases of Guatemala, Colombia, or Perú, as described, respectively, by Victoria Sanford, Juan Pablo Aranguren (2016), and Isaías Rojas-Pérez (2017). Neither is it a context in which the unearthing of past violence can contribute to historical memory projects, such as the case of the Spanish Civil War mass graves described by Francisco Ferrándiz, or the Mexican Dirty War burial pits described by Silvia Dutré. The exhumations in northern Sinaloa are performed by the mothers themselves. They do not intend to find the culprits or judicialize the cases; in their own words, their objective is “to find their treasured ones and to give them a dignified burial.” They do not work in the context of a scientific, forensic scenography; nor do they have wide media coverage, unlike the situations described through dense ethnography in the aforementioned studies. They work in the context of violence, in which perpetrators are still roaming free and even hold office in the local security forces.

The specific characteristics of this case lead us to rethink the limitations of the judicial struggle many of us had vindicated through our work in legal activism, forcing us to explore local epistemologies on justice and reparation. The “emancipatory” use of law seems to be reaching its limits in contexts in which organized crime operates through the state’s own institutions. In Sinaloa, as in other regions of Mexico, the problem is not only the inefficacy and impunity of the security and justice systems but also the fact that violence originates from the very institutions that should protect citizens. In this sense, it is necessary to think about the role played by the searchers to “destabilize” or “reproduce” the strategies of necro-governmentality—that is, the use of death and the deceased as a strategy for the control and reproduction of state power (Rojas-Pérez 2017).

Sharing an ethnographic window of a day of search with Las Rastreadoras allows us to understand how this collective of mothers, sisters, and wives, through contradictory practices and discourses, has faced the pedagogy of terror and its strategies of silencing. They have employed a pedagogy of love and care for the deceased that contributes to the construction of community in a context in which the social fabric has been torn apart by armed violence.

It is February 5, 2017. Las Rastreadoras have organized another Sunday search. Every Wednesday and Sunday, they gather at 7:00 a.m. in a small establishment they have rented at a downtown shopping mall in Los Mochis. My colleague Carolina Robledo and I have been invited to join them in their search. The previous day, we had conducted a memory workshop, in which we began to systematize the group’s history and its findings, as part of a wider collaborative project. For them, inviting us to their search is a way to share their main work strategy and, in some way, to make us part of their community. We know that these citizen-organized searches break national and international legal requisites for exhumation; however, the mothers have negotiated with the government of Sinaloa, which authorized their actions as long as they report their findings to the authorities in charge of identifying human remains. This informal agreement can be analyzed from several perspectives: as a political achievement that evidences the negotiating capabilities of the collective’s leader, or as a strategy of legitimation and simulation that allows state institutions to present the findings of Las Rastreadoras as their own.

A civil servant of the State Commission for Human Rights told us, in a critical tone, that the Agency of the Public Prosecutor's Office Specialized in Enforced Disappearance is merely concerned with filing records. If Las Rastreadoras did not report any findings, the agency would not have any information to report to its superiors.<sup>20</sup>

After pondering the risks implied by working in the "gray zones" (Levi 1989) in which Las Rastreadoras deal with the state, we accepted their invitation. The collective's members arrive on time. Most of them are wearing a T-shirt with a picture of their daughters or sons printed on it. Some of them sport a brown long-sleeved T-shirt that Mirna, their leader, gifted them. On the back, it says, "I'll look for you until I find you." A few of them—those who have already found their missing relatives—wear a green T-shirt that says, "Promise fulfilled."

I am ready to conduct my first "ethnography at the foot of the pit." I climb into a run-down truck that fits almost fifteen passengers, heaped up between two cabins and a cargo bed. There is an additional, newer truck that fits another eight women. On rare occasions, one or two of their husbands join them; today, Ricardo, Mirna's husband, is driving one of the trucks. He is merely the designated driver; he does not participate in the planning of their activities or in the search itself. They all know that I have a knee injury, and they take care of me with the same affection shown to Maqui, the oldest member of the group, who suffered a brain stroke and walks with difficulty. For security reasons, nobody knows where the search will be conducted until we are aboard the trucks. This time, we go to the surroundings of the town of San Blas, to some meadows near the community of Buenavista where peasants found human bones while looking for firewood. Often, it is local peasants who provide clues, always with fear, asking for anonymity. Sometimes they guide the mothers to the exact location; at other times, they sketch maps or give detailed descriptions that do not always lead to the correct place.

Las Rastreadoras repeatedly state their paradoxical motto to the media, "We do not want justice; we want to find our children"; "Finding the culprits is the government's responsibility; we only want to find our treasured ones." This message, repeated again and again, is a way of protecting themselves and their remaining children. Demanding punishment in a context like the one in Sinaloa would place their lives at an even greater risk; they could share the fate of Sandra Luz Hernández, member

of a group called Madres con Hijos Desaparecidos en Culiacán (Mothers with Disappeared Children in Culiacán), who was murdered by “heavily armed men” in May 2014.

We pick up the guides, an old man and his grandson, in a cemetery halfway to our destination. They sit in the truck’s cabin, as they need to avoid being seen by the *halcones* (falcons), guards hired by organized crime to monitor the zone. They are afraid and barely speak. As we arrive at the indicated destination, we leave the trucks on the edge of the road. We are equipped with shovels, picks, rods, and machetes, distributed by Mirna, who gives instructions for the search. We must form groups of three or four; nobody can stray from their group; the work tools must be equally distributed in each group. I join Manqui and two other members, thinking that I will be able to move slowly with the older woman. Our guides magically disappear after pointing out the location of their findings. It is a large plot of land, around twenty-five acres filled with thorny bushes and small trees. The groups are spread throughout the whole area. A designated member sticks a rod in the ground and takes it out, in order to check if it has the smell of death, which they have learned to identify. With Manqui, we find a long bone, almost at ground level. It looks like a femur. As we notify the rest of the group, we hear Mirna screaming, “Positive!,” the word they use when they find something.

She has found a pit; she is right in the middle, digging, as the rest arrive and gather in a circle around her. She designates who will help her. When it becomes evident that there is a skeleton, the digging is halted, and they grab hands to pray. We know that not all of them are Catholic; there are members of several Christian denominations, and some of them admit to having lost their faith due to their children’s disappearance. Nevertheless, they all pray, lowering their heads and thanking God for letting them return another person to their family. After the prayer, they resume the digging. They know they have to report the finding. When the prosecutor’s specialists arrive, they will take Las Rastreadoras out of the scene. They will not know who they found until weeks later, when the DNA test results are ready.

This is why they tend to keep digging as much as possible, in order to find a piece of clothing or other objects that could help them identify the found person. Each one of them has saved in their memory a considerable part of the database they have built over the last three years.

They remember not only the physical description of their own sons and daughters, the brands of the clothes and shoes they were wearing, but similar information about other members' children. The disappeared are now sons and daughters of them all.



FIGURE 5 Las Rastreadoras exhuming a clandestine grave in the municipality of Ahome, Sinaloa. Photo by Paola Alejandra Ramírez González.

I always thought that the first finding would fill me with fear or revulsion, but Las Rastreadoras manage to transmit the affection they feel to the rest of us. It is not a mere corpse, a skeleton, the body as a piece of evidence, but the body as a person. In this case, it is a man—someone's son, husband, or father. They speak to him lovingly, in first person. The strategies of dehumanization that treated his body as rubbish and threw it in barren land are reversed by voices and prayers that rehumanize him. The jeans he was wearing are almost intact, his shirt too. Carefully, Mirna looks in his pockets and finds a wallet, inside of which there is a picture of San Judas Tadeo and a voter ID. She reads it and screams his name: Guillermo Pacheco. He is the husband of Zoraime, one of the members of Las Rastreadoras who had joined us in the workshop the day before. On this occasion, she could not join the search due to her advanced pregnancy. One of her cousins is on the current expedition and speaks to him affectionately, "Guillermito, we have found you; Zora could not come, but we will give her the news right now." They are all surprised that Guillermo appeared with his ID: "He came out screaming his name," someone remarked. I cannot stop thinking about what Isaias Rojas-Pérez (2017) calls "the agency of corpses," which is expressed through the information they carry.

The ritual solemnity of prayer turns into euphoria. Everyone speaks at the same time: those who knew him share their memories; others talk about Sorayma. Amid the racket, Ricardo appears and shushes them. "I heard gunshots," he tells us. "Silence." Everyone remains silent. Then we hear a raucous sound that reminds me of my town's fireworks. They identify it as the burst of a *cuerno de chivo* (AK-47), one of the assault rifles used by drug dealers. Those who were still digging quickly climb out of the pit, and Mirna, in a low voice, organizes the retreat. She tells us that we must swiftly walk toward the top of a hill, in the opposite direction of the gunshots. We walk in a straight line, silent. Manqui, my search-mate, turns out to be quicker than me. I struggle to keep her pace. If anyone falls behind, the rest of the group waits and encourages them to step up the pace. Manqui suggests that Ricardo should be in front. "We must protect him; he is the only man. And if they catch us, they will kill him first." Although my heart is racing, I feel protected by their sisterhood. Carolina and I take mutual care of each other in silence. Mirna makes the phone call that she should have made when the pit was first discovered.

She explains to the authorities that there are armed men and describes our current location. We walk through the mountain for more than half an hour, until we reach a path. A few minutes later, trucks from the Attorney's Office arrive. We are seemingly safe. It is only then that some of them begin to cry, embrace each other, or nervously laugh to conceal their fear. After the ministerial police scout the zone, making sure there is no danger, they inform us that bullet casings were found, seemingly from *cuernos de chivo*. The zone is cordoned off, and the forensic team arrives, consisting of a dentist and her assistants. No one can return to the pit, and once the fright shakes off, Sorayma's cousin gets in contact to notify her that Guillermo has been found. From that point on, recovering his remains will launch a bureaucratic odyssey. Sorayma will face the bureaucrats' banality of evil.

We return to the office, exchanging jokes that conceal our nervousness: "What an introduction we gave you, Aída! You thought Manqui would help you, but none of that; you had to chase her." In the office, a meal awaits us, prepared by the members who did not attend the search. The word has spread that it was a successful mission. Everyone is talking about Guillermo's return. The news is making the rounds on social media, and Dulcina Parra, a supportive journalist who has become a fellow searcher, announced it in her radio program. The next day, local newspapers run headlines, such as "Remains of a Disappeared Neighbor of San Blas Are Delivered," "Another Finding by Las Rastreadoras," "Skeleton Found in Buenavista."

Later, we find out that, along with Guillermo Pacheco, the search had found another disappeared person from San Blas, a member of a family that did not participate in the collective. For now, the news is centered around Sorayma, who will be able to give her husband a dignified burial, and her children, Angelita and Guillermo, who will be able to mourn their father in his grave.

### *Facing the Pedagogy of Terror and Necro-Governmentality*

The pedagogy of terror that has been established in Mexico functions by destroying, mutilating, and disappearing bodies that have been rendered

disposable, sending a message of terror directed toward the entire population (Hernández Castillo 2018; Segato 2013). In the context of impunity that permeates public life in the country, disappearing bodies does not necessarily have the purpose of “erasing evidence” or “thwarting investigations.” It is known that the levels of impunity in Mexico are higher than 98 percent, and only 1.5 percent of legal complaints reach a judge. In such a context, how could one interpret Las Rastreadoras’ discoveries? What is the bodily epistemology that the found bodies incarnate? That is, what do these bodies show us? Do they reveal truths or silence responsibilities? Is every finding a contribution to the pedagogy of terror, or a denunciation against impunity and constant violence? Answering these questions implies approaching the experiences and meanings that Las Rastreadoras have built around their field searches and the bodies they have found.

First, it must be said that there is not a single, definitive answer for what the searches imply or how justice is understood in these contexts. The voices of Las Rastreadoras are as diverse as their personal stories and the accumulated violence they have endured. Some of them dare to break the silence and directly blame the government not only for the impunity but also for its direct participation in violence, denouncing this complicity in public events. Such is the case of Felicitas Hernández, the mother of Juan Carlos, whose disappearance we described at the beginning of this chapter. The responsibility of Commander Gerardo Amarillas is directly mentioned time after time in the testimonies of Las Rastreadoras. His name was also mentioned by Professor Rosa Elia Vázquez. She is the mother of Román Alberto, a young man disappeared by municipal policemen under the command of Amarillas. His case is the only one that affects the commander, who is currently facing criminal charges. It has resulted in the detention of three policemen who have been convicted to twenty-eight years and nine months in prison.<sup>21</sup> There are others who prefer to negotiate with the government, instead of denouncing its direct responsibility. Professor Rosa Elia ended up retiring from the collective due to health reasons, but also because of a differing perspective: for her, the search for justice and the prosecution of culprits is inseparable from the search for her son:

We had a meeting with the mayor of El Fuerte and the prosecutor. Commander Amarillas also showed up, what a coincidence. The prosecutor

told us that they did not want any press involvement, but Mirna retorted that we wanted the press to be there, as it was our right. So, the press came in. I saw a man dressed in blue and asked, “Who is he?” They told me he was Gerardo Amarillas. He kept staring at the floor. I waited for the right moment and raised my hand: “Excuse me.” I stood up and told him, “Meeting certain people is not a pleasure. You are one of those people, as you are responsible for my son’s disappearance.” [. . .] I wanted to find my son, but I also wanted to obtain justice. I do not agree with many of the mothers in Mirna’s group, who claim, “we do not want justice, we just want to find our children.” We recently took a course with the National Brigades in Culiacán. They were very prepared, and told us: “No, if you find your children, you must go on and demand justice, if not, this will never stop.” As I listened to them, I confirmed that I was not wrong, I demand justice and I demand finding my son [. . .] I am aware that the police are behind my son’s disappearance, and I will not remain silent. Sometimes, in interviews conducted by the press, I stated that Commander Amarillas is responsible for the disappearance of young people. They told me, “Be careful, aren’t you afraid?” Maybe I am, for my children, but: what more can a mother do? I feel that I am doing something. In this moment, sharing his story with you, I feel as if I was doing something with him. When I go to Mexico City, I feel as if I am doing something for him.<sup>22</sup>

Other mothers prefer not to name the perpetrators and are willing to negotiate with the government, without denouncing its share of blame. Mirna Medina often repeats the saying “In the way you ask, lies what you receive,” to explain her relationship with local authorities. Las Rastreadoras have a polyphonic discourse that showcases the ambiguity of the government’s hegemony. The government proves effective when it acts as a “benefactor” that supports their searches; when it fails to fulfill the promises of justice and citizenship offered in a liberal human rights discourse, it seems fractured and is denounced as fraudulent.

Authors like Janice K. Gallagher (2022) have analyzed the legal consciousness of relatives of the disappeared, pointing out how their personal stories, their own agreements and disagreements with the government and security forces, have influenced the concrete ways in which families use the legal system.<sup>23</sup> Some families considered the Mexican government as a legitimate power from which one could demand

justice; however, after experiencing its bureaucratic violence and lack of response, they turn to other strategies of search and build a different conception of justice. Such was the case of Professor Rosa Elia, for whom the perpetrators' detention did not imply justice, as her son is still missing. Other families have endured state violence on a daily basis, through police harassment suffered by their children or the militarization of their communities. They see in the state an enemy that participates in the disappearing device, as denounced by Felicitas in her account. However, most members of Las Rastreadoras share their leader's perspective—that is, trying to navigate through the government's spaces with alliances that allow them to advance their humanitarian searches, avoiding the judicialization of their cases, building conceptions of justice that differ from punitive state justice.

As a collective, they have not prioritized the judicialization of their cases; rather, they have focused on field searches as their work strategy, for which they have established several collaboration agreements with forensic teams, both government and independent ones. In the context of these alliances, Mirna Medina traveled to Guatemala and took a course at the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation (FAFG). There, she began a training process that has proven useful in the search for remains in clandestine burial pits. This desire to continue training in field search has also been channeled in the collaboration with the GIASF interdisciplinary team, in which I participated.

Ever since the passage of the 2017 *Ley General en Materia de Desaparición Forzada de Personas, Desaparición Cometida por Particulares y Sistema Nacional de Búsqueda* (General Law on the Enforced Disappearance of Persons, Disappearances Committed by Individuals, and the National Search System), the search for persons has been controlled by institutions that have the exclusive authority to retrieve bodies. In this context, Las Rastreadoras have appropriated forensic knowledge, complemented by their local knowledge on the geography of violence. This has allowed them to destabilize the epistemic hierarchies of forensic science that tend to disqualify nonacademic knowledge. Based on their extensive field search experience, they have achieved the legitimization of their own knowledge and the development of collective work strategies that allow them to keep total control of the process of exhumation and identification of the people they find.<sup>24</sup>

Usually, the decision of where to search is based on information provided by anonymous sources, through phone calls, maps, or written messages left beneath their office door or through direct information shared by peasants or lumberjacks who find possible indicators of a pit in the lands where they work. A way to incentivize information sharing is to appear on local radio shows in which they repeat time after time, “We are not looking for culprits; we just want to find our treasured ones.” Through these messages, and the relationship of trust they have built with the local population, they obtain information that the Search Commission or the Prosecutor’s Office would not get. Based on these clues, they start field scouting. Thanks to their experience, they are able to recognize land plots in which the soil has been turned over, or where nature has been affected by the presence of human beings. Each search entails new lessons, as well as different ways of reading landscapes and recognizing the marks of violence left in a territory (Ramírez González 2022, 70–71).

According to the unwritten agreements struck with the judicial authorities, Las Rastreadoras must report their findings by calling 911. After being informed, the Prosecutor’s Office sends a forensic team that will be responsible for retrieving the found bodies. When this team arrives, the burial pit is cordoned off, thus preventing Las Rastreadoras from intervening in the exhumation. Because of this, they have learned to document the pits’ conditions and the objects they find. If the found bodies are still dressed, they go through their pockets in order to see if they carry some form of ID, as exemplified in Guillermo Pacheco’s case, the first exhumation in which I participated. Since 2005 the Prosecutor’s Office and funeral parlors have made a verbal agreement to guard the bodies that appear in clandestine burial pits. Moreh Inhumaciones, a funeral parlor in Los Mochis, has played an important role in the searches of Las Rastreadoras. Through an agreement with the Prosecutor’s Office, this parlor is also part of the safekeeping apparatus that protects bodies until the genetic identification processes are concluded.<sup>25</sup>

This practice has resulted in funeral parlors taking advantage of families, charging high prices for safekeeping bodies and forcing them to hire their funerary services once the bodies have been identified. Las Rastreadoras managed to secure the construction of Servicios Médicos Forense (Forensic Medical Service, SEMEFO) units. However, these units

remain as white elephants, merely used for storage. To this date, funeral parlors take care of the bodies found in clandestine pits.<sup>26</sup>

Authors such as Isaias Rojas-Pérez analyze the forms in which the state controls dead bodies. The term *necro-governmentality* describes how bodies are “localized, examined, individualized and eventually returned to their families to be properly buried, reestablishing a distinction between family and community that is crucial for the modern political conception of the state” (2017, 87). The control of exhumed bodies in Sinaloa partially fits the processes described by Pérez-Rojas; however, the way in which Las Rastreadoras treat the deceased as their own breaks away from the individualization and isolation of modern politics. As previously stated, Las Rastreadoras look for their own relatives and for every disappeared person. Mothers whose children have already been found—like Mirna Medina, the group’s coordinator—continue to participate in the searches. By treating the bodies they find as human beings, rather than as mere remains, and adopting them as if they were their own kin, they contravene the “privatization of the deceased” and reinforce a sense of community.

Another characteristic of necro-governmentality described by Rojas-Pérez is related to “territory and memory.” According to this author, the exhumation of clandestine burial pits and the participation of forensic teams in territories in which war has taken place is a state strategy to recover geographical control and to shape the historical memory that exhumed bodies carry. In the context of northern Sinaloa, government institutions have not achieved any form of territorial control, and the memory that the bodies carry is still a matter of dispute. *Nadie detiene al amor: Historias de vida de personas desaparecidas en el norte de Sinaloa* (Nobody stops love: Life stories of victims of enforced disappearances in Northern Sinaloa) is a collectively authored book that intends to combat the stigmatization endured by victims of disappearance, labeled as criminals or wayward youngsters who earned their own disgrace. It also aims to reveal the networks of complicity and impunity that enabled their disappearance. Addressing the genealogy of violence and exclusion that has marked the lives of the disappeared and their families is a way of contextualizing enforced disappearance in the structural and institutional forms of violence that enabled it.

My colleague Carolina Robledo and I coordinated the publication of *Nadie detiene el amor* and brought together the accounts of Las

Rastreadoras de El Fuerte, along with the poems and letters they shared with the feminist publishing collective Colectiva Editorial Hermanas en la Sombra, a group of imprisoned women.<sup>27</sup> The stories told in *Nadie detiene al amor* do not only bear witness to one of the most violent periods of contemporary Mexico; they also reveal the complicity between the state and the perpetrators of enforced disappearances, as well as the indifference of a society that has grown accustomed to violence.

Finally, the third mechanism of necro-governmentality described by Rojas-Pérez (2017) is based on language. The state's exhumation projects "are articulated around human rights legislation and global humanitarianism, thus, they have a specific grammar and vocabulary (such as rights and trauma) that thin out the reality of violence and suffering. There is a pretension to recover the past in a controlled way" (120). Despite this, Las Rastreadoras have developed a vernacular variation of human rights discourse, using it to confront the state. Simultaneously, they have maintained their local language, which humanizes bodies by converting them into sons and daughters of them all. They have combined forensic techniques learned in the national and international circles they participate in with popular religious rituals that turn the findings into a rite of community reinforcement.

At the same time, their generalized rejection of judicialization is a way of opposing the concept of penal justice in which most of them do not believe, a refusal to recognize state institutions as custodians of a worldly justice they are yet to enjoy. In the twenty-five in-depth interviews we conducted with Las Rastreadoras, most participants speak about divine justice as the only form of justice they can aspire to, as well as the need for violence to stop. The account of Berthila—the mother of Alejandra Peña, a young woman who, along with a friend, disappeared after verbally confronting a soldier who owned the apartment where she lived—narrates the violence she faced in order to get her daughter's body back, after months searching for her.

I do not ask for justice, because the government will never give us justice, justice can only be given by the one above, he will provide the means for peace and tranquility to reach my soul. I would ask for this situation to end, so no more mothers suffer like Manqui, like Mirna.<sup>28</sup>

On this topic, Sorayma, Guillermo Pacheco's wife, expressed the following:

I think that I will never get to know why this happened, much less who did it. From what we have seen, the authorities, the Prosecutor's Office, will not give us any answers. They are not interested in researching. I would like for justice to be served, but I do not wish anyone what we have endured, not even those that took him away, as the punishment would fall on their families. Your life changes completely. For me, true justice would be for all this to end. I have children, which means that one day I will have grandchildren, and I do not want them to experience the same world that I am living in. That is the sort of justice I would ask for. Not the punishment of those who are found guilty, but for violence to stop, for all of this to stop. If my children have their own families, they should be able to live peacefully, without fearing that their kids won't come back home, that someone else is going to take them. That would be justice for me.<sup>29</sup>

In this context, my previous experiences in legal activism have not been useful, as the priorities of Las Rastreadoras are finding their children, giving a name and a face to the disappeared, and trying to end the cycle of mourning by giving a dignified burial to their relatives. In order to understand these processes, it has been necessary to acknowledge the meanings that underlie seeking justice from below, prioritizing the mothers' discourses and practices, without imposing our preconceived notions of justice and reparation. This has implied setting aside our epistemological arrogance and opening up to other conceptions of restorative justice, putting our knowledge and abilities to their service.

### *Taking Care of the Dead and the Pedagogy of Love*

One of the first things I learned when joining the searches performed by Las Rastreadoras and other collectives was the importance of taking care of the dead as a process of re-dignifying people whose bodies had been turned into trash, treated like disposable matter. It also functions as a strategy to dismantle the pedagogy of terror.

The rituals performed around the pits, before Las Rastreadoras report the findings to the authorities, are a way to face the cruelty these bodies were subjected to. By putting aside their different religious affiliations, as well as their varying degrees of closeness to faith communities, the group's members have collectively developed sacralization rituals. They talk to the bodies and the souls of those who suffered violence, promising to them a return to their homes. The dead bodies they find are not forensic evidence or skeletons, but people whose life and death are dignified by the families that pray for them and integrate them into their networks of affection and care.

The way in which they conduct the exhumation process contrasts with the rough work done by the forensic teams. They have learned to identify soil that has been turned over and detect the smell of a buried body. They have created a tool to locate clandestine burial pits: a T-shaped rod formed by a stick with a triangular handle on top, and a pair of slots centimeters above the lower tip. This rod has become a symbol for various collectives and appears alongside a shovel in the logotype created for the BNB. When they suspect a plot of land has been used as a burial pit, they dig carefully, using a small shovel to avoid damaging the body or skeleton they might find. If the search is successful, before continuing, they perform a welcome ritual for those who will soon return to their families and communities. Afterward, they dig from the edges to the center, sifting the soil they remove to look for small bones they might have missed.

Nevertheless, as the agreement establishes that they must notify the Prosecutor's Office as soon as they find something, the exhumation process is modified by the forensic teams. On many occasions, I have witnessed confrontations between collectives and government workers due to the way in which they treat the deceased, tossing the bodies around and leaving part of the bodies in the surroundings areas. One of these incidents took place on February 11, 2018. In my field diary, I described the return to a pit in which a body had already been found:

We keep on walking and find the pit where a body had been found last November. There are bricks in the middle forming a makeshift altar, with a candle in the middle. It is evident that relatives have come to mark the place in which the body was found. Besides the altar, María López—the physical anthropology student that has joined us—takes a shovel and be-

gins to remove the soil. Without digging too deep, she finds part of a foot. She tells us that it is a right foot. It is surrounded by a harder material, which I believe to be some form of fabric. María explains us that it is mummified skin. She keeps on digging and finds several vertebrae, as well as finger and feet bones. It seems like the Prosecutor's forensic team did not do a good job and left part of the body in the pit. We gather in a circle around the findings and one of them leads a prayer. The ritual is briefer than those performed when a complete body is found. There is indignation among Las Rastreadoras. They ask María to continue digging, she proceeds carefully, and bones keep coming out. They explain us that their agreement with the authorities is to notify them immediately once there is a finding, so they can take charge. The problem is that when the Prosecutor's forensic team arrives, they must leave the scene and are unable to see what goes on next. That is why, on many occasions, they don't notify the authorities until they examine thoroughly for clothes or other objects that can help them identify the body. Now, they realize that they must perform most of the exhumation before notifying the Prosecutor's Office, as the government's forensic workers and criminologists don't do a proper job, they don't care to maintain the bodies' integrity. It is not the first time that part of a body is left in a pit. There is an ethical dilemma underway: the relatives have already received most of the body, they cremated it and made the corresponding rituals, thus, giving them a feet and bag of bones would stir up their pain. On the other hand, Las Rastreadoras cannot leave the remains there, as if they were trash. They decide to take what they have found and to collectively discuss the matter in their office, in order to take a good decision that won't revictimize the family.<sup>30</sup>

Beyond the philosophical debate that ponders if the dead have human rights (Rosenblatt 2010), Las Rastreadoras consider them people whose dignity must be recognized. They deserve respect, which implies trying to maintain the bodies' integrity. When listening to them talk affectionately, I reflect on how these practices confront the perpetrators' pedagogy of terror with a pedagogy of love that reestablishes the bond between the living and the dead. To describe this, Paola Alejandra Ramírez has coined the term *affective pedagogy of the care of dead bodies* (2022). However, I consider that it goes beyond practices of care: these are pedagogical practices that reach families that are still searching or that have already found

their missing relatives, as well as their communities, which are often paralyzed and silenced by fear. It is a politization of love that goes beyond personal affects to contribute to the reconstruction of communal space.

Their practices of care toward anonymous dead bodies, toward people whom they perhaps never met but who in death are integrated into their communities, broaden the sense of love beyond family or private spheres. It is the form of love that Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have denominated integral love, which has a material and political sense: “We need to recover today this material and political sense of love, a love as strong as death. This does not mean you cannot love your spouse, your mother and your child. It only means that your love does not end there, that love serves as the basis for our political projects in common and the construction of a new society. Without this love, we are nothing” (2004, 352). As I pointed out in this book’s introduction, the political sense of love in the construction of communities that transcend identity frontiers has also been theorized by feminist activist-academics like Chela Sandoval (2000) and bell hooks (2018), who have pointed out the importance of love for social transformation. In the case of Las Rastreadoras, this pedagogy of love transcends the frontiers between the living and the dead and breaks the silence imposed by fear in occupied territories.

This politics of caring for the bodies of the disappeared has led the searchers to develop the project “El Pueblito,” which has been proposed to the local government of Los Mochis. To develop it, they have bought a plot of land in the municipal graveyard. There, the found corpses will be properly buried, and DNA tests will be applied to every unidentified body. This information will be later compared with the official database, in order to ascertain the body’s identity. Those who remain unidentified after the testing will be adopted and cared for by Las Rastreadoras and given proper burial in “El Pueblito” until their real mothers claim their remains.

The pedagogy of love extends to the families that have found their relatives; to those who have provided economical or material aid for the celebration of funerals, burials, and novenas—a nine-day period of mourning practiced by Catholic families. During the two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the WhatsApp group chat I participated in remained active. It was used to notify about the health status of the members who caught the virus, to raise funds for families that lost their jobs, and to assign turns to take care of the ill. The use of social media has also been a fundamental

tool to build alliances and communal bonds outside Las Rastreadoras' territories. This reflects not only what some authors have denominated "techno-political appropriations of searching" (Franco Migueles 2019) but also an effort to widen their networks of care with other vulnerable groups that do not necessarily have missing relatives, such as the Indigenous people of northern Sinaloa. This became evident when they coordinated support for the peasant and Mayo-Yoreme communities affected by Hurricane Pamela in October 2021 and by Tropical Storm Norma in October 2023. In each of these acts, the collectives not only contributed to the reconstruction of the social fabric but also built families that transcend blood.

The construction of an extended family is achieved not only through solidary action in times of crisis but also in the celebration of life. An example of the latter was Heydi Alejandra's—Felicitas's daughter—quinceañera party, in which Mirna Medina was chosen as the godmother. Another example was Mirna's wedding ceremony, in which all members of Las Rastreadoras had an active role.<sup>31</sup>

Part of the sisterly energy that allows them to keep on with their weekly searches despite the emotional pain inflicted by their children's absence, as well as the consequences this pain has had on their health and spirit, resides in the practices of affection and care that they perform before, during, and after their excursions. The weekly searches, with or without findings, usually end with the collective preparation of food, another sisterly ritual that strengthens their bonds as a family united by pain and hope.<sup>32</sup>

On one of my visits, this culinary ritual was dedicated to my mother, a great cook of Sinaloense food. This happened during Holy Week. I had mentioned that my mother used to cook and sell a local dessert known as *capirotada*, made out of stale bread and dried fruit and typically consumed during Lent. Without notifying me, the women agreed to bring the necessary ingredients to the office so they could surprise me and, after the search, cook what was the best *capirotada* I have ever eaten. This unforgettable evening ended with us dancing in the alleyways of a marketplace, to music played by a brass band, which charged us by the song. The apparent contradiction between the pain of interrupted mourning and the energy and *joie de vivre* the women radiated shook my epistemic certainties about victims and their resistance strategies.

Through these quotidian demonstrations of love, as well as my participation in field searches and in memory workshops, I became part of the extended family that Las Rastreadoras have formed with their allies.

### *Nothing Stops Love: Memory as a Fighting Tool*

Ever since we began to work with Las Rastreadoras in 2017, we brought up the possibility of collaborating on a product for divulgation that could help to publicize their fight, to destigmatize their children's lives, and to denounce the violence that affects their lives. My eight-year-long work on memory workshops and identity writing with imprisoned women enriched the methodological strategies that we developed when we started to work with Las Rastreadoras to systematize their knowledge about the context in which their sons and daughters disappeared, as well as their own stories and those of their missing relatives.

Authors like Gabriel Gatti (2022) have questioned if it is appropriate to speak about memory in contexts in which disappearance is not a problem of the past but an issue that continues to this day. The dialogue we established with Las Rastreadoras showed us that the reconstruction of their memories about the origins of violence in northern Sinaloa, their personal stories, and those of their sons and daughters provides a different concept of memory. Contrary to the idea that posits that speaking about memory places the phenomenon of enforced disappearance in the past, through our workshops, the reconstruction of memories allowed us to document the link between past and contemporary violence in northern Sinaloa, as well as the violence continuum that has marked the lives of Las Rastreadoras and their families.

From this new perspective of memory, our project of collectively writing a book drew from Latin American feminism, which has used memory studies to understand the impact of violence on communities, as well as the strategies used to reconstruct the social fabric, commonly spearheaded by women. The pioneering work of Elizabeth Jelin in Argentina (2002; 2007; 2010; 2017), Pilar Riaño-Alcalá in Colombia (2005; with Ricardo Chaparro 2020), and Actoras de Cambio (Agents of Change) in Guatemala (2011) bears witness to the political relevance of memory workshops in the battles for justice and against impunity. Questions such

as “How is the past represented?” “Who represents it?” and “How are these representations institutionalized?” are more than academic inquiries: they are political and methodological tools in feminist fights for memory and epistemic decolonization.

When we started to work in Sinaloa, I had accumulated years of experience in collaborative methodologies, which included memory and creative writing workshops. I had worked with imprisoned women to document the violence that marked their lives and to denounce the racism and patriarchal violence of the prison system. I did so through a political, pedagogical, and artistic project known as *Colectiva Editorial Hermanas en la Sombra* (which will be addressed in more detail in chapter 4). Its objective is contributing to the dignification of penitentiary spaces by building small niches for the exchange of knowledge, fostering sisterhood and a consolidated sense of community inside institutions that promote mistrust, violence, and individualism among incarcerated women (Hernández Castillo 2016d and 2021c).

This project has also entailed the appropriation of the means of self-representation, by creating a penitentiary editorial through which the incarcerated women could write, design, and publish their own books. The humanitarian intermediation in which allies become “the spokespeople for those that have lived certain experiences firsthand” (Fassin 2008) is no longer necessary when the means of self-representation are provided. In this sense, their editorial production has become a form of theorization about the world that is shared in printed form and on digital networks.

Out of these precedents emerged a proposal to establish a bridge between both projects, so that the *Colectiva Editorial Hermanas en la Sombra* could design and publish the collective book. In 2018, in an effort to build alliances between these groups, I facilitated an epistolary exchange between *Las Rastreadoras* and the *Colectiva Editorial Hermanas en la Sombra*, imprisoned in the *Centros de Readaptación Social* (Centers for Social Readaptation, CERESOs).

We began to systematize the life stories of *Las Rastreadoras* by conducting long-form interviews between 2017 and 2018. Nineteen women and one man were interviewed. All of them were members of the collective. They were searching for twenty-three missing persons, disappeared between 2011 and 2017: twenty-one men and two women who



FIGURE 6 Life stories workshop at the office of Las Rastreadoras in Los Mochis, Sinaloa. Photo from author's personal archive.

disappeared in the municipalities of El Fuerte, Ahome, Choix, and Guasave in northern Sinaloa. Juan Carlos, Alfonso, Alejandra, Osvil, Christian, Guillermo, Rulo, Zumiko, Chico Lugo, Jasiel, Candelario, Kalucha, Chayo, Vladimir, Tacho, Roberto, César Armando, Rigo, Román, Lucas, and Jean Paul. Six of them have been found dead: Alejandra, Juan Carlos, Guillermo, Candelario, Kalucha, Roberto, and Chato.

The decision of who would participate in the book took into consideration who had the time to share their story. The recorded interviews, the longest of which clocked in at four hours, were transcribed. Then, we worked both collectively and individually on the construction of the stories that would make up the book.

One of the exercises consisted of working in pairs, reading stories to one another, and commenting on the similarities and differences in their life trajectories and those of their loved ones, as well as the way in which the latter had disappeared. By sharing their life trajectories, the anthology's authors exchanged emotions such as indignation, pain, and

mourning but also faith and hope in the possibility of building fairer societies. These exercises contributed to the construction of a sense of community, which they often call “their new families.” By reconstructing the context of the “critical event,” drawing maps of their findings in clandestine burial pits, and sharing their knowledge about the violence that affects their communities, they articulated the experience of racist and patriarchal forms of violence that have marked their lives and those of their sons and daughters.

While my methodological perspective drew from feminist traditions, the memory workshops we conducted did not pretend to “raise awareness” and were not pedagogical in nature. Nevertheless, sharing experiences and recognizing their own knowledge allowed the participants to develop collective reflections on the violence they have endured and their resistance strategies.

When we collectively decided to write the book, there was a clear awareness among Las Rastreadoras that writing their version of the grievances that fractured their lives was a strategy to confront “official truths” about them and their families. Their stories also show an acknowledgment of their “gifts,” as well as their capacity for fighting and resisting. In this sense, they confront the victimizing effects that personal testimonies have had in certain contexts of transitional justice (Fassin 1998). While the workshops did not have a therapeutic intention, Las Rastreadoras recognized that collectivizing pain, reflecting about their personal stories, and empathically listening to the suffering of the other participants also constituted a way of healing.<sup>33</sup>

Although the workshops were an exercise in documenting women’s version of history, this did not necessarily lead to a critical, anti-patriarchal reflection. The collective members’ contradictory perspectives on masculine violence were reflected in their wish to eliminate any mention of domestic violence in their narratives. This shows that documenting women’s version of history does not necessarily lead to a critical, anti-patriarchal reflection. A post-structuralist perspective has questioned some aspects of feminist memories, such as the normalization of sisterhood and essentialist perspectives on female identities. These critics point out that “feminizing memory”—that is, amplifying women’s voices in memory studies—is not enough, as it is important to reflect on how these memories build gender and, in many contexts, reinforce hegemonic

discourses and practices of femininity and masculinity (Troncoso Pérez and Piper Shafir 2015).

In this sense, the memory workshops carried out in northern Sinaloa with the mothers of the disappeared were meetings in which hegemonic representations of violence and justice were destabilized. However, these were also spaces full of contradictions. We constructed ourselves by reproducing conservative discourses about what women should be, but we also deconstructed ourselves as gendered subjects, destabilizing traditional perspectives on maternity and family.

When I took the stories of Las Rastreadoras to the women's prison in Atlacholoaya, to propose that the project could be published by Colectiva Editorial Hermanas en la Sombra, the process of reflection widened, as it included the voices of incarcerated women, who had a longer trajectory in writing and in feminist critique of patriarchal violence. They suggested answering each of the Las Rastreadoras' stories with a poem or letter. When Las Rastreadoras read the texts that their stories had inspired, they proposed including them in the collective book.

Thus, two "memory communities" were built, separated by fifteen hundred kilometers, five states, and multiple penitentiary barriers.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, they were united by a critique of state violence and injustice, as well as a shared desire to reunite with their sons and daughters. In the popular imagination, these communities would seem antagonistic: on one side, the mothers, sisters, and wives of the disappeared, commonly seen as "victims" of organized crime, on the other, imprisoned women, represented as "perpetrators," criminals, or accomplices. Nevertheless, their shared writings and reflections show us that they both represent segments of the population severely affected by the violence unleashed during the so-called war on drugs. These are women who fell "prey to statistics," criminalized and jailed by the Mexican justice system, and women whose relatives were disappeared, in contexts marked by militarization, violence, and impunity.<sup>35</sup> Their representations as "perpetrators" and "victims" are destabilized by the collective reconstruction of their life trajectories through the texts they have written as a product of memory and creative writing workshops.<sup>36</sup>

Their dialogue—epistolary and, recently, in person—have allowed them to confirm the way in which they share grievances and resistances against patriarchal violence.<sup>37</sup> Enforced disappearance and imprisonment

are two different yet complementary strategies to control territories and populations, used by armed factions in these “new neoliberal wars” (Pailey 2020). The memories of violence documented by these collectives include violence perpetrated by men on their families, by security forces, or by criminal organizations.

The members of Las Rastreadoras and other collectives have seen their lives and communities shattered by patriarchal forms of violence that use the pedagogy of terror as means for territorial control (Segato 2013). Sharing their experiences and engaging in collective reflections have allowed them to represent violence not as “personal grievances” or as a consequence of “bad luck” or “bad parenting” but as a common experience of structural violence that marks their lives and territories.

### *Final Remarks*

Approaching the work of Las Rastreadoras, their practices of care of the deceased and their communities, allows us to understand how life can still be celebrated in these territories marked by multiple forms of violence.

I do not intend to say that all missing persons are destined to appear in a clandestine burial pit; however, this has been the main space explored by Las Rastreadoras, due to the geopolitical context in which they conduct their searches, where armed agents—both legal and illegal—have prioritized pits as spaces to hide bodies and mark territories. In chapters 4, 5, and 6 of this book, we will see that other collectives in Mexico have prioritized searching for those who remain alive in jails, psychiatric hospitals, rehabilitation clinics, and other dangerous spaces where people may be detained against their will. Even Las Rastreadoras have joined some of these searches, along with the BNB. This experience will be analyzed in chapter 4. Nevertheless, for Las Rastreadoras, the appropriation of forensic knowledge has been a political bet that has allowed them to specialize in field searches and to supervise that the government’s forensic teams do their job according to search protocols, respecting the dignity of the deceased.

In the process of searching, of walking through the territory, of rummaging soil, of plunging into canals and rivers, they have also built a sense

of community that strengthens them, both politically and emotionally. Some authors allude to political communities of loss (Ramírez González 2022), mourning communities (Robledo 2017). Alternatively, leaning on Myriam Jimeno's (2019) concept of emotional communities, they describe the way in which researchers become part of these communities (Macleod and De Marinis 2019). In this chapter, we have documented that the bonds Las Rastreadoras have built among themselves—which can be conflictive and contradictory—have extended to communities that suffer other kinds of violence, such as the Mayo-Yoreme people in northern Sinaloa or the imprisoned women in Atlacholoaya, Morelos. This impulse to reconstruct bonds torn apart by violence leads me to argue that a pedagogy of love involves facing and dismantling a pedagogy of terror and cruelty that has paralyzed the population of territories occupied by illegal and legal armed agents.

The collectives formed by relatives of victims of enforced disappearance comprised some of the few organizations that did not stop working during the harshest months of the COVID-19 pandemic, risking their own health. They kept on searching, supporting those who fell sick and reminding the country that the pandemic of disappearances hadn't stopped, despite the sanitary measures and lockdowns (see Hernández Castillo 2021f).

Their local knowledge on such topics as context analysis, the history of criminality in the region, and the orography of the lands where they search, as well as the trust they have won in the neighboring communities, have been fundamental to their achievements: 628 found bodies, half of which have been returned to their families. The challenge of body identification is still an obstacle for reintegrating exhumed bodies to their communities. To overcome it, they have fought for the construction of a Center for Temporary Storage and Human Identification in Culiacán, the capital of Sinaloa.<sup>38</sup> However, the mere construction of such a building cannot ensure that its functioning will meet the challenges faced in this region.

At the same time, they are developing projects and strategies to take care of the bodies that remain unidentified and buried in mass graves. As discussed, they have already secured a plot of land in the Los Mochis cemetery, to establish a project named "El Pueblito," which would allow them to take care of the graves of unidentified people, to pray for their

rest, and to celebrate with them the necessary rituals for their souls to be at peace. The impulse to “privatize the dead” as a state strategy for establishing what Isaías Rojas-Pérez calls necro-governmentality has not worked in a context in which every last person is sought, and in which those who have already been found are integrated into the communities of the living through these projects.

Nevertheless, the care they take of both the living and the dead has not stopped the violence that stalks their communities. To this date, Sinaloa is among the three states with the largest number of missing persons, along with Veracruz and Guerrero: 5,585 disappearances, out of which 500 took place during the first quarter of 2023.

Echoing the voices of Las Rastreadoras, who call for violence to stop and who work to ensure that their children and grandchildren can enjoy a free life in Sinaloa, is an ethical and political commitment for those of us who have had the privilege of walking by their side and learning from their struggles.

## CHAPTER 6

---

# THE STRENGTH OF SPIRITUALITY IN THE SEARCHERS' JOURNEY

In this chapter, I use my participation in the Eje de Iglesias y Espiritualidades—the origins of which were addressed in the previous chapter—as an ethnographic window, in order to show the importance of spirituality in the construction of political and solidary communities. These communities mobilize against enforced disappearance and participate in self-care strategies to help them face the loss and interrupted mourning of those whose relatives have disappeared.

While the Eje de Iglesias y Espiritualidades was created in the context of the BNB, its reach, both in time and space, goes beyond it. The axis has turned into a *detrterritorialized* political and affectional community, comprising people from different creeds and faiths who support each other and join efforts in the search for the disappeared.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I am interested in documenting and analyzing the impact that this community's practices and discourses have had both in the search process and in the lives of the searchers. In a wider sense, I address the importance of spirituality as a means to deal with social suffering and as a source of inspiration and political energy to resist violence and imagine other meanings of justice.<sup>2</sup>

Academic works about the Eje de Iglesias y Espiritualidades have been written from the perspective of critical theology, which aims to systematize the axis's methodological experiences in spiritual accompaniment, so that their way of working can contribute to the creation

of a Latin American network that deals with enforced disappearance through the lens of theology (Otero Hernández 2021). Perspectives in the sociology of religion have also analyzed the social, cultural, symbolic, and religious capital that the axis's members give and receive in their social field: the search for victims of enforced disappearance (Rodríguez Pacheco 2024). These analytical perspectives have focused on documenting the actions taken by ecclesiastical organizations and people of faith committed to the relatives of the disappeared. I am interested in approaching the political and emotional community that has been created through the Eje de Iglesias y Espiritualidades, which includes people with a disappeared relative, as well as those who, despite not suffering the direct impact of an enforced disappearance, have decided to join the searching community. From a feminist perspective, I am interested in analyzing both the emancipatory power that spirituality holds for the relatives of the disappeared and the impact that the pedagogy of love has had on the searchers, pastoral agents, and volunteers who are part of the axis. That is, I am interested in taking a bidirectional analytical journey, documenting, on the one hand, the place of spiritual practices and faith experiences in the search process, and, on the other, the impact of the search process on the ways we experience faith and spirituality.

By claiming the emancipatory potential of Christian spirituality in female searchers, I must acknowledge the contradictory nature of religious identities built in dialogue with institutions that tend to promote the values and subjectivities of traditional femininity.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, I consider Daniel Levine's proposal valuable. He stated that "although analysis must go beyond the formal limits of institutions, the continued impact of institutions cannot be ignored. Institutions are more than machines for grinding out documents or allocating roles and statuses in a formalized way. They are vital, changing structures that help form the contexts in which experience is lived and judged. They provide identity, continuity and nets of solidarity that are much valued by members, despite possible rejection by group members of specific institutional leaders or positions" (Levine 1992, 15). With these contradictory identities, female searchers have mobilized and, on many occasions, confronted conservative perspectives of "feminine duties," renegotiating gender roles in the domestic context, acquiring knowledge, and occupying political spaces they had historically been excluded from.

Despite the conservative and anti-feminist nature of Protestant and Catholic hierarchies in Mexico, it is important to acknowledge that, inside these churches, there have been pastoral agents/workers engaging—through critical reflection—in the organizing processes of underprivileged groups. In works addressing the case of Indigenous women in relation to Mexican Catholicism, I have analyzed how neither liberation theology nor Indigenous theology has prioritized reflection on gender inequality. Despite this, both approaches have created spaces and provided tools for Indigenous women and rural mestizo women in Chiapas to apply the critique of ethnic and class inequality to their own subordination as women in the contexts of family, community, and church. In some cases, feminist theology has reached Mexico's remotest communities through the efforts of religious sisters and laywomen, giving place to fruitful dialogues between pastoral agents and peasants.<sup>4</sup>

In the case of the BNB, the members of the Eje de Iglesias y Espiritualidades come from different religious traditions, including Catholicism, Anglicanism, Methodism, Mennonite Anabaptism, Presbyterianism, Quakerism, the Evangelical Covenant Church, and the Church of



FIGURE 21 Members of the Eje de Iglesias y Espiritualidades of Morelos renaming the Plaza de Armas as Plaza de La Paz. Photo by Cecilia Lobato.

Mexicanidad (Mexicanness). There are also members who practice other forms of spirituality influenced by Buddhism. While the searchers come from a predominantly Catholic culture, they have developed their own spiritual practices in dialogue with the diverse traditions of those who have joined their path.

Those who have joined and documented the struggle led by mothers of femicide victims have pointed out that faith and spiritual practices have been fundamental to facing and resignifying violence. These are creative processes in which the hegemonical meanings of the “feminine code of behavior,” guilt, and sin are destabilized. For example, Karina Bárcenas and Eleane Proo claim that

for the mothers of victims, Christian spirituality offers an alternative to resignify femicidal violence. These women take a framework they learned as part of their religion of origin and, at the same time, question the patriarchal inheritance that religions have imposed through their worldview. From their subjective experience, without the intermediation of any religious authority or community allegiance, they summon the existence of a transcendent being to provide meaning to a tragical event and to implore for justice, which they continue to look for in this world even if it has been denied to them. (Proo and Bárcenas 2021, 22)

Although female searchers who participate in the Eje de Iglesias y Espiritualidades still look for the participation of male pastoral workers in their ritual celebrations (such as the birthdays of their sons and daughters, the anniversaries of their disappearance, and religious holidays such as Christmas and Holy Week), little by little, they have taken on a more active role in said ritual spaces. They have also included female pastoral workers in their celebrations. In Morelos, Anglican priest María Elena Marván has played an important role in the destabilization of patriarchal imaginaries around priesthood and the intermediation with divinity. At the same time, this encounter with the searchers and the community surrounding them has awakened a political commitment in the Anglican minister to denounce injustice:

I have walked with the searchers for almost three years, which have been an entirely new life to me, along the other volunteers, respecting and pro-

moting their human dignity. Both the relatives and the victims are often judged. The privilege of joining their struggle has allowed me to grow, experiencing God as embodied in the tenaciousness, solidarity and enormous courage needed to look for those they are missing, denouncing injustice and promoting peace.<sup>5</sup>

New horizons have emerged through the sight of a woman officiate a mass, using the paraphernalia and following the rites usually reserved for male religious figures. In the axis, this has influenced the invitation of Catholic religious sisters to officiate celebrations such as quinceañeras and even weddings. Female searchers who are part of the Eje de Iglesias y Espiritualidades are also beginning to play an important role in certain public rituals, providing the final blessing or the homily during ecumenical services. Simultaneously, they have innovated the sacralization rituals during the search process, using such objects as shovels, picks, and the clothes of their loved ones.

The ethics of accompaniment practiced by the Eje de Iglesias y Espiritualidades have consisted of amplifying the families' leading role, acknowledging their spiritual practices and knowledge, what I have deemed their "embodied theologies," to refer to the way in which, from their own bodies, they manifest the presence of the divinity. With their loving practices, they teach us to take care of the dead and to search not only for our own sons and daughters but for all of those who disappeared and are sorely missed. For some pastoral workers, this has implied learning to abdicate their leading role to place the families in the center, to prioritize silence over words. During the brigade and later experiences, the instruction for all those involved has been to "learn to be," to place their bodies and their listening in these processes. Paola Clerico, a religious sister of Jesus and Mary, founder of the axis, and one of its most active and committed members, notes,

Something I have learned throughout this journey along the families of the disappeared is trying to remain silent. A necessary silence. No words are enough to understand the magnitude of the pain inflicted to families whose loved ones have been unfairly and inhumanely disappeared. In most cases, the best possible word is a loving silence that manages to communicate, with the whole body, some empathy; a silence that does not incur

in the violence of superfluous words, uttered, perhaps, because of the fear of not knowing what to say [. . .] recipes or generic advice that often revictimize and that, usually, are out of place. An active silence, that enables a necessary listening. (Eje de Iglesias y Comunidades de Fe 2020)

Abel Rodríguez, member of the axis, sociologist, and ex-priest, points out that

this has allowed them to develop an accompaniment model that values, first of all, their presence, being with the families, rather than proposing actions or solutions. There, keeping company at ground level, lies the main difference with other local initiatives that have emerged from the ecclesiastical institution.<sup>6</sup>

In this effort to acknowledge their spiritualities and theological thought, the axis's pastoral agents have invited several of the searchers to write their reflections and to contribute, with their ideas, to the collective journey taken by the communities of faith created during their search. They published a brochure titled *Bienaventuranzas para las familias buscadoras* (Blessedness for the searching families), during the Red de Enlaces Nacionales annual meeting in 2020. For this exercise in collective reflection, the axis's members were invited to reflect about the Sermon on the Mount, a collection of eight blessings known as The Beatitudes, which appear in the Gospel of Matthew (5:3). In their everyday lives—with their searches, their interrupted mourning, and their spiritual practices—they established a dialogue with one of the beatitudes, reflecting on how, amid pain, they feel blessed. On this topic, Doña María Herrera, historical leader of the movement, wrote,

Listening to Jesus, who tells us this beatitude, “blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness: for they shall be filled,” I find a strength and a reason to hope. These words, if we make them our own, if we embrace them in what we live as relatives of victims of disappearance, must fill us with peace and happiness. God has his own timing, he knows when and how, he has never left us alone [. . .] For example, the fact that we are surrounded by so many good and generous people, that join us without pay, strengthens us. There, we can see those words turning into reality Gods

opens us doors and spaces through so many solidary people, good people that keep us company. There shines the Lord's light. At the same time, when we give our hearts, everything we have left, for this battle, to search for our children, we give what we are, our humanity. When we embrace the pain of others, that is also nourishing, it fills us. My family and I have gotten unending strength from this. Thus, we make faith in humanity grow. In the Red de Enlaces Nacionales, the interest to as a collective struggle has grown. We strengthen each other, that is how God satiates our thirst and hunger for righteousness and for spirituality too. We understand each other because we speak one same language, we lived through the same experiences. This nourishes us. (Eje de Iglesias y Comunidades de Fe 2020)

The fact that this reflection comes from a woman, mother of four disappeared children, thanking God for the blessings she has received, makes it almost impossible to understand the sense behind it, at least for those of us who do not share this experience of faith. It is a faith that mobilizes the search, not an experience of resignation that is often promoted by the most conservative sectors of the Catholic and Protestant Churches. "Embracing the pain of others" is a way of building a community, to support others and search as a collective. It is a way to "make the faith in humanity grow," in a context in which those who wield extreme violence attempt to destabilize society, which is, in a particular way, an attempt to destroy human dignity. Female searchers, like Doña María, use faith to draw on the vital energy that allows them to continue living, which, in their own words, means to "continue searching."

From the point of view of social psychology, those who have worked with relatives of the disappeared have documented that religion and spirituality provide a sense of transcendence to people, an important tool for emerging out of periods of acute depression. When the entire world is out of control and the well-being of the disappeared person does not depend on anything that the relative can do, faith becomes a stronghold within which one can face uncertainty.<sup>7</sup> It is not only a "therapeutic resource"; rather, the voices and experiences of searchers show us that spirituality becomes a vital energy that allows them to work as a collective, in supporting other women and building emotional and political communities.

For Lore Reza, the sister of Juan Carlos Garduño, disappeared on September 26, 2007:

Faith has given me strength to continue searching for my brother and for all the people that we are missing. Many times, churches turn their back on us when a relative disappears. I was lucky to find a faith community that has supported and held me when I needed it. On September 2019, I attended the reunion of the Red de Enlaces Nacionales in Mexico City. There, I learned of the existence of the Eje de Iglesias y Espiritualidades. I approached them and told them I wanted to participate, that I wanted to know what they were doing and to bring the Axis to my home state, Morelos. Sister Paola (Clerico) told me that I am the founder of the Axis in my state, because I decided to approach them, so that I could bring the voice of the disappeared to different churches, to awaken the consciousness of those who remained indifferent [. . .] this community has strengthened me, it has given me the opportunity to meet many people, to open my mind to different knowledge. I learn something new from each one, I can talk to Catholic and Anglican priests, with Protestant pastors, with deacons or religious sisters, with the volunteers. We have built a great community of searching and faith, we have become peace-builders. This is our wager, that we can sow a seed so that it grows into peace in our country and an end to violence.<sup>8</sup>

Lorena Reza, alongside other searchers, has taken her testimony to different faith communities to “yank” out of indifference—as she described it—pastoral agents/workers and laypeople who prefer to remain unaware of what is happening outside their parishes, neighborhoods, or communities. This way of “delivering a testimony” is also a way of producing what I have deemed embodied theology, which consists not only of words but of bodies placed where violence is confronted and spaces of death are sacralized. This embodied theology is fashioned in their day-to-day experience. In the Mexican context, everyday life is marked by extreme violence and the defense of life. Chicano and Latino feminist theologians have proposed the concept of *lo cotidiano*, as the space where the struggle for life is immediate and vibrant, where women who confront social suffering produce their own theology.<sup>9</sup> In opposition to a hegemonical perspective on theology, which many of them consider patriarchal—produced inside seminaries and universities, systematized through academic writing—they bring into being practices, rituals, chants, and prayers of women who resist violence and defend life, as liberating theological praxis and spiritualities of social resistance.<sup>10</sup>



FIGURE 22 Sacralizing the public space with a mandala with the shoes of their missing loved ones. Photo by Cecilia Lobato.

In the case of the mothers of femicide victims in Ciudad Juárez, Chicana feminist theologian Nancy Pineda-Madrid argues that their practices of resistance to femicide and extreme violence have brought new theological meanings to the way “salvation” is understood, centering collective struggle and communities. She argues that, in the face of social suffering, these women have taught her that community is a condition for salvation. They turned their social suffering into political energy to defend not only the community of the living but also the community of the dead.<sup>11</sup> The same happens in the case of “searching” collectives and their testimonial practices of building a culture of peace and preventing violence with their pedagogy of love, with their care of the anonymous dead in clandestine burial pits, with their messages of hope to imprisoned women with disappeared children. These are forms of defending their communities, both of the living and the dead. From the perspective of feminist theologians, these are liberating theological praxes, which teach us to understand “salvation” and practice spirituality.

Feminist theologians importantly argue that the social revolutions of the last decades have centered on the transformations of the state and

its institutions and the rules of the market, without accounting for the day-to-day level of social transformation. Thus, these revolutions have ended up reproducing the forms of domination and exclusion that affect people in their everyday lives, such as patriarchal violence, racism, and ableism. This criticism echoes reflections that I have developed in other works, which draw from my experience of walking alongside organized Indigenous women. I have rethought traditional and institutional ways to understand Politics—with a capital P—to consider how in their day-to-day living women who defend life destabilize practices and discourses of domination, with cultural politics that are not always acknowledged or made visible by those who only look at institutions.<sup>12</sup>

This day-to-day resistance to violence has also taken place through virtual means of communication, building a sense of community that goes beyond their original location. What I have deemed *detrterritorialized solidarity communities* were strengthened since the COVID-19 pandemic, when many of the searchers began to appropriate digital tools not only to spread pictures of the disappeared on social media but also to share the losses, feelings, and challenges accumulated during their searching experience. One of this spaces was the Listening Community, created at the start of the pandemic, which has run on a weekly basis ever since.

### *Cultivating Healthy Closeness*

The COVID-19 pandemic, declared as an international public health emergency by the World Health Organization (WHO) on January 30, 2020, impacted the everyday lives of people all over the planet, paralyzing many of the struggles led by social movements. In Mexico, it complicated the strategies to search for the disappeared. Nevertheless, during the first year of the pandemic, people kept on disappearing. At the end of 2020 the National Search Commission reported that 6,925 people had disappeared since COVID's outbreak.<sup>13</sup> The *disappearance pandemic*, a term coined by Zoraida García Castillo, director of Forensic Sciences at the UNAM, continued throughout 2020, parallel to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>14</sup>

In this context, female searchers kept searching for their sons and daughters, taking care both of the dead and each other, even if going out

for field searches implied catching the disease and putting their families at risk.<sup>15</sup> Simultaneously, they appropriated the tools of the virtual world to build meeting spaces. For example, the organizations grouped under the Movement for Our Disappeared Ones in Mexico met through digital means to promote the agreement that outlawed the incineration of unidentified bodies and unclaimed identified bodies in the wake of COVID-19. The Red de Enlaces Nacionales cancelled the brigade it had planned for 2020; nevertheless, they still organized virtual meetings to discuss the *Standardized Search Protocol for Disappeared Persons and the Investigation of the Crime of Enforced Disappearance*, published in October 2020.<sup>16</sup> The appropriation of the digital space to maintain the links between the members of the collective implied greater use of social media, as well as the development of new abilities by many of the members, who had previously limited their social media use to Facebook. Several collectives bought Zoom accounts or learned to use free platforms such as Streamyard or Google to successfully meet with members of other collectives, or even within their own collective, while complying with “healthy distance” public health measures.



FIGURE 23 Memorial for the people found in the clandestine graves of Tetelcingo. Photo by Cecilia Lobato.

One of these spaces, created by the Eje de Iglesias y Espiritualidades, was the Listening Community, which subverted the slogan used by Mexico's Health Ministry. Instead of a "healthy distance," they spoke of the need to "cultivate healthy closeness" through weekly virtual meetings so that the relatives of victims of enforced disappearance could have a space where they could be heard and receive spiritual accompaniment during the monthslong quarantine. What started as a circumstantial initiative turned into the construction of a *detrterritorialized community* in which relatives from all around the country (mostly women) share their struggles and everyday challenges.

The guide elaborated by the Axis of Churches and Spiritualities for the Construction of a Listening Community specifies that

it is a non-directive community, each person expands on their own knowledge and resources through their interaction with the other members of the community. It is a community of personal growth, of growth in the Spirit. An ecumenical community that looks to promote spirituality, not a specific religious tradition. A community that aims to lighten the load borne by its members, at least momentarily, allowing them to reach a better internal state, as well as sharing experiences of light, joy and peace as a way of healing the sisters and brothers who listen. A community that believes that being and feeling listened and received is a way of allowing divinity to save our lives, a way of realizing that divinity inhabits us and our community. A community that listens with the heart and grants itself the opportunity of listening in the manner of divinity listening my sisters and brothers. (Clerico Medina et al. 2020)

A key element of this space is learning to listen to others, knowing to remain silent if necessary and to keep company through silence or words, depending on what the situation demands. Those of us who participate in this space have to be willing to let ourselves be affected, to open our own mourning and emotions. There is no a division between those who listen and those who are listened to; everyone trades both in words and silence. In this sense, rather than listening through empathy, I find it more appropriate to speak about *vulnerable listening*, a term proposed by Andrea García, addressed in chapter 3. It is a form of listening that bonds us: "Vulnerable listening refers to connections: connections between

bodies, connections between multiple forms of violence. Vulnerable listening refers to openness toward other people, which entails all of the connected parts, where someone may be exposing their own experience, but the person who listens is also vulnerably responsive. Vulnerable listening implies being open to approaches and ideas that unsettle our way of understanding the world, internal questions, taking on responsibilities and the potential transformations all of this entails” (García 2021, 231).<sup>17</sup>

All of us who have participated in the Listening Community during these past years have seen our way of experiencing faith and spirituality become unsettled, as I discuss in the next section. What started as a space primarily moderated by axis members who had religious formation or a position within a church became a horizontal space in which all members—relatives and volunteers—handle coordination duties by turns. The ritual resources that are used depend on the moderators’ creativity. These can include flowers, candles, music, portraits, objects of the disappeared sons and daughters, even short videos found on social media that can spark a reflection. Virginia Peña—who weekly joins the space from Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz—shared how she feels about this community:

I really like the Listening Community, as there, I found the love of every member and God. I feel very relaxed when I participate, it has given me peace in moments when I felt alone. I also learn a lot through the shared reflections, as they always make me feel the love that joins as the brothers and sisters we are.<sup>18</sup>

This virtual space, created in the context of the pandemic, has continued after it abated and has become another meeting place to strengthen community ties. For some relatives, who are unable to actively participate in the searches due to health or job issues, the Listening Community has become a space where they not only find emotional support but also build a sense of belonging within the movement. Such is the case of Daniel López Villa, the brother of Juan Manuel López Villa, who disappeared on September 2, 2011, in Oaxtepec, Morelos. Due to his delicate health, Daniel was unable to join his mother, Gabriela Villa, in the activities conducted by the Regresando a Casa Morelos Collective, of which she is a member. Nevertheless, Daniel has become one of the few men who

participate each week in this space and help to keep it dynamic. He has taken on creative writing to share his reflections, becoming the Listening Community's resident poet.

In one of his texts, he expresses the meaning this community holds for him:

To me, the Listening Community is a space where you can express how you feel. It has been a very useful tool to continue the process entailed by the forced absence of a loved one. You are not only speaking to someone about your feelings, you are speaking to people who live a similar situation (pain cannot be the same, due to different factors: emotional bonds, kinship, the type of relationship, etc.). You feel embraced, there is a greater degree of trust than even with close friends. While I believe that people can be really sincere and support you, it is difficult for someone who has not known this kind of pain to give the sort of support as someone who has gone through the same experience. In particular, the Listening Community is a space where I could connect once more with my spiritual side. It gave me two great gifts: the first one was expressing my feelings and touching the hearts of other people who suffer the absence of a loved one; the second one is being part of a great family, which makes me feel supported and protected. It is also a space for learning, where I have found great role models, such as Sister Pao Clericó, Sister Sarai Hernández and Father Arturo Carrasco. It also gave me a great adviser in Mrs. Esther Pérez Ibañez, and many other volunteers who participate in this space.<sup>19</sup>

This "great family" that Daniel speaks of is a community that goes beyond consanguinity. It has been built not only during the searches, in a shared geographic location, but also through virtuality, where spatial distance has stopped being an obstacle to sharing feelings, bereavement, and hope. In this space, we have seen the emergence of spiritualities of social resistance that instill new political energy to keep the search going.

### *Resignifying the Meaning of Justice Through Faith*

The embodied theology that the women searchers have developed through their practices has destabilized many of the hegemonic

discourses on the boundaries between the living and the dead, expanding the rights of the deceased into the realm of academic and political debate.<sup>20</sup> Those who participate in the Eje de Iglesias y Espiritualidades have also created spaces to reflect on the limitations of punitive justice and to collectively think through the sort of justice they want to build. As pointed out in chapter 1, there is no single, permanent meaning for what “wanting justice” entails for the searchers. In many instances, the meaning of “wanting justice” changes throughout the processes of searching and political education.

Over a period of ten years, Janice Gallagher documented the transformation undergone by relatives of victims of enforced disappearance, who became citizens who demand rights, showing how political mobilization influenced their legal consciousness and their capacity to struggle against impunity. Through the reconstruction of the life stories of members of different searching families, she categorized the forms of legal consciousness as including people who are *in front of the law* and still believe that rules work if you know how to follow them and those who are *against the law*, as they have witnessed corruption and the inefficiency of the Mexican legal system, and thus, no longer expect anything out of the state. A third position is held by those who *strategize with the law*, seeing it as a game in which one must learn to move and, if possible, manipulate things to one’s advantage.

But legal consciousness, so carefully documented by Gallagher, does not include all of the imaginaries of justice built throughout the search process. While the state is an important agent (due to its direct and indirect responsibility with respect to the disappearances), its criminal procedures and its prisons are not what is demanded when the searchers ask for justice. As analyzed in chapter 1, when Las Rastreadoras de El Fuerte scream “We do not want justice, we just want to find our treasured ones,” it is, on the one hand, a self-care strategy that allows them to search in territories controlled by organized crime. But it also reveals a disappointment with the justice provided by the state and its security apparatus, which, in many cases, was involved in the disappearance of their sons and daughters. In this context, some of the women whose stories are documented in the book *Nadie detiene el amor* argue that justice means for violence to stop and for their loved ones and all young members of their communities to lead safe, free lives. The concept of “divine justice”

appears in many testimonies of devout women who express their faith in the perpetrators eventually paying for the evil they have committed. For example, Berthila, the mother of Alejandra Peña Beltrán, who disappeared on July 6, 2013, and whose body was found four years later in a clandestine burial pit in northern Sinaloa, reflected about her conception of justice:

After my daughter was delivered to me, they never told me if they would keep searching or not. The investigation is still open, but I have not been contacted again. I expect nothing from them anymore, I do not ask for justice, because justice is only imparted by the One above, I only hope for divine justice. He will put things in their place, He will grant the means for peace and tranquility to reach my soul. For me, true justice would be for all of this to end, no more young victims of disappearance and no more mothers like Manqui, like Mirna, and like me. For me, that would be justice.<sup>21</sup>

But we also find reflections and practices that look to build an alternative, worldly form of justice that stops violence. The “Restorative Circles” conducted in prisons are exemplary here. Fabiola Pensado is a member of the Eje de Iglesias y Espiritualidades and mother of Argenis Yosimar Pensado Barrera, a young man who disappeared in Xalapa, Veracruz, on March 16, 2014, when he was twenty years old, in the context of a police raid.<sup>22</sup> The conviction that this was a case of enforced disappearance has led Fabiola to distrust the security forces and the possibility of finding justice within the state apparatus, which is, at the same time, a disappearing apparatus. This is why Faby—as she is known among her friends—decided to accept the invitation of yoga teacher Luisa Pérez Escobedo, from the International Institute for Restorative Justice and Law (IIDEJURE), to participate in the initiative known as “Peace Circles” or “Restorative Circles,” in which the victims of extreme violence participate in exercises of restorative justice with imprisoned people who have committed high-impact crimes.

This proposal originated in the United States, in 2002. It was created by yoga instructor James Fox, who developed a method described as “a trauma-informed approach to teaching yoga,” which he started to apply in his classes with the incarcerated women at the San Quentin prison in California. The promoters of this method argue that yoga, as a

mindfulness practice, not only helps to cure trauma but breaks violent patterns of behavior. Once the incarcerated women have gone through a healing process with yoga, they are invited to participate in circles of restorative justice with the people they damaged or other people who have experienced similar violence. Since its creation, this program has expanded to 260 prisons all around the United States, as well as Australia.<sup>23</sup> In Mexico, this approach was introduced by IIDEJURE in 2017 and has been implemented in prisons in Mexico City, the State of Mexico, Morelos, and Veracruz, benefiting around seven hundred people.<sup>24</sup>

In one of her many travels for training in search strategies, Faby met Luisa Pérez, who introduced her to the “Restorative Circles” and, during the pandemic, invited her to participate in one of these exercises via Zoom. At the same time, Faby was participating in the virtual Listening Community. This was one of the spaces where she had reflected on the urgent need to build a peace culture that puts a halt to enforced disappearance and the multiple forms of violence that enable it. Fabiola describes her participation in this first virtual exercise, which took place on March 2021, as follows:

I insistently asked to God for strength and words to touch the hearts of the incarcerated men I would talk to. I remember that I began to pray and asked for help to touch their hearts, for this experience to be fruitful, even if I didn't yet know what to expect. Then, I joined the session from my house in Xalapa. I sat in front of the camera. Five men were there, as well as Luisa, who joined us from Mexico City. I talked to them and was unable to contain myself, I began to cry, as I was very sensible due to the anniversary of Yosi's disappearance. Then, I started explaining all we had gone through after the disappearance, how much this had impacted my family and the entire society [. . .] As we talked, one of them lowered his head and took notes. When he finished, he read what he had written. Listening him deeply moved me. I don't remember the exact details of his text, but it had very poetic words, written with love, deeply felt. Then, three other incarcerated men told their stories. I listened to them and found their testimonies moving. They recounted how they had suffered since their childhood. One of them told us he was forced to do things he didn't want to. His mother died and he had to take care of his grandmother. As he grew, the uncles who looked after him violently introduced him to their

trade: kidnapping. He told us that all he had lived through didn't justify the terrible things he had done, but that he wanted us to know how he ended up being the person he was. As the session ended, I spent a long time thinking, thinking about the humanity of those men. They were not robots, cold beings that only awake fear and distrust. They are people just like me, they are not that different. They also feel and suffer. But all of those thoughts were conflicting, as I reflected: How was Yosi guilty of the life handed to the people that damaged him? Yosi was a beloved son, a peaceful son. Then, this conflict spined around my head. I told Luisa, I already went and listened to them, now, what do I do with all these emotions? She told me that we had to work through this together, but I didn't have time, I still had searching to do and many commitments with collective.<sup>25</sup>

As social distancing measures loosened after the first vaccination campaigns, rules inside prisons also became laxer and the "Restorative Circles" started to be conducted in person. This time, the IIDEJURE team began to impart its yoga classes and "Peace Circles" in the Federal Center for Social Readaptation Number 1 El Altiplano (The High Plateau), also known as the Almoloya jail, Mexico's maximum security federal prison. This prison, located in the eastern State of Mexico, gained international fame as noteworthy drug dealers like El Chapo Guzmán and his son, Ovidio, have spent some time inside its installations. Fabiola was also invited to join this process. She decided to accept the invitation, despite all the warnings extended by her friends and relatives, who told her she should not risk going into such a dangerous place, where she could be "manipulated by bad people." In her testimony, she addresses all the negative imaginaries that exist about imprisoned people, more specifically, incarcerated men in high security prisons.

Moved by the conviction that God had placed her on that path to touch the hearts of imprisoned people, Fabiola decided to travel to the State of Mexico and go through the prison's complicated security screening, in order to share her testimony and put her *vulnerable listening* at the service of those who needed to verbalize the crimes they committed and to ask for forgiveness, as part of their healing process. This time, she was joined by two people who came from the United States and, during their time in prison, had found a path toward transformation through yoga and the "Peace Circles." They also came to share their testimony,

using their own lives as proof that it is possible to change and to heal the wounds left by the violence they both suffered and perpetrated.

Seven incarcerated men participated in this circle. Four of them spoke about their lives and the paths that led them to become sicarios. Fabiola listened, once more, to testimonies of mutilated childhoods, maternal abandonment, and child recruitment that moved her to tears.<sup>26</sup> She could confirm what she already knew: that the state offered no solutions to violence, that on the contrary, it was part of the “disappearing device.” With regard to this, she recounts one of the testimonies she heard at Almoloya:

One of the participants that day told us: I was member of so-and-so cartel, I operated in that zone and we operated this and that way. Before participating, they warned us not to be cruel when giving our testimony, that’s why I don’t go into details, as you have disappeared relatives and we can hurt you. I will just tell you that I did terrible things, I burned people. What I can tell you is not to trust the government: don’t trust attorneys general, don’t trust authorities, as we are their workforce, their henchmen. I am here not for the terrible things I did, but because I stopped working for the government, that’s why they locked me up here.<sup>27</sup>

While the participation of state security forces in many of the disappearances has been documented and denounced by several collectives, listening to a perpetrator saying it was very impactful for Faby. These complicities include the prison system and its authorities, as we could confirm during the visits conducted as part of the BNB, in which Faby also participated.

For Faby, the participation in processes of restorative justice has implied not only time and energy but undergoing emotional experiences she is still processing. She shared with me a long story, filled with details that she remembers clearly, about the verbal and body language of those who participated in these processes, the things that were said with words or expressed through gazes or tears.<sup>28</sup> She was particularly moved by the story of an incarcerated man who became a sicario when he was a child. He was betrayed and handed over to an opposing group by his own mother. Faby describes how this strong, serious man broke down and transformed into a poor child when recounting the maternal betrayal. At the end of the process, they shared a meal. The man approached her and said:

I didn't know what a mother's love was. But I listen to you and see in your eyes a lot of love. You speak of your son with a love that I never got, with a love that neither my father nor my mother ever showed me. Despite this, I don't blame them. Despite this, I don't hate them. Now I'm on a different process, thanks to this Circle that is helping me to transform. And believe me: your testimony, your word, has restored my faith. I believe, once more, in humanity, in the existence of a mother's love [. . .] I would like to apologize for all the damage I inflicted. I would also like to apologize in the name of the people that hurt you, and in the name of those I hurt, for all the people I hurt and all the things I did I would like to apologize. The people I hurt are not in front of me, but allow me apologize to them through you, and to apologize to you in the name of those who hurt you. I am sorry.

Faby adds, "That's what he told me, and I felt in my heart he was being sincere. I then understood the importance of participating, of having accepted the invitation."<sup>29</sup>

In her account, she shares how the doubts that her relatives and friends had sown in her diluted once she understood the importance of touching the hearts of these people. Ever since, she started talking to members of other collectives about the violence that affects us all, pointing out that perpetrators are often victims too. She also talks about the urgency of working not only to touch their hearts but to prevent more children from being recruited as sicarios, without the opportunity of being cared for or loved. At the time this chapter was being finished, Fabiola was preparing to participate in new processes of restorative justice at different prisons around the country. From her experiences in the "Circles of Peace," both virtually and in person, she has grown convinced that another form of justice is possible, one that heals perpetrators and victims, one that is not reduced to punishment and vengeance. In her assessment of this experience, she points out:

I am convinced that this form of understanding restorative justice plants a seed of peace. Some of the incarcerated men will never be released from prison, but those who will be freed one day, will come out as different people. I hope to contribute to that transformation. What I would like is for them to never damage another person, another family, society. This is my purpose when I accept to participate. I am moved by the possibility to

transform a life, rather than by the information that incarcerated men could provide about our disappeared [. . .] Now, it's clear to me why God gave me the opportunity of touching those hearts. If I ever help one of those people to change, if my testimony deters them from inflicting damage again, that would be an achievement for me. Now, it's clearer to me why I do it, I'm no longer conflicted. This whole process has filled me with hope.<sup>30</sup>

At the same time that the consciousness of perpetrators is being transformed through this model of restorative justice—which is impossible to measure through the means of qualitative research—Fabiola tells me that in the process she has obtained information on the whereabouts of disappeared and clandestine burial sites. Above all, she feels that her efforts to build a culture of peace, as defended by the BNB, have found a path that contributes to stopping the violence that halted the dreams and life projects of her son, Argenis Yosimar.

It is true that Fabiola Pensado's experience is an extraordinary case, as many other female searchers still consider prison and punishment as the means to obtain justice; however, spaces for reflection on other forms of justice have opened. Dialogues with formerly imprisoned women—like the ones analyzed in chapter 3, with the Colectiva Editorial Hermanas en la Sombra—make us think about building a form of justice that restores a social fabric that has been torn, as well as providing spiritual peace to those who live the continuous torture of disappearance.<sup>31</sup>

### *Affective and Affected in Our Own Spiritualities*

I do not want to finish this chapter without addressing the way in which those of us who have walked alongside the searching families as part of the Eje de Iglesias y Espiritualidades have been impacted by their theological praxis in our own spiritual conceptions and faith experiences. I am interested in documenting the way our own religious belief systems and spiritual practices have been “affected,” including for those of us who were agnostic and those who were pastoral agents or ministers of some religious tradition.

As I have pointed out in other parts of this book, I do not pretend to make a distant, objective description of the processes I analyze. Following

the epistemic and methodological tradition of French Algerian anthropologist Jeanne Favret-Saada, I have let myself be affected by the searchers' practices and experiences of faith. Favret-Saada confronted the positivist academia of her time by proposing a way of doing ethnography that "lets ourselves be affected" when living and experimenting the realities we meddle into as ethnographers. This goes a step beyond "participant observation," by allowing us to feel and listen to our emotions as part of the epistemic dialogue we establish with the social agents we work with.<sup>32</sup>

As a feminist, I have been trained in a profoundly anticlerical academic and political tradition, in which the critique against the patriarchal ideologies and violence of Christian institutions has been very important, both in theoretical works and in feminist activism.<sup>33</sup> This political and intellectual genealogy made me grow apart from religious spaces, other than my participation in family celebrations such as Christmas, weddings, christenings, etc. Nevertheless, the dialogues and solidary accompaniment I have engaged in with the families of victims of enforced disappearance have "brought me back to the path of faith."

Acknowledging the risks entailed by writing about these topics in academia, I consider that it is ethically and epistemically necessary to situate my knowledge about spirituality from my own faith experience. I do not mean faith in a masculine, white God who punishes those who do not follow his precepts, but faith in a divine and vital force that moves us and has physical and metaphysical manifestations. In the worldly plane, this is expressed through the loving, life-caring practices we have addressed in this book. It also has spiritual manifestations that cannot always be explained by positivist, scientific epistemologies. As touched upon in chapter 2, in dialogue with Belgian philosopher Vincian Despret (2021), if we acknowledge the possibility of an existence that goes beyond materiality, we would have to acknowledge that there are forms of communication that are not conveyed through language or body.

In other sections of this book, I have documented the way in which the relatives of the disappeared have received messages from their loved ones, asking them to search in specific locations or to perform rituals in the places where they disappeared.<sup>34</sup> In the same way, volunteers have received nonverbal messages from the disappeared, which affect and mobilize us. In my case, the first victim of disappearance whom I affectively adopted and with whom I spiritually bonded was Diego Maximiliano

Rosas Valenzuela. He disappeared when he was just sixteen years old. I got to know and love him through the memories of his mother, Verónica Rosas Valenzuela, founding member of the Axis of Churches and Spiritualities. “Dieguito,” as we lovingly call him, was kidnapped on September 4, 2015, in Ecatepec, State of Mexico. Ever since, he remains disappeared. Perhaps due to Dieguito’s likeness to my own son Rodrigo when he was his age, or due to the close friendship I established with his mother, Diego began to visit me in my dreams, and his image became present during my swimming or meditation routines. He has turned into a loving presence in my life, who manifests himself when I least expect it. I started feeling that Dieguito adopted me, rather than me adopting him, just like he has adopted many uncles and aunts who search for him. A spiritual kinship has been established, which we cultivate in the ritual spaces his mother organizes either virtually or in person, on his birthday or the anniversary of his disappearance.

Afterward, others arrived in my life: Juan Carlos Martínez Hernández, through his little sister Heidy Alejandra, who lived with me and was my adopted niece for two years; Viridiana Morales Rodríguez, whom I got to know and love through the memories and texts about her written by her mother, Angie, and her sister, Karina; Ángel Saúl Muñoz, whose family lives abroad, so I have made sure he is present in public acts by wearing a shawl with his photo; Emilio Zavala Sánchez, whom I have known through the poetry of his mother, Esperanza; Argenis Josimar Pensado, who came to my life in the stories of his mother, Faby; Juan Manuel López Villa, who appeared in his mother’s dreams as well as mine, asking us to mark his place of disappearance with a cross; Alia Vanesa Uribe Calderón, a young Colombian woman who now has a lot of uncles, aunts, brothers, and sisters who search for her; Rosendo Vázquez Peña, who now has a grave where his mother, Vicky, prays; and many more whom I got to know through their mothers, sisters, or wives. Letting myself be affected by the memories that their relatives have shared with us, and by attending to their constant spiritual presence in the Listening Community, has been a way of building affectional bonds with them, of joining the spiritual and political community formed in this search.

Cristina López, therapist and yoga teacher, member of the Eje de Iglesias y Espiritualidades, shared with me how she experienced what we both deem “the way back to faith”:

Female searchers have made me return to spirituality, to believe not in a Judeo-Christian God, crucified, but in spirituality as breathing, inspiration, a spark of life, that is, body, flesh, words . . . They turn the screw of history, the official narratives of history, which come with the violence of death [. . .] female searchers have taught us to see death and the deceased from a place of loving strength. It is a love that makes them be. Many times, I ask myself: how could they think of doing that? It is the potential of love that makes them do one thing after another, which would be inconceivable. That is faith, I believe, a blessed leap of faith. How to do it any other way? The least expected way, they go to spaces of death, the most battered places, they go to those places and rescue what they love the most [. . .] they have to question the logic of violence to build a logic of love, to find those who have disappeared. A great power is needed. Some of them have stopped believing in God, but build a place that is closer to hope. When they cannot even count on God, faith remains. Prayers, rituals and words acquire a sense: it is not what they say, but the place where they say it from. Each prayer and ritual contain hope. If they believe, it is hard not to feel their faith. You will not go searching without hoping to find someone, their faith is contagious. From them, I have learned to have faith. Doing something, moving so that the reencounter happens, shatters the logic of violence and death, and places us within a logic in which love prevails. For me, that is redemption, something that tells us a different story. In spirituality, there is a redemption in which each prayer makes sense. Now, I approach spirituality from a different place.<sup>35</sup>

That which Cristina calls “a turn of history’s screw” is the way in which the searchers have taught us, through their embodied theologies, to see a humanity that prevails over violence and hate. The pedagogies of terror that aim to teach silence and to demobilize (Segato 2013, 2018) have been opposed by this logic of love, which, to some people, means redemption or salvation.

Destabilizing the theological discourse around individual salvation through the fulfillment of religious and moral precepts, this spiritual path has created new meanings of salvation that grow from a collective construction of justice. In this regard, Sandra Márquez, social psychologist and member of the Mennonite Anabaptist community in Mexico, points out that

I have learned to think about salvation from a different place. I believe that nobody must be saved alone, that is, we must all save each other, salvation as a collective matter, we must all transform what we have built. What some call sin, which is egocentrism, the hate towards one's neighbor, is confronted by transforming the structures of injustice. For me, that is salvation, to generate collectivity. From my perspective, that is what the Bible is about. I don't agree with other denominations in which salvation is individual and you, as a person, must be liked by God. For me, God is collective, I believe that God's justice restores, it doesn't punish. We must rethink these ideas through our Axis. How can we re-signify our own doctrinal perceptions? I don't think that anyone in the Churches Axis, or those who participate in the Listening Community, is thinking about doing good deeds to "win entrance to heaven." On this path, we have collectively learned to imagine salvation from other theological standpoints and spiritual practices.<sup>36</sup>

Usually, works in anthropology of religion tend to focus on the way Catholicism and Protestantism have impacted the life of Indigenous, peasant, and underprivileged urban communities.<sup>37</sup> That is, they focus on the impact of epistemic colonialism exerted by religious institutions, which have imposed worldviews, values, and meanings, often conjoined by material and cultural dispossession. Paradoxically, our colonized perspectives about "subaltern knowledge" make us think that the knowledge of the dominating group always prevails. Nevertheless, there are some studies of the way in which communities have transformed religious agents, unsettling their worldview and generating new knowledge through epistemic dialogues that are established despite the context of social hierarchies and power inequalities where they take place.<sup>38</sup> The testimonies given by the members of the Eje de Iglesias y Espiritualidades reflect this side of the coin: the way in which the embodied theology produced by female searchers has displaced many of the doctrinal principles with which pastoral agents/workers were inculcated.

Arturo Carrasco, Anglican priest and founder of the Eje de Iglesias y Espiritualidades, describes this displacement in the following terms:

For me, walking alongside the families of victims of disappearance has profoundly transformed me. Like in many other professions, clerical work helps, but field work radically deconstructs us; reality hits you in

the face and transforms pastoral practice. The rudiments of faith that they know, reinterpret and appropriate, enlighten us. I am convinced that these searchers are the *magisterium*. In terms of faith, we deem the pedagogic function *magisterium*; the *magisterium* is supposed to enlighten us so we can understand notions of faith. This is why I say they are the *magisterium*. There was an exam in the Pontifical University about disappearances. It was a thesis that addressed the topic. The defendant was asked why did she not cite the *magisterium*. She answered that the *magisterium* had not uttered a single word about the disappearances. After the exam, I approached the examiner that asked said question, and I told him that the searchers were the *magisterium*, that the teachings are there, where we must be, where we must look. Joining them, we can learn. In the process of putting one's body on the field, the answers to the theological questions we ask emerge. For me, the searchers have deconstructed all theological references. Now, I see those dusty books and I'm not even interested in opening them, they do not provide an answer to the concrete. Now, I turn my eyes to the *magisterium* of searchers, which is a work in progress, we must say this [. . .] but in them we have the opportunity to truly learn theology, to truly learn what loving God and one's neighbor means.<sup>39</sup>

Even without complete understanding—why father Arturo Carrasco considers what the searchers have as “rudiments of faith”—it is evident that his journey alongside the families has introduced new theological questions and has made him problematize what the Anglican Church, which he belongs to, understands as the *magisterium*.

For other members of the axis, female searchers have brought them closer to feminist theologies, not because the searchers openly question gender inequality or have a clear notion of the link between disappearance and patriarchal violence but because of their practices. These show the important role women are playing in the denunciation of the politics of death perpetrated by the Mexican state and in the promotion of a culture of peace. For Saraí Hernández, these life-caring practices bring her closer to what she calls “the feminine face of God”:

By walking alongside the searching families, the image I had of God has changed, I have found the feminine face of God. They have showed me this feminine face, the feminine and tender part of God, the part that is

composed of mercy, a God that speaks of justice differently, not with violence, but with opposite of it. It is not an all-seeing God who is magical and will solve all problems. The God that performs miracles is an image they have implanted us. For me, the searchers have demonstrated that the feminine-faced God still walks with the people, a God that walks and cries and suffers and rejoices and embraces the mothers [. . .] This God makes us form sororal and fraternal bonds, which turn us into a community. This God is not in favor of violence of death, on the contrary, he wants life.<sup>40</sup>

Not all members of the Eje de Iglesias y Espiritualidades share the same conception of divinity; however, we agree that, by walking alongside the families at the edge of burial pits, inside prisons, at the morgue's door, in protests, and at public rituals, we have felt the presence of the divine. This journey has transformed, in different ways, both our religious imaginaries and our spiritual practices. The group is heterogenous, with varying degrees of theological education and connection to the institutional structure of their churches. Circumstantial alliances have been established between the families and said churches. By adding the term *spiritualities* to the axis's name, we have embraced our diversity and acknowledged that churches are not the only spaces to honor and feel the presence of the divine. We have learned to walk together and respect our differences. Above all, we have learned to build a community with the searching families, placing their voices and experiences front and center.

### *Final Remarks*

The voices, experiences, and reflections of female searchers documented in this chapter reveal the way in which spirituality strengthens the political energy of women who resist and confront violence. What some authors have called resistance spiritualities do not emerge inside religious institutions, but despite them. Although liberation theology and the so-called preferential commitment to the poor influenced the formation of several of the members of the axis, their journey with the families has enriched their theologies and strengthened their commitment to peace-building.

In the case of collectives formed by the families of victims of enforced disappearance, their spiritual knowledge and practices have been expressed in the places where they search, opposing the impact left by violence—both in people and in territories—with life-affirming rituals that sacralize these spaces of death. Their testimonies, prayers, and rituals are part of what I have deemed the pedagogy of love, which teaches us to notice the presence of the divine in each effort to defend life and dignify the dead. When they scour territories in search of their disappeared relatives, or when they connect to virtual platforms to share their mourning and hope, not only are they building a community; they are also teaching through their practices to combat silence and fear. Therein lies the pedagogic value of their struggles.

This pedagogy of love is demonstrated in their prayers, their rites, their songs, but above all, in their loving practices of care toward the dead and in their commitment to search not only for their own sons or daughters but for all of those who are sorely missed. With contradictory identities that often reproduce traditional perspectives on the “feminine code of behavior,” they have destabilized the collective imaginaries that paint “victims” as “objects” of commiseration and emotional support. Instead, they take on a leading role in the ecumenical spaces that have been built around their searches. Opening up to a “vulnerable listening” has entailed, for the volunteers who form the Axis of Churches and Spiritualities, destabilizing our own epistemic privilege, either theological or academic. We had to acknowledge our ignorance in matters such as the pain of losing a loved one, or the strategies the families have developed to confront social suffering through faith. Their embodied theology has impacted the way many pastoral agents live their faith and spirituality, giving place to an ecumenical community open to learning, with members who put their bodies in the spaces where searches are conducted.

The dialogues between different forms of knowledge have been established with diverse social agents, enriching their critical reflections on justice and the origins of violence. There is not a single, definite position on punitivism, state justice, or strategies against violence; however, proposals of restorative justice are being developed, like the “Circles of Peace” that focus on dismantling violence and healing its effects, instead of punishment or vengeance.

Only by acknowledging the strength of their spiritual practices, and turning our eyes to the day-to-day nature of their struggles will we be able to understand the subtle and deep ways in which they are transforming our communities and confronting the politics of death that have enabled the disappearance of their sons and daughters.

# REFERENCES

- A dónde van los desaparecidos. 2018. "Mapa Sinaloa." <https://adondevanlosdesaparecidos.org/mapaestados/sinaloa/>.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1990. "Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?" *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 5 (1): 7–27.
- Actoras del Cambio. 2011. *Tejidos que lleva el alma: Memorias de mujeres mayas sobrevivientes de violación sexual durante el conflicto armado*. Guatemala: ECAP-UNAMG.
- Aguayo, Sergio, and Jacobo Dayan. 2020. *Reconquistando la laguna: Los zetas, el estado y la sociedad organizada, 2007–2014*. Mexico City: El Colegio de México.
- Ahmed, Sara. 2015. *La política cultural de las emociones*. Translated by Cecilia Olivares Manzuy. Mexico City: Programa Universitario de Estudios de Género-UNAM.
- Allier Montaño, Eugenia, Camilo Vicente Ovalle, and Juan Sebastian Granada Cardona. 2022. "Recasting History to Cast off Shadows: State Violence in Mexico, 1958–2018." In Mandolessi and Olalde, *Disappearances in Mexico*, 50–72.
- Almendares Maradiaga, Cesar Alejandro, and Carmelina Medina. 2016. *Plan de desarrollo municipal de villa San Antonio con enfoque de ordenamiento territorial*. Secretaria de Derechos Humanos Justicia Gobernación y Descentralización-Agencia de Cooperación Internacional de Japón (SEDHJGD y JICA) Alcaldía Municipal de Villa de San Antonio.
- Álvarez Velasco, Soledad. 2021. "Tránsitos irregularizados." In *Migración*, edited by Soledad Álvarez, Ireri Ceja, and Ulla D. Berg, 31–38. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.
- Angel, Arturo. 2020. "Colapso en Comisión de Víctimas por recorte: Despedirán a 60% del personal y no hay ni para renta." *Animal Político*, June 2, 2020. <https://>

- www.animalpolitico.com/2020/06/colapso-ceav-recorte-despidos-no-hay-dinero-renta.
- Ansolabehere, Karina, Sandra Serrano, and Álvaro Martos, eds. 2024. *Desapariciones y regímenes de violencia: Lecciones desde México*. Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas–UNAM.
- Ansttett, Elisabeth, and Jean Marc Dreyfuss, eds. 2015. *Human Remains and Mass Violence: Methodological Approaches*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Antillón Najlis, Ximena, ed. 2018. *Yo solo quería que amaneciera: Informe de impactos psicosociales del caso Ayotzinapa*. Mexico City: Fundar, Centro de Análisis e Investigación A.C.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1987. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.
- Aranguren Romero, Juan Pablo. 2016. “Efectividad del daño y desdibujamiento del sujeto: Aproximaciones a las narrativas sobre el sufrimiento en el conflicto armado colombiano.” *Revista de Estudios Sociales* 60:62–71.
- Araujo, Olga, Olga Bermúdez, and Cristina Vega Solís. 2018. “Sanación, cuidado y memoria afrodescendiente en el Pacífico colombiano: Las mujeres frente al conflicto armado.” In Vega Solís, Martínez Buján, and Paredes Chauca, *Cuidado, comunidad y común*, 111–22.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1999. *Eichmann en Jerusalén: Un estudio sobre la banalidad del mal*. Barcelona: Lumen.
- Arias, Arturo. 2016. “New Indigenous Literatures in the Making: A Contribution to Decoloniality.” In *Decolonial Approaches to Latin American Literatures and Cultures*, edited by Juan G. Ramos and Tara Daly, 77–95. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Aristegui Noticias. 2025. “Teuchitlán está por convertirse en el Ayotzinapa de Sheinbaum: Saucedo.” *Aristegui Noticias*, March 18, 2025. YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dw5soJPiq5U>.
- Arreola Piñon, Cinthia Gricell, María Guadalupe Contreras Pierda, and María Inés Gómez del Campo del Paso. 2016. “Efectos de la intervención logoterapéutica con padres de hijos desaparecidos: El caso de San Miguel Totolapan (México).” *Ánfora* 23 (40): 99–120.
- Aubry, Andres. 2011. “Otro modo de hacer ciencia: Miseria y rebeldía de las ciencias sociales.” In *Luchas “muy otras”: Zapatismo y autonomía en las comunidades indígenas de Chiapas*, edited by Bruno Baronnet, Mariana Mora, and Richard Stahler, 59–78. Mexico City: CIESAS.
- Ayala Martínez, Aranzazú. 2020. “Buscando nos encontramos: Una escuela para buscar personas desaparecidas.” A dónde van los desaparecidos, December 17, 2020. <https://adondevanlosdesaparecidos.org/2020/12/17/buscando-nos-encontramos-una-escuela-para-buscar-personas-desaparecidas/>.
- Ayala Martínez, Aranzazú, and Marcos Nucamendi. 2022. “La fe y la búsqueda de personas desaparecidas.” A dónde van los desaparecidos, December 22, 2022.

- <https://adondevanlosdesaparecidos.org/2022/12/22/la-fe-y-la-busqueda-de-personas-desaparecidas/>.
- Barahona, Marvin. 1978. *Honduras en el siglo XX: Una síntesis histórica*. Tegucigalpa: Guaymuras.
- Behar, Ruth. 2003. *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Behar, Ruth, and Deborah Gordon, eds. 1995. *Women Writing Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bell, Lucy, and Joey Whitfield. 2022. "La creación de una *archiva*: Feminismos descoloniales en la obra testimonial de Hermanas en la Sombra y Las Rastreadoras de El Fuerte." *Cartaphilus* 20:5–39.
- Bell, Lucy, and Joey Whitfield. 2024. "Narración y sanación: La sorografía y las nuevas formas feministas en la escritura de Leo Zavaleta." *Altre Modernità* 32:195–227.
- Bello, Martha Nubia, Elena Martín Cardinal, Constanza Millán, Belky Pulido, and Raquel Rojas. 2005. *Bojayá, memoria y río: Violencia política, daño y reparación*. Choco, Colombia: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- Benítez Manuat, Raúl, and Rut Diamit. 2010. "La cuestión militar: El golpe de Estado en Honduras como desafío a la democracia y el sistema interamericano." *Nueva Sociedad* 226:20–45.
- Beristain, Carlos Martin. 2017. *El tiempo de Ayotzinapa*. Mexico City: Editorial Amazon.
- Berlant, Lauren. 2011. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Boff, Leonardo. 2002. *Espiritualidad, un camino de transformación*. Madrid: Sal Térrea.
- Bojórquez/Riodoce, Ismael. 2013. "Malova, bajo la sombra del narco." *Proceso*, July 5, 2013. <https://www.proceso.com.mx/reportajes/2013/7/5/malova-bajo-la-sombra-del-narco-120512.html>.
- Bosh, Esperanza, Victoria E. Ferrer, Virginia Ferreiro, and Capilla Navarro. 2013. *La violencia contra las mujeres: El amor como coartada*. Barcelona: Anthropos.
- Bravo, Vanessa, and María de Moya. 2021. "Contesting the 'Bad Hombres' Narrative: U.S. and Mexican Media Diplomacy and Presidential Strategic Narratives about Immigrants." *Diplomática* 3 (1): 47–73.
- Brigada Nacional de Búsqueda de Personas. n.d. "Intro." Facebook, accessed November 10, 2024. [https://www.facebook.com/brigadadebusqueda/?locale=es\\_LA](https://www.facebook.com/brigadadebusqueda/?locale=es_LA).
- Brito, Jaime Luis. 2017. "Acusan 'venganza política' de Graco Ramírez contra Alejandro Vera." *Proceso*, November 12, 2017. <https://www.proceso.com.mx/nacional/estados/2017/11/12/acusan-venganza-politica-de-graco-ramirez-contr-a-alejandro-vera-194682.html>.
- Brito, Jaime Luis. 2021. "Brigada Nacional de Búsqueda halla 'campo de exterminio' en Yecapixtla, Morelos." *Proceso*, October 20, 2021. <https://www.proceso.com.mx/nacional/estados/2021/10/20/brigada-nacional-de-busqueda-halla-campo-de-exterminio-en-Yecapixtla-morelos-274314.html>.

- Burgos-Debray, Elizabeth, and Rigoberta Menchú. 1985. *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia*. Mexico City: Siglo XXI.
- Cacho, Lisa Marie. 2012. *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected*. New York: New York University Press.
- Calveiro, Pilar. 2021. "Disappearance and Governance in Mexico." *History and Graphics, Iberoamericano University* 28 (56): 17–52.
- Calvillo, Sofía. 2022. "¿Has visto a Jesús? El calvario de Maribel y José a 10 años de la desaparición de su hijo." *El Sol de Hermosillo*, February 21, 2022. <https://www.elsoldehermosillo.com.mx/local/has-visto-a-jesus-el-calvario-de-maribel-y-jose-a-10-anos-de-la-desaparicion-de-su-hijo-7893795.html>.
- Campbell, Maria. 1973. *Half Breed*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Camus, Manuela. 2012. "Fronteras, comunidades indígenas y acumulación de violencias." *Revista Desacatos* 38:73–95.
- Cantú, Silvano. 2016. "Evidencia de tortura y otros tratos crueles, inhumanos o degradantes." *Revista Resiliencia* 3:38–56.
- Casado, David, Alejandro Castillejos, Paola Díaz, and Ivana Belén. 2018. "Materializando la desaparición: La singularidad de sus cosas." *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* 9 (2): 237–51.
- Castillejo Cuéllar, Alejandro. 2009. *Los archivos del dolor: Ensayos sobre la violencia y el recuerdo en la Sudáfrica contemporánea*. Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, CESO, Ediciones Uniandes.
- Castillejo Cuéllar, Alejandro. 2017. *La ilusión de la justicia transicional: Perspectivas críticas desde el sur global*. Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Departamento de Antropología.
- Castillo, Jesús. 2021. "Cárcel de mujeres," *Cauce Legal*, October 1, 2021. <https://revistacaucelegal.com/2021/10/01/carcel-de-mujeres/>.
- Castro Cruz, Valentina. 2023. "Mujeres valientes." In Trejo Bizzaro et al., *Sanadoras de memorias*, 166–67.
- Centro de Estudios Ecuménicos. n.d. "Solidaridad y paz." Accessed November 12, 2024. <https://estudiosecumenicos.org/solidaridad-y-paz/>.
- Clerico Medina, Paola, Noe Amezcua, Daniel Otero, and Ilich Avilés. 2020. *Guía para la Construcción de una Comunidad de Escucha*. Available at <https://www.scribd.com/document/672382955/Guia-e-Infografia-Construir-Una-Comunidad-de-Escucha>.
- Clifford, James, and George Marcus. 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Clouthard, Glen Seard. 2014. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- CNN Editorial Research. 2022. "Operation Fast and Furious Fast Facts." *CNN World*, September 16, 2022. <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/27/world/americas/operation-fast-and-furious-fast-facts/index.html>.
- Colectiva de Intervención ante las Violencias (CIAV). 2024. *[Im]pericias: Una crítica feminista a la investigación de desapariciones*. Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón.

- Colectiva Editorial Hermanas en la Sombra. 2010. *Bajo la sombra del Guamúchil: Historias de vida de mujeres indígenas en reclusión*. Mexico: Colectiva Editorial Hermanas en la Sombra/CIESAS/IWGIA.
- Colectivo Uniendo Esperanzas Estado de México. 2023. *Narrativas de una vida suspendida*. Mexico City: Colectivo Uniendo Esperanzas Estado de México.
- Comas, José. 1986. "El odio a los 'gringos' se extiende por Honduras." *El País*, March 17, 1986. [https://elpais.com/diario/1986/03/18/internacional/511484412\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/diario/1986/03/18/internacional/511484412_850215.html).
- Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos [CNDH]. 2009a. *Informe en el que documentaba el secuestro de migrantes y la participación de funcionarios migratorios en la detención y soborno de los mismos*. CNDH.
- Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos [CNDH]. 2009b. "Informe especial sobre los casos de secuestro en contra de migrantes." Available at [https://www.cndh.org.mx/sites/default/files/doc/Informes/Especiales/2009\\_migra.pdf](https://www.cndh.org.mx/sites/default/files/doc/Informes/Especiales/2009_migra.pdf).
- Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos [CNDH]. 2013. *Recomendación no. 80/2013*. [https://www.cndh.org.mx/sites/default/files/doc/Recomendaciones/ViolacionesGraves/REC\\_2013\\_080.pdf](https://www.cndh.org.mx/sites/default/files/doc/Recomendaciones/ViolacionesGraves/REC_2013_080.pdf).
- Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos [CNDH]. 2015. "Atrae la CNDH investigación sobre el caso de Oliver Navarrete y de decenas de cuerpos encontrados en las fosas clandestinas de Morelos." *Comunicado de Prensa CGCP/353/15*. CNDH. <https://www.cndh.org.mx/documento/atrae-la-cndh-investigacion-sobre-el-caso-de-oliver-navarrete-y-de-decen-de-cuerpos>.
- Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos [CNDH]. 2017. "Recomendación no. 8VG/2017 Sobre la investigación de violaciones graves a los derechos humanos a la seguridad ciudadana y de acceso a la justicia en su modalidad de procuración, en agravio de las 49 personas halladas sin vida en el municipio de Cadereyta, Nuevo León." [https://www.cndh.org.mx/sites/default/files/doc/Recomendaciones/ViolacionesGraves/RecVG\\_008.pdf](https://www.cndh.org.mx/sites/default/files/doc/Recomendaciones/ViolacionesGraves/RecVG_008.pdf).
- Corral, Carolina, dir. 2020. "Volvete a Ver." Amate Films/IMCINE, June 10, 2020. YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOEBQO6Vmkk&t=40s>.
- Corral, Carolina, dir. 2024. "Sanadoras de memorias—video presentación del libro." March 22, 2024. YouTube video. [https://youtu.be/\\_ulQzuTVk3o?si=vohZn-T5FX78VFEq](https://youtu.be/_ulQzuTVk3o?si=vohZn-T5FX78VFEq).
- Corral, Carolina, and Magali Rocha, dir. 2021. *Llueve*. Amate Films/IMCINE. [http://www.amatefilms.mx/es\\_es/video/Llueve/](http://www.amatefilms.mx/es_es/video/Llueve/).
- Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos [CoIDH]. 2010. *Caso Fernández Ortega y Otros vs México Resumen Oficial emitido por la Corte Interamericana de la Sentencia del 30 de agosto del 2010* (Excepción Preliminar, Fonda, Reparaciones y Costas). CoIDH. [https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/resumen\\_215\\_esp.pdf](https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/resumen_215_esp.pdf).
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé W. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43 (6): 241–99.

- Cussianovich, Alejandro. 2007. *Aprender la condición humana: Un ensayo a la pedagogía de la ternura. Ensayos sobre la infancia II. Educando desde una Pedagogía de la Ternura*. Lima: Ifejant.
- Darder, Antonia. 2002. *Reinventing Paulo Freire: A Pedagogy of Love*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Das, Veena. 2008. *Sujetos del dolor, agentes de dignidad*. Translated by Francisco Ortega. Medellín: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- Davies, Douglas J. 1997. *Death, Ritual and Belief: The Rhetoric of Funerary Rites*. London: Cassell.
- De Hoyos, Elena, Marina Ruíz, and Aída Hernández. 2021. *Renacer en la escritura: Manual para la intervención feminista en espacios donde se viven violencias*. Mexico: Colectiva Editorial Hermanas en la Sombra/CIESAS. Available at <https://hermanasenlasombra.org/manual/>.
- De la Serna Alegre, Andrea. 2022. "Hacia una reflexión antropológica de las burocracias forenses y sus violencias en México." Coloquio Virtual Estudiar las Violencias en América Latina. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) e Instituto Mora.
- De la Serna Alegre, Andrea. 2023. "Las desoladas burocracias de la desaparición (o de la importancia de dar cuenta del desgaste y el maltrato institucionales)." A dónde van los desaparecidos, March 30, 2023. <https://adondevanlosdesaparecidos.org/2023/03/30/las-desoladas-burocracias-de-la-desaparicion-o-de-la-importancia-de-dar-cuenta-del-desgaste-y-el-maltrato-institucionales/>.
- De León, Jason. 2015. *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- De León, Jason. 2024. *Soldiers and Kings: Survival and Hope in the World of Human Smuggling*. New York: Penguin Random House.
- De Sousa Santos, Boaventura. 1998. *La globalización del derecho: Los nuevos caminos de la regulación y la emancipación*. Bogotá: ILSA/Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- Delgadillo, Ana Lorena. 2023. "Caravana migrante: El éxodo de los desprotegidos." *Aristegui Noticias*, December 27, 2023. <https://aristeginoticias.com/2712/opinion/caravana-migrante-el-exodo-de-los-desprotegidos-articulo/>.
- Despret, Vinciane. 2021. *A la salud de los muertos: Relatos de quienes quedan*. Buenos Aires: La Oveja Roja.
- Diario del Istmo. 2021. "Rosendo Vázquez tendrá descanso eterno: Entregarán restos a su madre." *Diario del Istmo*, October 28, 2021. <https://diariodelistmo.com/policiaca/rosendo-vazquez-tendra-descanso-eterno-entregaran-restos-a-su-madre-/50134274>.
- Díaz, Gloria Leticia. 2016. "Brigada Nacional y su infatigable búsqueda de desaparecidos." *Proceso*, April 18, 2016. <https://www.proceso.com.mx/reportajes/2016/4/18/brigada-nacional-su-infatigable-busqueda-de-desaparecidos-162825.html>.
- Díaz, Gloria Leticia. 2017. "Inicia este sábado la Tercera Brigada de Búsqueda de Personas Desaparecidas en Sinaloa." *Proceso*, January 19, 2017. <https://www.proceso>

- .com.mx/nacional/estados/2017/1/19/inicia-este-sabado-la-tercera-brigada-de-busqueda-de-personas-desaparecidas-en-sinaloa-177394.html.
- Díaz, Mónica, and Rocío Quispe-Agnoli, eds. 2017. *Women's Negotiation and Textual Agency in Latin America 1500–1799*. London: Routledge.
- Domínguez Cornejo, Matilde Margarita. 2024. "Violencia burocrática: El caminar de las mujeres en busca de sus desaparecidos en Guanajuato." In *Género y violencias en América Latina*, edited by Sarai Miranda Juárez, Maritel Yanes Pérez, Juan Iván Martínez Ortega, and Esperanza Tuñón Pablos, 137–68. San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico: El Colegio de la Frontera Sur.
- Durin, Severin. 2024. *Desaparecer en México: Una crisis humanitaria y forense sin precedente*. Mexico City: Colección el CIESAS ante los Problemas Nacionales.
- Dziuban, Zuzanna. 2022. *Mapping the Forensic Turn: Engagements with Materialities of Mass Death in Holocaust Studies and Beyond*. Vienna: New Academic Press.
- EFE. 2018. "Jalisco utiliza un camión frigorífico para almacenar cadáveres." *Expansión*, September 17, 2018. <https://expansion.mx/jalisco-utiliza-un-camion-frigorifico-para-almacenar-cadaveres>.
- El Economista. 2025. "Sheinbaum rechaza señalamientos de la ONU sobre desaparición forzada." *El Economista*, April 8, 2025. YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2TBSq9APOeY>.
- El Informador. 2012. "Autoridades de NL descartan civiles entre muertos en Cadereyta." *El Informador*, May 13, 2012. <https://www.informador.mx/Mexico/Autoridades-de-NL-descartan-civiles-entre-muertos-de-Cadereyta-20120513-0110.html>.
- Emmerich, Norberto. 2013. "El narcotráfico en los territorios indígenas de América Latina." Available at <https://es.scribd.com/doc/194724881/El-narcotrafico-en-los-territorios-indigenas-de-America-Latina>.
- Enamorado, Ana, and Sandra Odeth Gerardo. 2022. "Que nadie más pase doce años buscando a su hijo: La búsqueda inmediata de personas migrantes." A dónde van los desaparecidos, August 10, 2022. <https://adondevanlosdesaparecidos.org/2022/08/10/que-nadie-mas-pase-doce-anos-buscando-a-su-hijo-la-busqueda-inmediata-de-personas-migrantes/>.
- Engelke, Matthew. 2019. "The Anthropology of Death Revisited." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 48 (1): 29–44.
- Eje de Iglesias y Comunidades de Fe. 2020. *Las bienaventuranzas para las familias buscadoras en el marco del Encuentro Anual de la Red de Enlaces Nacionales*. Mexico: Red de Enlaces Nacionales.
- Escobar, Amalia, Sandra Tovar, and Ana Garcés. 2023. "Proliferan los colectivos de buscadoras: Hay 234 en el país." *El Universal*, August 1, 2023. <https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/estados/prolifera-los-colectivos-de-buscadoras-hay-234-en-el-pais/>.
- Escutia Girón, Omar, and María Fernanda Gutiérrez Figueroa. 2022. "Entre el bordado y la escritura, la elaboración de lo textual: El caso de Bordando por La Paz." *Revista EDUCA UMCH* 19:129–137.

- Espino, Saúl. 2019. "Feminismo católico en México: La historia del CIDHAL y sus redes transnacionales (c. 1960–1990)." PhD diss., El Colegio de México.
- Espinosa Damián, Gisela. 2015. "Reseña de *Senti-pensar el género. Perspectivas desde los pueblos originarios*, coordinado por Georgina Méndez T., Guadalajara, Jal.: Red Interdis de Investigaciones de los Pueblos Indios de México A.C./Taller Editorial La Casa del Mago/Red de Feminismos Descoloniales, 2013." *Estudios Latinoamericanos* 36:151–55.
- Estévez López, Ariadna. 2015. "La crisis de derechos humanos y el dispositivo de administración del sufrimiento: Necropolítica pública de víctimas, defensores y periodistas." *El Cotidiano* 194:7–17. [Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana Unidad Azcapotzalco]
- Estrada Maldonado, Sandra. 2024. "Madres buscadoras de Guanajuato: Resistencia y memoria en contextos de violencia." PhD diss., UAM-I, Mexico City.
- Excelsior. 2012. "Cimbran a NL 49 cadáveres tirados: Investigan ajustes de cuentas." *Excelsior*, May 14, 2012. <https://www.excelsior.com.mx/2012/05/14/nacional/833869>.
- Fassin, Didier. 2008. "The Humanitarian Politics of Testimony: Subjectification through Trauma in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict." *Cultural Anthropology* 23 (3): 531–58.
- Fassin, Didier, and Richard Rechtman. 2009. *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Favret-Saada, Jeanne. 1990. "Être affecté." *Gradhiva, Revue d'Histoire et d'Archives de l'Anthropologie* 8:3–9.
- Fernández Menéndez, Jorge. 2002. *El otro poder: Las redes de la política, la violencia y el narcotráfico en México*. Mexico City: Editorial Aguilar.
- Fernández Menéndez, Jorge. 2003. "Exoneran a Carrillo Olea." *Proceso*, February 17, 2003. <https://www.proceso.com.mx/nacional/2003/2/17/exoneran-carrillo-olea-73356.html>.
- Fernández Menéndez, Jorge. 2022. "Narcopolítica en Morelos: Historia de dos décadas." *Excelsior*, 2022. <https://www.excelsior.com.mx/opinion/jorge-fernandez-menendez/narcopolitica-en-morelos-historia-de-dos-decadas/1493926>.
- Ferrándiz, Francisco. 2014. *El pasado bajo tierra: Exhumaciones contemporáneas de la Guerra Civil*. Barcelona: Anthropos.
- Ferri, Pablo. 2016. "Una fiscalía en México pierde el cadáver de un joven y demanda a su madre." *El País*, May 18, 2016. [https://elpais.com/internacional/2016/05/18/mexico/1463593914\\_627648.html](https://elpais.com/internacional/2016/05/18/mexico/1463593914_627648.html).
- Fiscalía General de la República. 2015. "Protocolo para el tratamiento e identificación forense." Gobierno de México, October 15, 2015. <https://www.gob.mx/fgr/documentos/protocolo-para-el-tratamiento-e-identificacion-forense>.
- Flores, René D., and Ariela Schachter. 2019. "Examining Americans' Stereotypes about Immigrant Illegality." *Contexts* 18 (2): 36–41.
- Fontein, J., and J. Harries. 2009. "Report of the 'Bones Collective.'" Presented at the workshop "What Lies Beneath: Exploring the Affective Presence and Emotive Materiality of Human Bones." University of Edinburgh, December 4–5, 2008.

- Franco, Jean. 2013. *Cruel Modernity*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Franco Miguez, Darwin. 2019. "Tecnologías de esperanza: Apropiaciones tecnopolíticas para la búsqueda de personas desaparecidas en México: El caso de Las Rastreadoras de El Fuerte." *Comunicación y sociedad* 16:1–29.
- Fregoso, Rosa-Linda. 2023. *The Force of Witness/Contra Feminicide*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Freire, Paulo. 1992. *Pedagogía de la esperanza: Un encuentro con la pedagogía del oprimido*. Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores.
- Foucault, Michael. 1991. *Microfísica del poder*. Madrid: Las Ediciones de la Piqueta.
- Gallagher, Janice K. 2022. *Bootstrap Justice: The Search for Mexico's Disappeared*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gandhi, Debu, Ben Greenho, and Nick Wilson. 2025. "Trump's Rash Immigration Actions Place Cruelty and Spectacle above Security." Center for American Progress, February 27, 2025. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/trumps-rash-immigration-actions-place-cruelty-and-spectacle-above-security/>.
- García Castillo, Zoraida. 2020. "La otra emergencia que no para en tiempo de Covid-19." A dónde van los desaparecidos, May 21, 2020. <https://adondevanlosdesaparecidos.org/2020/05/21/la-otra-emergencia-que-no-para-en-tiempos-de-covid-19/>.
- García de la Rosa, Andrea. 2023. "A mis pequeñas manos." In Trejo Bizarro et al., *Sanadoras de memorias*, 38.
- García González, Andrea. 2022. "Del sufrimiento en disputa a la escucha vulnerable: Exploraciones sobre reconocimiento, encuentros y memoria en el caso Vasco." *Revista de Antropología Social* 31 (2): 223–37.
- García González, Andrea. 2023. *Calla y olvida: Violencias, conflicto Vasco y escucha vulnerable como propuesta feminista*. Spain: Editorial Katakarak.
- Gatti, Gabriel. 2022. "Cartografía de las nuevas formas de desaparición." *Disparidades: Revista de Antropología* 77 (2): 1–26.
- Gaussens, Pierre. 2020. "La organización del crimen: Delincuentes y caciques en tiempos de 'guerra al narco'." *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales* 65 (240): 119–45.
- Geldres González, C. 2016. "Zonas grises del peritaje antropológico en materia de derecho ordinario e indígena en los países andinos." *Revista in Jure Anáhuac Mayab* 4 (8): 85–114.
- Gerardo Pérez, Sandra Odeth. 2024. "Desbordar fronteras, desbordar violencias: Comunidades político afectivas frente a violencias sufridas por personas migrantes hondureñas en México. La comunidad alrededor de la masacre de Cadereyta." PhD diss., Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social.
- Gilligan, Carol. 2013. *La ética del cuidado*. Barcelona: Cuadernos de la Fundació Víctor Grífols i Lucas.
- Girardi, Enzo. 2019. "Capitalismo necropolítico y razón tecnoliberal: Encrucijada y distopía en América Latina." Paper presented at the First Congreso Internacional de Ciencias Humanas, Humanidades entre pasado y futuro: Escuela de Humanidades, Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Gral. San Martín.

- Gobierno del Estado de Sinaloa. 2023. "El Centro de Identificación Humana es un compromiso cumplido del Gobernador Rocha en Colectivos de personas con familiares desaparecidos: Inzunza Cázarez." Sinaloa.gob, June 5, 2023. <https://sinaloa.gob.mx/el-centro-de-identificacion-humana-es-un-compromiso-cumplido-del-gobernador-rocha-con-colectivos-de-personas-con-familiares-desaparecidos-inzunza-cazare/>.
- Gómez Correal, Diana. 2022. "Memoria profunda: Expresiones y trayectorias del sufrimiento social en Colombia." *Revista de Antropología Social* 31 (2): 185–200.
- Gordillo-García, Johan. 2022. "Resonant Frames, but Failed Alliances: The Upward Scale Shift of the Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity." *Contention: The Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Protest* 10 (2): 56–82.
- Guerriero, Leila. 2008. "Trail of Bones." *Gatopardo*, no. 88 (April 2008).
- Guerriero, Leila. 2020. *Frutos extraños*. Buenos Aires: Alfaguara.
- Guillén, Alejandra, and Diego Petersen. 2019. "El regreso del infierno: Los desaparecidos que están vivos." A dónde van los desaparecidos, February 4, 2019. <https://adondevanlosdesaparecidos.org/2019/02/04/los-desaparecidos-que-estan-vivos/>.
- Guillén, Beatriz. 2024. "Mueren otras tres mujeres dentro del Cefereso 16, 'el Cementerio para vivas' de Morelos." *El País*, August 23, 2024. <https://elpais.com/mexico/2024-08-23/mueren-otras-tres-mujeres-dentro-del-cefereso-16-el-cementerio-para-vivas-de-morelos.html#:~:text=En%20menos%20de%20tres%20meses,esta%20c%C3%A1rcel%20federal%20de%20Morelos.>
- Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 4 (3): 575–99.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. 2004. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: Penguin.
- Harper, Sheila. 2010. "The Social Agency of Dead Bodies." *Mortality* 15 (4): 308–22.
- Hernández, Edith. 2023. "Israel resplandece debajo de la tierra." In Trejo Bizarro et al., *Sanadoras de memorias*, 157–60.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aida. 1998. "Indígenas y religiosas en Chiapas: ¿Una nueva teología india desde las mujeres?" *Cristianismo y sociedad* 35 (137): 32–55.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aida. 2001a. *Histories and Stories from Chiapas: Border Identities in Southern Mexico*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aida. 2001b. *La otra frontera: Identidades múltiples en el Chiapas poscolonial*. Miguel Ángel Porrúa, Mexico: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aida. 2006. *Historias a dos voces: Testimonios de violencias y resistencias de mujeres indígenas*. Morelia, Michoacán, Mexico: Instituto de Cultura de Michoacán.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aida. 2008a. *Etnografías e historias de resistencia: Mujeres indígenas, procesos organizativos y nuevas identidades políticas*. Mexico City: CIESAS-Porrúa.

- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aida. 2008b. "Indígenas y teología india: Límites y aportaciones a las luchas de las mujeres indígenas." In *Religión y género: Enciclopedia Iberoamericana de las religiones*, edited by Sylvia Marcos, 319–36. Madrid: Editorial Trotta.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aida. 2013. "¿Del estado multicultural al estado penal? Mujeres indígenas presas y criminalización de la pobreza en México." In *Justicias indígenas y estado: Violencias contemporáneas*, edited by Teresa Sierra Camacho, Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo, and Rachel Sieder, 299–338. Mexico City: FLACSO / CIESAS.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2016a. "Curso de Especialidad Epistemologías de descolonización, identidad y poder." Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social: Maestría en Antropología.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2016b. "Feminist Activist Research and Intercultural Dialogs." In *Ethnographic Collaborations in Latin America: The Effects of Globalization*, edited by H. C. Buechler and J. C. Nash, 25–48. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2016c. "Los secretos de Michapa: Privatización y violencia carcelaria." *La Jornada*, September 1, 2016. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/2016/09/01/opinion/018a2pol>.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2016d. *Multiple Injustices: Indigenous Women, Law, and Political Struggle in Latin America*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2018. "Retos y posibilidades de los *Peritajes* antropológicos: Reflexiones desde la experiencia mexicana." *Abya-Yala: Revista sobre Acesso à Justiça e Direitos nas Américas* 2 (2): 57–85.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2019a. "La antropología jurídica feminista y sus aportes al trabajo forense con familiares de desaparecidos alianzas y colaboraciones con Las Rastreadoras de El Fuerte." *Abya-Yala: Revista sobre Acesso à Justiça e Direitos nas Américas* 3 (2): 94–119.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2019b. "Las múltiples ausencias de los indígenas desaparecidos en México." A dónde van los desaparecidos, April 25, 2019. <https://adondevanlosdesaparecidos.org/2019/04/25/las-multiples-ausencias-de-los-indigenas-desaparecidos-en-mexico>.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2019c. "Racialized Geographies and the 'War on Drugs': Gender Violence, Militarization, and Criminalization of Indigenous Peoples." *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 24 (3): 635–52.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2020. "'Putting Heart' into History and Memory: Dialogues with Tseltal-Maya scholar, Xuno López Intzin." In "Memory Worlds: Reframing Time and the Past," edited by Johama Vollmeyer, Francisco Ferrándiz, and Marije Hristova. Special issue, *Memory Studies* 13 (5): 805–19.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2021a. "Against Discursive Colonialism: Intercultural Dialogues as a Path to Decolonizing Feminist Anthropology." *Pluralist* 16 (1): 58–74.

- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2021b. "Comunidades de fe en la búsqueda de personas desaparecidas: La importancia del ecumenismo en la articulación de alianzas." Available at <https://www.rosalvaaidahernandez.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Comunidades-de-fe.pdf>.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2021c. "Etnografía feminista en contextos de múltiples violencias." *Alteridades* 31 (62): 41–55.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2021d. "Faith Communities in the Search for Disappeared Persons: The Importance of Ecumenism in the Articulation of Alliances." Available at <https://www.rosalvaaidahernandez.com/wpcontent/uploads/2021/12/Comunidades-de-fe.pdf>.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2021e. "La Brigada Nacional de Búsqueda removiendo conciencias." *La Jornada*, October 17, 2021. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/2021/10/17/opinion/013a2pol>.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2021f. "La pandemia de la desaparición en el 2020 y las mujeres-medicina." *Rompeviento*, January 5, 2021. <https://www.rompeviento.tv/la-pandemia-de-la-desaparicion-en-el-2020-y-las-mujeres-medicina/>.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2021g. "Las violencias burocráticas y la triple desaparición de personas en Morelos: los casos de las fosas clandestinas estatales ante la ONU." *Rompeviento*, February 22, 2021. <https://www.rompeviento.tv/las-violencias-burocraticas-y-la-triple-desaparicion-de-personas-en-morelos-los-casos-de-las-fosas-clandestinas-estatales-ante-la-onu/>.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2021h. "Prison as a Colonial Enclave: Incarcerated Indigenous Women Resisting Multiple Violence." In Speed and Lynn, *Indigenous Women and Violence*, 43–73.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2022. "Cronistas del Oprobio: Reflexiones feministas sobre memoria, desaparición y violencias contemporáneas en México." *Revista de Antropología Social* 31 (2): 239–52.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2023a. "Chroniclers of Violence in Contemporary Mexico: Feminist Reflections on Memory and Disappearance." In Huttunen and Gerhild, *An Anthropology of Disappearance*, 163–84.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2023b. "Clamor por la inocencia de María Luisa Villanueva." *Ojarasca: La Jornada*, August 11, 2023. <https://ojarasca.jornada.com.mx/2023/08/11/clamor-por-la-inocencia-de-maria-luisa-villanueva-7217.html>.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída, ed. 2017. *Resistencias penitenciarias: Investigación activista en espacios de reclusión*. Mexico City: Juan Pablos Editor.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída, and Daniela Mondragón Benito. 2024. "La pandemia en la sombra: Violencias carcelarias en tiempos de COVID19." In *Resistir en la sombra de la pandemia: Las violencias de género en México en el contexto de la COVID 19*, edited by Natalia De Marinis and Rosalva Aída Hernández. Mexico City: CIESAS-USLP.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída, and Mariana Mora. 2015. "Ayotzinapa: ¿Fue el estado? Reflexiones desde la antropología política en Guerrero." *LASA FORUM* 46 (1): 28–34.

- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída, and Héctor Ortiz Elizondo. 2012. "Asunto: Violación de una indígena Me'phaa por miembro del Ejército Mexicano. Presentado ante la Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos. Abril–mayo de 2010. Una historia de agravios y desagravios: El ejército mexicano ante la CoIDH." In *Boletín Colegio de Etnólogos y Antropólogos Sociales. Peritaje antropológico en México: Reflexiones teórico metodológicas y experiencias*, edited by Colegio de Etnólogos y Antropólogos Sociales, A. C. Difusión Empresarial, 67–81. <https://www.rosalvaaidahernandez.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/peritaje-ines-fernandez.pdf>.
- Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída, and Carolina Robledo Silvestre, eds. 2020. *Nadie detiene el amor: Historias de vida de familiares de personas desaparecidas en el norte de Sinaloa*. Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas.
- Herranz Herranz, Atanasio. 1987. "El lenca de Honduras: Una lengua moribunda." *Mesoamérica* 14:429–66.
- Herrera Gómez, Coral. 2012. *Los mitos del amor romántico en la cultura occidental*. Madrid: El Rincón de Haika.
- Hertz, Robert. 1960 [1915]. *Death and the Right Hand*. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press.
- Hesford, Wendy S. 2011. *Spectacular Rhetorics: Human Rights Visions, Recognitions, Feminisms*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- hooks, bell. 2018. *All About Love: New Visions*. New York: William Morrow.
- Huttunen, Laura, and Gerhild Perl. 2023. *An Anthropology of Disappearance: Politics, Intimacies and Alternative Ways of Knowing*. New York: Berghahn.
- Impunidad Cero. 2023. "Impunidad en delitos de desaparición en México." *Impunidad Cero*, December 2023. <https://www.impunidadcero.org/articulo.php?id=196&t=impunidad-en-delitos-de-desaparicion-en-mexico2023#>.
- Infobae. 2021. "Fiscalía de Tamaulipas identificó 4 de los cuerpos calcinados en Camargo: Dos mexicanos y dos guatemaltecos." *Infobae*, January 30, 2021. <https://www.infobae.com/america/mexico/2021/01/31/fiscalia-de-tamaulipas-identifico-4-de-los-19-cuerpos-calcinados-en-camargo-son-dos-mexicanos-y-dos-guatemaltecos/>.
- Infobae. 2024. "Narco reclutó a más de 31 mil niños y adolescentes en menos de 20 años, advierte diputado del PVEM." *Infobae*, March 17, 2024. <https://www.infobae.com/mexico/2024/03/17/narco-recluto-a-mas-de-31-mil-ninos-y-adolescentes-en-menos-de-20-anos-advierde-diputado-del-pvem/>.
- InSight Crime. 2024. "Cartel de Sinaloa." *InSight Crime*, March 15, 2024. <https://insightcrime.org/es/noticias-crimen-organizado-mexico/sinaloa-cartel-perfil/>.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística de Honduras [INE]. 2019. *Censos municipales de Honduras*. <https://www.ine.gob.hn/V3/imag-doc/2019/07>.
- Instituto Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas [INPI]. 2016. "Indicadores sobre la mujer rural indígena en México." *Gobierno de México* (blog), October 15, 2016. <https://www.gob.mx/inpi/articulos/indicadores-sobre-la-mujer-rural-indigena-en-mexico>.
- Instituto Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas [INPI]. 2017. "Etnografía del pueblo mayo de Sinaloa y Sonora (yoremes)." *Gobierno de México* (blog), July 12, 2017. <https://www.gob.mx/inpi/articulos/etnografia-de-los-mayos-de-sonora>.

- Isasi-Díaz, Ada María. 2004. *La Lucha Continues: Mujerista Theology*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books.
- Jelin, Elizabeth. 2002. *Los trabajos de la memoria*. Mexico City: Editorial Siglo XXI.
- Jelin, Elizabeth. 2007. *Formas de historia cultural: Un abordaje latinoamericano*. Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento.
- Jelin, Elizabeth. 2010. *Fotografía e identidad: Captura por la cámara, devolución por la memoria*. Buenos Aires: Nueva Trilce.
- Jelin, Elizabeth. 2017. *La lucha por el pasado: Cómo construimos la memoria social*. Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores.
- Jimeno, Myriam. 2010. "Emocoes e política: A vitima e a construação de comunidades emocionais." *Revista Mana* 16 (1): 99–121.
- Jimeno, Myriam, and David Arias. 2011. "La enseñanza de antropólogos en Colombia: Una antropología ciudadana." *Alteridades* 21 (41): 27–44.
- Jimeno, Myriam, and Morna Macleod. 2014. Interview with Myriam Jimeno. November 2014. Available at <http://mornamacleod.net/?p=767>.
- Jimeno, Myriam, Daniel Varela, and Ángela Castillo. 2015. *Después de la masacre, emociones y política en el Cauca Indio*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- Jimeno, Myriam, Daniel Varela, and Ángela Castillo. 2019. "Violencia, comunidades emocionales y acción política en Colombia." In Macleod and De Marinis, *Comunidades emocionales*, 33–64.
- Jusionyte, Ieva. 2024. *Exit Wounds: How America's Guns Fuel Violence across the Border*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Kearney, Michael. 1991. "Borders and Boundaries of State and Self at the End of the Empire." *Journal of Historical Sociology* 4 (1): 52–74.
- Kearney, Michael. 1996. *Reconceptualizing the Peasantry: Anthropology in Global Perspective*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Kleinman, Arthur, and Joan Kleinman. 1996. "The Appeal of Experience: The Dismay of Images: Cultural Appropriations of Suffering in Our Times." *Daedalus* 125 (1): 1–23.
- Koshy, Lisa, Marie Cacho, Jodi A. Byrd, and Brian Jordan Jefferson, eds. 2022. *Colonial Racial Capitalism*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Kros, Cynthia. 2015. "Rhodes Must Fall: Archives and Counter-Archives." *Critical Arts* 29 (sup1): 150–65.
- La Jornada. 2010. "Cuelgan cuatro cuerpos decapitados en un puente vehicular de Cuernavaca." *La Jornada*, August 23, 2010. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/2010/08/23/politica/010n1pol>.
- La Jornada. 2012. "Alerta en Nuevo León." *La Jornada*, May 14, 2012. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/2012/05/14/portada.pdf>.
- La Jornada. 2024a. "Familiares piden justicia por desaparecidos en varios estados del país." *La Jornada*, August 30, 2024. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/noticia/2024/08/30/estados/madres-buscadoras-de-morelos-piden-identificacion-de-cuerpos-encontrados-4473>.
- La Jornada. 2024b. "Rescate en Tamaulipas, obra de la fiscalía estatal, GN y las fuerzas armadas." *La Jornada*, January 4, 2024. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/2024/01/04/politica/003n3pol>.

- Labrecque, Marie-France. 1998. "Metodología feminista e historias de vida: Mujeres, investigación y estado." In *Los usos de la historia de vida en las ciencias sociales*, edited by Thierry Lulle, Pilar Vargas, and Lucero Zamudio, 27–52. Lima: Institut français d'études andines.
- Lagarde y de los Ríos, Marcela. 2005. *Los cautiverios de las mujeres: Madresposas, monjas, putas, presas y locas*. Mexico City: UNAM.
- Lagarde y de los Ríos, Marcela. 2009. "La política feminista de la sororidad." *Mujeres en Red, el Periódico Feminista* 11:1–5.
- Lagarde y de los Ríos, Marcela. 2022. *Claves feministas para la negociación del amor*. Mexico City: Siglo XXI.
- Levi, Primo. 1989. *Los hundidos y los salvados*. Barcelona: El Aleph Editores.
- Levine, Daniel. 1992. *Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Librería de las Mujeres de Milán. 1993. "El Affidamento." *Debate Feminista* 7:288–91.
- Lichter, Daniel, Domenico Parisi, and Michael C. Taquino. 2012. "The Geography of Exclusion: Race, Segregation, and Concentrated Poverty." *Social Problems* 59 (3): 364–88.
- Lobato, Cecilia. 2023. "Las mujeres que me inspiran." In Trejo Bizarro et al., *Sanadoras de memorias*, 58.
- Lomnitz, Claudio. 2005. *Death and the Idea of Mexico*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Zone Books.
- Loperena, Cristopher, Mariana Mora, and Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo. 2020. "Cultural Expertise? Anthropologist as Witness in Defense of Indigenous and Afro-Descendant Rights." *American Anthropologist* 122 (3): 588–94.
- Lorde, Audre. 1984. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Trumansburg, N.Y.: Crossing Press.
- Lorde, Audre. 2007. "Carta abierta a Mary Daly." In *La hermana, la extranjera*. Madrid: Horas y Horas.
- Lorusso, Fabrizio. 2022. "Desaparecer y buscar en Guanajuato: Respuestas colectivas frente a las violencias." *Korpus* 21 2 (6): 507–30.
- Loza Ochoa, Oscar. 2004. *Tiempo de espera*. Culiacán, Mexico: Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa.
- Lutz, Catherine. 1988. *Unnatural Emotions: Everyday Sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll and Their Challenge to Western Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Macleod, Morna, and Natalia De Marinis, eds. 2018. *Resisting Violence: Emotional Communities in Latin America*. Cham: Springer.
- Macleod, Morna, and Natalia De Marinis, eds. 2019. *Comunidades emocionales: Resistiendo a las violencias en América Latina*. Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia.
- Macleod, Morna, Mindek Dubravka, and Jorge Ariel Ramírez, eds. 2017. *Violencias graves en Morelos: Una mirada sociocultural*. Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico: Editorial UAEM.
- Maher, Mónica. 2013. "Spiritualities of Social Engagement: Women Confronting Violence in Mexico and Honduras." In *Religion and Politics in America's Borderlands*, edited by Sarah Azaransky, 119–42. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books.

- Maier Hirsch, Elizabeth. 1997. "Los mitos de la maternidad: El caso de las madres de los desaparecidos." PhD diss., UNAM.
- Maldonado, Salvador. 2012. "Drogas, violencia y militarización en el México rural: El caso de Michoacán." *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 74 (1): 5–39.
- Maldonado, Vanessa. 2023. "Devenires trans: De Cuba, Honduras y Guatemala ¿a Estados Unidos? Narrativas de trabajo sexual, migración y movilidad transnacional de mujeres trans en tiempos de las Caravanas." PhD diss., Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social.
- Mandolessi, Silvana, and Katia Olalde, eds. 2022. *Disappearances in Mexico: From the Dirty War to the "War on Drugs"*. London: Routledge.
- Marcelino Sandoval, Yinhue. 2022. "Visibilización de un sistema de justicia en crisis: Una experiencia de exigencia de verdad y justicia en Morelos." *Revista Electrónica de Psicología Política* 20 (48): 1.
- Marcelo, Yanett. 2023a. "Claroscuro/Toxihkohtilia." In Trejo Bizarro et al., *Sanadoras de memorias*, 68–69.
- Marcelo, Yanett. 2023b. "Escribe/ ¡Xtlakwilo!" In Trejo Bizarro et al., *Sanadoras de memorias*, 70.
- Mariscal, Andres. 2018. "38 balazos recibió el comandante Gerardo Amarillas en el atentado." *Debate*, July 3, 2018. <https://www.debate.com.mx/losmochis/38-disparos-comandante-gerardo-amarillas-exdirector-ssp-Ahome-asesinato-20180703-0183.html>.
- Márquez Olvera, Sandra. 2024. "Resistencias sociales desde las iglesias y espiritualidades ante la desaparición de personas en Morelos." In *Violencias y resistencias en Morelos: Una discusión en contexto*, edited by M. Macleod and I. Bastian. Centro Interdisciplinario de Investigación en Humanidades (CIIHU), Universidad Autónoma del estado de Morelos (UAEM).
- Martín, Alex. 2023. *Jojutla: 5 años de la no identificación*. [Documentary].
- Martínez, Fabiola, and Enrique Méndez. 2021. "Hay en México crisis forense: 52 mil cuerpos sin identificar: Encinas." *La Jornada*, December 23, 2021. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/noticia/2021/12/23/politica/hay-en-mexico-tesis-forense-52-mil-cuerpos-sin-identificar-encinas-3925>.
- Martos, Álvaro, and Elena Jaloma Cruz. 2017. "Desenterrando el dolor propio: Las Brigadas Nacionales de Búsqueda de Personas Desaparecidas en México." In Yankelevich, *Desde y frente al estado*, 75–127.
- Mazariegos, Hilda. 2019. "Mujeres metodistas en León, Guanajuato-México: Liderazgos en movimiento." *Revista Cultura y Religión* 13 (1): 24–44.
- Mbembe, Achille. 2011. *Necropolítica*. Spain: Melusina.
- Melenotte, Sabrina. 2021. *Mexique: Une terre de disparu.e.s*. París: FMSH/IRD/ANR.
- Mercado Benitez, Yadira. 2022a. "Educación para La Paz ante la desaparición de personas: reflexiones desde la experiencia de una buscadora (primera parte)." A dónde van los desaparecidos, October 27, 2022. <https://adondevanlosdesaparecidos.org/2022/10/27/educacion-para-la-paz-ante-la-desaparicion-de-personas-reflexiones-desde-la-experiencia-de-una-buscadora-primera-parte/>.

- Mercado Benitez, Yadira. 2022b. "Educación para La Paz ante la desaparición de personas: reflexiones desde la experiencia de una buscadora (segunda parte)." A donde van los desaparecidos, November 10, 2022. <https://adondevanlosdesaparecidos.org/2022/11/10/educacion-para-la-paz-ante-la-desaparicion-de-personas-reflexiones-desde-la-experiencia-de-una-buscadora-segunda-parte/>.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 1984. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Humanism and the University* 12 (3): 333–58.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 2008. "Bajo los ojos de Occidente: Academia feminista y discursos coloniales." In *Descolonizando el feminismo: Teorías y prácticas desde los márgenes*, edited by Liliana Suárez and Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo, 112–61. Madrid: Cátedra Ediciones.
- Moon, Claire. 2020. "Los derechos humanos de los muertos y sus familiares." *Observatorio del Desarrollo, Investigación, Reflexión y Análisis* 9 (25): 48–52.
- Moore, Henrietta L. 2009. *Antropología y feminismo*. Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra.
- Moore Shaw, Anna. 1974. *A Pima Past*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Mora Bayo, Mariana. 2017. "Ayotzinapa and the criminalization of racialized poverty in La Montaña, Guerrero, Mexico." *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* (POLAR) 40 (1): 67–85.
- Morales, Flavia. 2023. "Duarte, imputado por desaparición forzada: un caso 'en-deble' y con 'filo político.'" *Proceso*, January 20, 2023. <https://www.proceso.com.mx/reportajes/2023/1/20/duarte-imputado-por-desaparicion-forzada-un-caso-endeble-con-filo-politico-300668.html>.
- Morales, Nydia. 2023. "Miedo a la ausencia." In Trejo Bizarro et al., *Sanadoras de memorias*, 95.
- Morales Rodríguez, Karina. 2023a. "Para mis desaparecidas y desaparecidos." In Trejo Bizarro et al., *Sanadoras de memorias*, 89.
- Morales Rodríguez, Karina. 2023b. "Aceptando mi color." In Trejo Bizarro et al., *Sanadoras de memorias*, 86.
- Moshan, Martha, Ana Verónica Nájera, Daniela Mondragón, Lucy Bell, and Joey Withfield. 2024. "Sorority Inside and Outside as a Means of Survival and Resistance: Experiences of Women Imprisoned in Mexico." *Prison Service Journal* 272:41–49.
- Moya Domínguez, Marta. 2022. "Caravana de madres centroamericanas retoma búsqueda de sus hijos desaparecidos en México." *France24*, May 2, 2022. <https://www.france24.com/es/am%C3%A9rica-latina/20220502-madres-desaparecidos-caravana-migrantes-m%C3%A9xico>.
- Mücke, Ulrich. 2019. "Testimony/Testimonio." In Wagner-Egelhaaf, *Handbook of Autobiography / Autofiction*, 669–74.
- Muehlmann, Shaylih. 2024. *Call the Mothers: Searching for Mexico's Disappeared in the War on Drugs*. California Series in Public Anthropology, 58. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Murillo, Eduardo. 2020. "Exigen la renuncia de la fiscal en desaparición forzada de Morelos." *La Jornada*, July 21, 2020. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/2020/07/21/politica/008n3pol>.

- New York Times Magazine. 2022. "The Cienfuegos Affair: Inside the Case that Upended the Drug War in Mexico." *New York Times Magazine*, December 8, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/08/magazine/mexico-general-cienfuegos.html>.
- Nixon, Rob. 2011. *Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Noé, Francisco. 2020. "Mireya, es tus ojos cabe un mundo." Posted by Francisco Noé, September 13, 2020. YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHTsDcns95M>.
- Nordstrom, Carolyn. 1997. *A Different Kind of War Story*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Ochoa, Luis. "Hallan restos 49 cuerpos México: Gran ataque narco." *Reuters*, May 13, 2012. <https://www.reuters.com/article/latinoamerica-delito-mexico-idLTASIE84C01720120513/>.
- Oestreich Lurie, Nancy. 1961. *Mountain Wolf Woman, Sister of Crashing Thunder: The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Otero Hernández, Daniel Antonio. 2021. "La participación del Eje de Iglesias en las Brigadas Nacionales de Búsqueda de Personas Desaparecidas." In *Transformar sistematizando: Producción de conocimiento y luchas emancipatorias*, edited by Equipo DEI, 147–79. San José, Costa Rica: Editorial DEI.
- Paley, Dawn Mary. 2020. *Guerra neoliberal: Desaparición y búsqueda en el norte de México*. Mexico: Libertad Bajo Palabra.
- Panizo, Laura Marina. 2011. "Cuerpos desaparecidos: La ubicación ritual de la muerte desatendida." In *Etnografías de la muerte: Rituales, desapariciones, VIH/SIDA y resignificación de la vida*, edited by Cecilia Hidalgo, 17–40. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Ciccus.
- Pedroza, Estrella. 2021. "Mixtlalcingo podría ser una de las fosas más grandes de Morelos: Brigada de Búsqueda." *Pie de Página*, October 21, 2021. <https://piedepagina.mx/Mixtlalcingo-podria-ser-una-de-las-fosas-mas-grandes-de-morelos-brigada-de-busqueda/>.
- Pedroza, Estrella, and Heriberto Paredes. 2022. "Brigada de Búsqueda en Morelos logra primer hallazgo en medio de la precarización y el desdén de autoridades." *Pie de Página*, November 29, 2022. <https://piedepagina.mx/brigada-de-busqueda-en-morelos-logra-primer-hallazgo-en-medio-de-la-precarizacion-y-el-desden-de-autoridades/>.
- Pérez, Verónica, and Cabral Pacheco. 2018. *Frente a la desaparición forzada y la desaparición por particulares en Jalisco: La lucha por la verdad y la justicia*. Guadalajara: Centro de Justicia para La Paz y el Desarrollo-Cepad.
- Pineda, Ingrid Ahtziri. 2022. "#AMíMcuidaMarabunta: El caminar de las hormigas." *Pie de Página*, March 23, 2022. <https://piedepagina.mx/amimecuidamarabunta-el-caminar-de-las-hormigas/>.
- Pineda-Madrid, Nancy. 2011. *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juárez*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Piñón, Cinthia Gricell Arreola, María Guadalupe Contreras Piedra, and María Inés Gómez del Campo del Paso. 2016. "Efectos de la intervención logoterapéutica

- con padres de hijos desaparecidos: El caso de San Miguel Totolapan (México)." *Ánfora* 23 (40): 99–120.
- Pozos, Adriana. 2018. "Le Corps absent comme sujet politique: Le processus de construction des disparitions forcée au Mexique comme un problema d'action publique (1969–2018)." PhD diss., Quebec University.
- Pradilla, Alberto. 2020. "Así se destruyó el expediente original de la investigación sobre la masacre de Cadereyta." *Animal Político*, June 7, 2020. <https://www.animalpolitico.com/2020/06/asi-se-destruyo-expediente-investigacion-masacre-Cadereyta>.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. 2022. *Planetary Longings*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Prison Yoga Project. 2022. "20 Years of Service with Prison Yoga Project Founder James Fox." Posted by Prison Yoga Project, October 18, 2022. YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gaYIXN2IGbU>.
- Proceso. 2012a. "Piden no enviar a la fosa común a descuartizados de Cadereyta." *Proceso*, July 30, 2012. <https://www.proceso.com.mx/nacional/2012/7/30/piden-no-enviar-la-fosa-comun-descuartizados-de-Cadereyta-106336.html>.
- Proceso. 2012b. "Se atribuyen Los Zetas masacre de 49 en Cadereyta, Nuevo León." *Proceso*, May 13, 2012. <https://www.proceso.com.mx/nacional/2012/5/13/se-atribuyen-los-zetas-masacre-de-49-en-Cadereyta-nuevo-leon-102639.html>.
- Proo, Eleane, and Karina Bárcenas. 2021. "La espiritualidad como estrategia para resignificar la violencia feminicida en madres de víctimas." *Revista Interdisciplinaria de Estudios de Género de El Colegio de México* 7 (1): 1–31.
- PROYECTO del PHB para proceso de participación y fortalecimiento. 2020. "Protocolo Homologado para la Búsqueda de Personas Desaparecidas y No Localizadas." Gobierno de México. May 2020. [https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/551671/PPHB\\_Versi\\_n\\_para\\_fortalecimiento\\_5may2020\\_\\_2\\_.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/551671/PPHB_Versi_n_para_fortalecimiento_5may2020__2_.pdf).
- Publímetro. 2012. "Autoridades atribuyen a Zetas masacre en Cadereyta." *Publímetro*, May 12, 2012. <https://www.publimetro.com.mx/mx/noticias/2012/05/13/autoridades-atribuyen-zetas-masacre-Cadereyta.html>.
- Ramírez Cruz, Sofía. 2022. "Acompañar las búsquedas de personas desaparecidas con escucha y bordado." *Corriente Alterna*, February 2, 2022. <https://corrientealterna.unam.mx/derechos-humanos/bordado-erendira-ornelas-desaparecidos/>.
- Ramírez González, Paola Alejandra. 2022. "Política y (po)ética de vivos y muertos. Caminos para rehacer el mundo después de la desaparición forzada y la muerte violenta." PhD diss., Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social.
- Ravelo, Patricia. 2011. *Miradas etnológicas: Violencia sexual y de género en Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. Estructura, política, cultura y subjetividad*. Mexico City: Editorial UAM.
- Rea, Daniela. 2021. "Comunidades de cuidado: En la búsqueda y en la enfermedad." *Pie de Página*, August 23, 2021. <https://piedepagina.mx/comunidades-de-cuidado-en-la-busqueda-y-en-la-enfermedad/>.
- Reinharz, Shulamit. 1992. *Feminist Methods in Social Research*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- ReverdeSer. 2023. *Memorias para el future: Experiencias de ReverdeSer Colectivo*. Available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oxzpidJhfbXxuYFQezqa0SHXQXmHNDzN/view>.
- Reza Garduño, Lorena. 2023a. "Aprendiendo a vivir sin miedo." In Trejo Bizarro et al., *Sanadoras de memorias*, 109.
- Reza Garduño, Lorena. 2023b. "Desaparecimos todas." In Trejo Bizarro et al., *Sanadoras de memorias*, 108.
- Riaño-Alcalá, Pilar. 2005. "Encuentros artísticos con el dolor, las memorias y las violencias." *Iconos: Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 21:91–104.
- Riaño-Alcalá, Pilar, and Ricardo Chaparro Pacheco. 2020. "Cantando el sufrimiento del río: Memoria, poética y acción política de las cantadoras del Medio Atrato chocoano." *Revista Colombiana de Antropología* 56 (2): 79–110.
- Rivera Garza, Cristina. 2013. *Los muertos indóciles: Necroescrituras y desapropiación*. Mexico City: Tusquets Editores México.
- Robbins, Joel. 2013. "Beyond the Suffering Subject: Toward an Anthropology of the Good." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19 (3): 447–62.
- Robinson, Cedric. [1983] 2005. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Robledo, Carolina. 2017. *Drama social y política del duelo: Las desapariciones de la guerra contra las drogas en Tijuana*. Mexico City: El Colegio de México.
- Robledo, Carolina. 2021. "Crímenes de oficina: Producción masiva de cuerpos sin identificar en la burocracia mexicana." In *De las fosas clandestinas a la tumba vacía: Narrativas de dignidad y esperanza en tiempos de horror*, edited by Carlos Mendoza, Pablo Reyna, and Carolina Robledo. Mexico: Universidad Iberoamericana.
- Robledo Silvestre, Carolina, Lilia Escorcía, May-ek Querales, and Glendi García. 2016. "Violencias e ilegalidad en las fosas de Tetelcingo: Interpretaciones desde la antropología." *Resiliencia* 1 (3): 8–24.
- Robledo Silvestre, Carolina, and Susana Garrido Cedeño. 2017. "Vidas precarias vidas en tránsito: sin tierra para el llanto." *Desacatos* 53:150–67.
- Robledo Silvestre, Carolina, and Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo. 2019. "Diálogos entre la antropología social y las ciencias forenses." *Abya-Yala: Revista sobre Acceso á Justiça e Direitos nas Américas* 3 (2): 7–23.
- Robledo Silvestre, Carolina, Lilo López López, May-ek Querales Mendoza, and Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo. 2018. *Peritaje socio-antropológico sobre el contexto de militarización y graves violaciones de derechos humanos cometidas por el ejército en el marco del operativo conjunto Chihuahua, especialmente en el norte de Chihuahua y sus impactos comunitarios relacionado con el caso Alvarado Espinoza y otros vs. México*. File number CDH-14–2016/011. Presented before the Interamerican Human Rights Court (CoIDH).
- Rodríguez Aguilera, Meztli Yoalli. 2021. "Grieving Geographies, Mourning Waters: Race, Gender and Environmental Struggles on the Coast of Oaxaca, Mexico." PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas.

- Rodríguez Aguilera, Meztli Yoalli. 2022. "Reparación de la naturaleza en México: Racismo ambiental, en las lagunas de Chacahua-Pastoría, Oaxaca." *Alteridades* 32 (64): 23–34.
- Rodríguez Monroy, Angélica. 2016. "Mamá, ven por mí, aquí estoy." *Resiliencia* 1 (2): 52–56.
- Rodríguez Monroy, Angélica. 2023. "Las grandes sobrevivientes." In Trejo Bizzaro, *Sanadoras de memorias*, 134.
- Rodríguez Pacheco, Abel. 2024. "Ser cristianos frente a la barbarie: El Eje de Iglesias como agente del campo de la búsqueda de personas desaparecidas." MA thesis, Universidad Iberoamericana, México.
- Rodríguez Villasante, Tomás. 2017. "Orlando Fals Borda concepto sentipensante." October 9, 2017. YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGAy6Pw4qAw>.
- Rojas-Perez, Isaías. 2017. *Mourning Remains: State Atrocity, Exhumations, and Governing the Disappeared in Peru's Postwar Andes*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Rompeviento TV. 2024. "Desmantelan la Comisión Nacional de Búsqueda: Resumen informativo 04/ene/2024." *Rompeviento TV*, January 24, 2024. YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HuGUtGKHh7A>.
- Rosaldo, Renato. 1993. *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Rosenblatt, Adam. 2010. "International Forensic Investigations and the Human Rights of the Dead." *Human Rights Quarterly* 32 (4): 921–50.
- RT. 2019. "No te rindas': La otra resistencia de los familiares de desaparecidos en México." *RT*, December 27, 2019. <https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/338060-terapia-familiares-desaparecidos-mexico-sacar-fuerzas>.
- Rufino, Adriana. 2024. "Desenterrando verdades: Reflexiones en torno a la búsqueda forense y los procesos de exhumación en las fosas de Tetelcingo y Jojutla." A dónde van los desaparecidos, January 18, 2024. <https://adondevanlosdesaparecidos.org/2024/01/18/desenterrando-verdadesreflexiones-en-torno-a-la-busqueda-forense-y-los-procesos-de-exhumacion-en-las-fosas-de-Tetelcingo-y-Jojutla-en-el-estado-de-morelos/>.
- Ruiz Serna, Daniel, and Carlos del Cairo. 2016. "Los debates del giro ontológico en torno al naturalismo moderno." *Revista de Estudios Sociales* 1 (55): 193–204.
- Salinas, Concepción. 2023. "Soy guardiana de raíces." In Trejo Bizarro et al., *Sanadoras de memorias*, 147.
- Salmerón, Castro, Fernando. 2019. "Caciques: Una revisión teórica sobre el control político local." *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales* 30 (117–18): 107–41.
- Sánchez, Esperanza. 2023a. "A Chacahua." In Trejo Bizarro et al., *Sanadoras de memorias*, 138–39.
- Sánchez, Esperanza. 2023b. "El renacer de mi espíritu." Trejo Bizarro et al., *Sanadoras de memorias*, 142.

- Sánchez, Esperanza. 2023c. "Sanadoras de memorias." In Trejo Bizarro et al., *Sanadoras de memorias*, 143.
- Sánchez Parra, Sergio Arturo. 2011. "La Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre en Sinaloa. Los restos de un naufragio: 1974–1976." *Anuario de Historia Regional y de las Fronteras* 16 (1): 243–65.
- Sánchez Valdés, Víctor Manuel, Manuel Pérez Aguirre, and Jorge Verástegui González. 2018. *Formación y desarrollo de los Colectivos de Búsqueda de personas desaparecidas en Coahuila: Lecciones para el futuro*. Mexico City: COLMEX.
- Sandoval, Chela. 2000. *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Sandoval, Clara, Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo, Sandra Odeth Gerardo, Allang Omar Rodríguez, and Dilcia Lorena Vázquez. 2019. *Entre el dolor y la búsqueda de justicia, verdad y reparación: Peritaje sobre agravios y resarcimiento a las víctimas de la masacre de Cadereyta. Presentado ante la Comisión de Atención a Víctimas (CEAV) del Estado Mexicano*. Mexico: Fundación para la Justicia y el Estado Democrático del Derecho.
- Sandoval, Perla. 2024. "La desaparición forzada de Argenis: Una historia de impunidad en Veracruz." *AVCNoticias*, September 1, 2024. <https://avcnoticias.com.mx/reportaje-especial-veracruz/especiales-avc/358398/la-desaparici-in-forzada-de-argenis-una-historia-de-impunidad-en-veracruz.html>.
- Sanford, Victoria. 2003. *Buried Secrets: Truth and Human Rights in Guatemala*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sanford, Victoria. 2023. *Textures of Terror: The Murder of Claudina Isabel Velasquez and Her Father's Quest for Justice*. San Francisco: University of California Press.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy, and Peter Bourgois, eds. 2004. *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*. Hoboken, N.J.: Blackwell.
- Schwartz, Joan M., and Terry Cook. 2002. "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory." *Archival Science* 2 (1–2): 1–19.
- Schwartz-Marin, Ernesto, and Arely Cruz-Santiago. 2016. "Pure Corpses, Dangerous Citizens: Transgressing the Boundaries between Experts and Mourners in the Search for the Disappeared in Mexico." *Social Research* 83 (2): 483–510.
- Sección Otros Saberes LASA. 2021. "Vidas en búsqueda: Desaparición y luchas por las justicias." Webinar, moderated by Aída Hernández and Rocío Moreno. Posted by Sección Otros Saberes LASA, June 11, 2021. YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3toVSgnJl4>.
- Secretaría de Gobernación. 2023. "Ayotzinapa fue un crimen de Estado; funcionarios del más alto nivel son responsables de la verdad histórica: Alejandro Encinas." Gobierno de México, September 27, 2023. <https://www.gob.mx/segob/prensa/Ayotzinapa-fue-un-crimen-de-estado-funcionarios-del-mas-alto-nivel-son-responsables-de-la-verdad-historica-alejandro-encinas-346304>.
- Segato, Rita Laura. 2013. *La escritura en el cuerpo de las mujeres asesinadas en Ciudad Juárez: Territorio, soberanía y crímenes de segundo estado*. Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón Ediciones.

- Segato, Rita Laura. 2016. *La guerra contra las mujeres*. Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños.
- Segato, Rita Laura. 2018. *Contra-pedagogías de la crueldad*. Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros.
- Sekaquaptewa, Helen. 1969. *Me and Mine: The Life story of Helen Sekaquaptewa*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Serpaj México. 2023. *Así buscamos, así amamos*. September 30, 2023. YouTube video. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fINZp\\_WUvl4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fINZp_WUvl4).
- Sicilia, Javier. 2016. *El deshabitado*. Mexico City: Grijalbo.
- Siman, Yael, and Matthew Hone. 2024. *Victim Activists in Mexico: Social and Political Mobilization amid Extreme Violence and Disappearances*. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books.
- Smith, Christen A. 2016. "Facing the Dragon: Black Mothering, Sequel-ae and Gendered Necropolitics in the Americas." *Transforming Anthropology* 4 (1): 1–94.
- Solís González, José Luis. 2013. "Neoliberalismo y crimen organizado en México: El surgimiento del estado narco." *Revista Frontera Norte* 25 (50): 7–32.
- Speed, Shannon. 2019. *Incarcerated Stories: Indigenous Women Migrants and Violence in the Settler-Capitalist State*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Stephen, Lynn. 2017. "Bearing Witness: Testimony in Latin American Anthropology and Related Fields." *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 22:85–109.
- Stephen, Lynn. 2019. "Testimonio, memoria social y comunidades emocionales político-estratégicas en las crónicas de Elena Poniatowska." In Macleod and De Marinis, *Comunidades emocionales*, 65–92.
- Stephen, Lynn, and Shannon Speed. 2021. *Indigenous Women and Violence: Feminist Activist Research in Heightened States of Injustice*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Stepputat, Finn. 2014. *Governing the Dead: Sovereignty and the Politics of Dead Bodies*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Stoll, David. 1999. *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Tiscornia, Sofia, and María José Sarabayruse. 2004. "Sobre la banalidad del mal, la violencia vernácula y las reconstrucciones de la historia." In *Estudios de antropología jurídica: Burocracias y violencia*, edited by Sofía Tiscornia, 63–74. Buenos Aires: Editorial Antropofagia Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Colección de Antropología Social.
- Torres, Ernesto. 2015. "Culpa madre de un joven desaparecido al comandante Gerardo Amarillas." *Noroeste*, November 15, 2015. <https://www.noroeste.com.mx/buen-vivir/culpa-madre-de-un-joven-desaparecido-al-comandante-gerardo-amarillas-PINO906922>.
- Torres, Rubén. 2012. "Masacre de Cadereyta, ordenada por El Lazca." *El Economista*, May 21, 2012. <https://www.economista.com.mx/ultimas-noticias/Masacre-de-Cadereyta-ordenada-por-El-Lazca-20120521-0068.html>.

- Trejo Bizarro, Marcia, Aída Hernández Castillo, Valentina Castro Cruz, and Marisol Hernández del Águila, eds. 2023. *Sanadoras de memorias: Testimonios fotográfico-poéticos de violencias y resistencias*. Mexico: Colectiva Hermanas en la Sombra/Regresando a Casa Morelos/Cardiff University/IWGIA.
- Treviño, Martín Sánchez. "Rescatan a 32 extranjeros en tránsito secuestrados." *La Jornada*, January 4, 2024. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/2024/01/04/politica/002n1pol>.
- Troncoso Pérez, Leyla Elena, and Isabel Piper-Shafir. 2015. "Género y memoria: Articulaciones críticas feministas." *Athena Digital* 15 (1): 65–90.
- Tuck, Eve. 2009. "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities." *Harvard Educational Review* 79 (3): 409–28.
- Turati, Marcela. 2015. "Masacre de Cadereyta: Cuando el dolor es impronunciable." *Pie de Página*, May 12, 2015. <https://enelcamino.piedepagina.mx/historia/masacre-de-Cadereyta-cuando-el-dolor-es-impronunciable/>.
- Turati, Marcela. 2016. "Mujeres en tránsito por México." *Pie de Página*, February 2, 2016. <https://enelcamino.piedepagina.mx/ruta/mujeres-en-transito-por-mexico/>.
- Turati, Marcela. 2023. *San Fernando. Última parada: Viaje al crimen autorizado en Tamaulipas*. Mexico City: Editorial Aguilar.
- Turati, Marcela. 2025a. "Teuchitlán, el cruel montaje del 'circo del horror.'" *Proceso*, March 26, 2025. <https://www.proceso.com.mx/nacional/2025/3/26/teuchitlan-el-cruel-montaje-del-circo-del-horror-348145.html>.
- Turati, Marcela. 2025b. "Teuchitlán, el infierno convertido en camposanto." A dónde van los desaparecidos, March 20, 2025. <https://adondevanlosdesaparecidos.org/2025/03/20/teuchitlan-el-infierno-convertido-en-camposanto/>.
- Turner Martí, Lidia, and Balbita Pita Cespedes. 2002. *Pedagogía de la ternura*. N.d.: Pueblo y Educación.
- Underhill, Ruth. 1936. "The Autobiography of a Papago Woman." Menasha, Wisc.: American Anthropological Association.
- Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos [UAEM]. 2016. "Informe sobre las fosas de Tetelcingo." Available at <https://www.uaem.mx/difusion-y-medios/actividades/informe-sobre-las-fosas-de-Tetelcingo>.
- Valencia, Sayak. 2010. *Capitalismo gore*. Spain: Melusina.
- Valenzuela Arce, José Manuel. 2019. *Trazos de sangre y fuego, bionecropolítica y juvenicidio en América Latina*. Guadalajara: CALAS.
- Varela, Daniel, Miriam Jimeno, and Angela Castillo. 2015. *After the Massacre: Emotions and Politics in Cauca Indio*. Bogotá: ICANH/National University of Colombia.
- Varela Huerta, Amarela. 2017. "Las masacres de migrantes en San Fernando y Cadereyta: Dos ejemplos de gubernamentalidad necropolítica." *Íconos* 58:131–49.
- Varela Huerta, Amarela. 2020. *Necropolítica y migración en la frontera vertical mexicana: Un ejercicio de conocimiento situado*. Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas.

- Vázquez, Martín Eduardo, and Javier Sicilia. 2016. *El Movimiento por La Paz con Justicia y Dignidad*. Mexico City: Era Editorial.
- Vega Solís, Cristina, Raquel Martínez Buján, and Myriam Paredes Chauca, eds. 2018. *Cuidado, comunidad y común: Extracciones, apropiaciones y sostenimiento de la vida*. Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños.
- Verdery, K. 1999. *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Viezzar, Moema. 1978. *Si me permiten hablar: Testimonio de Domitila, una mujer de las minas de Bolivia*. Mexico City: Editorial Siglo XXI.
- Villalobos, Sandra. 2016. "Igualdad y trabajo pastoral: La experiencia de las mujeres en los ministerios religiosos ordenados y consagrados en México." *Revista Interdisciplinaria de Estudios de Género de El Colegio de México* 2 (4): 76–102.
- Villanueva, Roberto, and Jaime Brito. 2016. "Yo soy Oliver Wenceslao Navarrete Hernández, y también pensaba que a mi, no me iba a pasar nada . . . hoy, ya no estoy aquí, ¿y mañana, quién sigue?" *Resiliencia* 2:42–49.
- Villarreal Martínez, María Teresa. 2015. "Las mesas de seguimiento de casos de personas desaparecidas: Una experiencia de incidencia en Nuevo León, México." *Revista Enfoques: Ciencia Política y Administración Pública* 13 (23): 85–97.
- "Vivir Quintana—Canción sin miedo ft. El Palomar." Posted by Vivir Quintana, March 7, 2020. YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLLyzqkH6cs>.
- Vizcarra, Marcos. 2015. "Dan sentencia a ex policías por desaparición forzada: Es el primer caso reconocido en Sinaloa." *Noroeste*, November 16, 2015. <https://www.noroeste.com.mx/buen-vivir/dan-sentencia-a-ex-policias-por-desaparicion-forzada-es-el-primer-caso-reconocido-en-sinaloa-LBNO990319>.
- Vizcarra, Marcos. 2020. "Crisis forense: Cuando las funerarias suplieron al Semefo." *5° Elemento*, October 7, 2020. <https://quintoelab.org/crisisforense/crisis-forense-cuando-las-funerarias-suplieron-al-semefo/>.
- Vizcarra, Marcos. 2023. "Reconocen víctimas áreas de tortura en campo militar de Sinaloa." A dónde van los desaparecidos, March 27, 2023. <https://adondevanlosdesaparecidos.org/2023/03/27/reconocen-victimas-areas-de-tortura-en-campo-militar-de-sinaloa/>.
- Wagner-Egelhaaf, Martina, ed. 2019. *Handbook of Autobiography / Autofiction*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- West, Cornel. 1999. *The Cornel West Reader*. New York: Basic Civitas Books.
- Whitfield, Joey. 2018. *Prison Writing of Latin America*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Xantomila, Jessica. 2023a. "Aún no identifican 97 cuerpos de las masacres en Tamaulipas y NL." *La Jornada*, April 16, 2023. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/2023/04/16/politica/006n1pol>.
- Xantomila, Jessica. 2023b. "Continúa falta de reparación a 9 años de la masacre de Güémez, Tamaulipas." *La Jornada*, February 18, 2023. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/2023/02/18/politica/010n3pol>.

- Xantomila, Jessica. 2023c. "Tragedia de migrantes en Ciudad Juárez 'no debió ocurrir': Acnur." *La Jornada*, September 17, 2023. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2023/03/28/politica/tragedia-de-migrantes-en-ciudad-juarez-no-debio-ocurrir-acnur/>.
- Yankelevich, Javier. 2017. *Desde y frente al estado: Pensar, atender y resistir la desaparición de personas en México*. Mexico City: Centro de Estudios Constitucionales-Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nación.
- Zagaria, Valentina. 2019. "The Clandestine Cemetery: Burying the Victims of Europe's Border in a Tunisian Coastal Town." *Human Remains and Violence: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 5 (1): 18–37.
- Zermeño, Sergio. 1985. *México, una democracia utópica: El movimiento estudiantil del 68*. Mexico City: Editorial Siglo XXI.