

## ***Pizcando Sueños/ Harvesting Dreams***

The Voices of Mexican Migrant Women

Article Two in a Series of Five

### **“Crossing the Border”**



“..mejor no me hubiera venido de mi rancho, pero ya cuando [uno] lo piensa es demasiado tarde.”

“...better that I would have stayed in my rancho, but by the time you think about it, it's already too late.”

Immigrant crossings at the Mexican-US border have been documented in both truth and fiction. Their journey reflects a breadth of experiences, government policies, dreams and realities. From the simplest crossing by foot at a border checkpoint, fake passport in hand, to the life-threatening midnight hold-ups by *cholos*, the women of *Pizcando Sueños* have learned to put their past aside as they move into the motions of work and survival.

The *Pizcando Sueños* project has documented the journey to Florida by twenty Mexican farmworking women. We desire to preserve the women's deeply profound beliefs as well as give voice to these women as they share their struggles. What follows are women's snap-shots on their decisions made to cross the border, the crossing itself and their arrival in *el norte*. These brief spoken images tell us much about the strength and hope of Mexican Farmworking women and their families.

### **La decisión de venir/The Decision to Come**

*“... mi decisión de venir acá fue que veía a mis padres tan pobres, el niño mucho se me enfermaba, él mucho lloraba queriendo de comer y no había que darle de comer ...”*

"...my decision to come here was that I saw my parents so poor, my little one used to get sick often, he would cry wanting to eat and there was nothing to give him..."

*"... me vine porque los maridos pasan más tiempo aquí en el norte que allá. Se van con uno, están 15 días y se regresan. [Le dije] 'Mejor me voy al norte y te veo todo el tiempo'."*

"...I came because the husbands spend more time here in the north than there. They commit to you, they stay here 15 days and then they go back. [I said to him, ] 'Better that I go north so that I can see you all the time.'"

*“ Le digo que decidí venirme ... con 8 meses de embarazo. Le platiqué a mi hermana que ya [me] venía. Ella me preguntó que porqué lo hacía, y le dije ‘es que es imposible, esto no puedo seguir así.’ ¿Qué ejemplo le voy a dar a mis hijos si él no me ayuda? Porque cuando él estaba tomado eran puras malas palabras ...y golpes.... ”*

"I tell you I decided to come...8 months pregnant. I spoke with my sister and said that I was coming. She asked me why I was doing it, and I said, 'It is impossible, that I can't go on like this.' What example am I going to give to my children if he doesn't help me? Because his drinking leads to abusive language and ...[beatings]..."

*"Yo me vine porque mi hermanito... cuando él se vino para acá me dijeron que andaba borracho. Aquí la cerveza es muy barata, las drogas aquí son fáciles de conseguir..., entonces me dijeron que andaba con mujeres que se vendían, se descontroló y yo dije: allá voy."*

"I came because of my little brother....when he came here they told me that he got into drinking. Here alcohol is very cheap, the drugs are easy to get..then they told me that he was hanging out with women who sell themselves, he lost control and I said, I am going there."

*"Yo no me vine [mis padres] me trajeron."*

"I didn't come here, [my parents] brought me."

*"Le dije yo [a mi esposo], tú dame el permiso y entonces yo tenía unos centavitos de los que me mandaban mis hijos ...-¿Estás decidida? -Estoy decidida. -Pero, ¿sabes qué?, me dijo, -yo no te doy ni un cinco para que te vayas...y mira, me dijo, -te vas pero te llevas al niño chiquito. Y le dije: - Claro que no te lo voy a dejar..."*

"I said [to my husband], give me permission and well, I had some money that my sons had sent me...‘Have you made up your mind?’ ‘I have.’ But you know what he said, ‘I’m not giving you a nickel if you go’... then he said, ‘you go, but you take the youngest boy.’ and I said to him, ‘Of course I am not going to leave him with you...’"

*"Mire, él ya se había venido para acá cuando estaba muchacho ...le dije: -Vámonos para allá. Y me dijo: - De veras te arriesgarías a ir?, -sí [le respondí]. -Pero, vamos a pasar el río. Y le dije: - En el nombre sea de Dios, le pedimos a la Santa Cruz que nos ayude, y con la bendición de nuestros padres."*

"Look, he had already come here when he was younger...I said to him, 'Let's go there.' And he said, ‘Are you sure that you'll risk it to go there?’ ‘Yes [I responded].’ ‘But we have to cross the river.’ I said to him, ‘In the name of God, we pray to The Holy Cross that she helps us and the blessing of our parents.’"

## **La pasada/The Crossing**

*"Estuvo duro porque pasé yo y mi esposo. El río y los dos solos, saliendo nos asaltaron, nos quitaron todo el dinero. .. pero la verdad yo me asusté porque agarraron a mi esposo y le decían que lo iban a matar si no entregábamos el dinero."*

"It was hard because I crossed, just me and my husband. The river and the two of us alone. Coming out of the river they [the *cholos*]assaulted us and took all of our money.. but the truth is that I was scared because they grabbed my husband and said they were going to kill him if we didn't give them the money."

*"Difícil, muy difícil. Estaba lloviendo mucho y tenía a mi hija chiquita que tenía un año y medio, y pasamos un río lleno de agua y lleno de lodo, mi hija hasta temblaba de frío por que como no pudimos cargar nada ..."*

"Difficult, very difficult. It was raining a lot and I had my little one who was one and a half year old, and we crossed the river-full of water and mud. My daughter was shivering from the cold because we couldn't bring anything with us".

*"Llegamos al lugar donde supuestamente el coyote nos iba a levantar y nada, no había nada, yo ahí lloré, ya se me acabaron mis fuerzas. Nos salimos a la carretera a pedir ride....una familia nos dio ride, yo lloré de emoción. Me preguntaron ¿por qué llora? no se imaginan lo que he pasado."*

- "We arrived at a place where supposedly the coyote was coming to take us and nothing. There wasn't anything. And there I cried, I had nothing left. We went to the highway to hitch a ride...a family gave us a ride, I cried with excitement. They asked me: 'Why are you crying?,' they couldn't imagine what I'd been through."

*"Me daba miedo porque venía yo sola, nadie se vino conmigo, yo sola simplemente... tenía yo que hacerme la valiente porque, dije- si voy a sentir miedo dije, -no voy a pasar... cualquiera va a decir: -esa tiene miedo porque se le ve. Me hice la valiente..."*

- "I was scared because I came alone, no one came with me, completely alone...I had to show courage because I said to myself, 'If I am going to be afraid,' I said, 'I am not going to make it' ...anyone of them would say, 'This one's scared, you can tell.' I had to make myself strong..."

*"Yo me vine por tierra, ...[los agentes de la migra] traen unos perros, los sueltan y hacen lo que quieren con uno y muerden feo ... nos tratan bien mal."*

"I came by land...[the immigration police] bring dogs, they let them loose and they do what they want to you and they bite hard...they treated us really bad."

## **La llegada**

*"Llegué nada más a trabajar... -sin ni un centavo- sin un cinco, ni donde vivir, ni donde dormir, llegábamos con... amigos nada más, ahí nos quedamos la noche, hasta que trabajamos y tuvimos dinero para rentar una casa para vivir, no teníamos carro, andábamos de ride, y fue bien duro."*

"I came here for nothing more than to work...without a cent, without a nickle, nowhere to live, nor to sleep, I came with some friends, nothing more. And over there we spent the night until we found work and had the money to rent a place to live. We had no car, we traveled hitching rides and it was really hard."

*Lo recuerdo y me duele, porque ahora yo pienso cuántas venimos así, que por estar con el esposo, que por salir adelante, que por todo. Venimos y no es cierto que la vida es más fácil [aquí]. Cierto ,aquí uno sale adelante, tiene uno un poquito más de posibilidades, pero uno aquí sufre mucho, porque empezando por el tipo de trabajo que uno tenga, el idioma, el que hay gente que nos ve muy mal, y gente de nuestra propia raza que habla inglés y nos trata mal."*

"I remember, and it hurts me, because now I think about how many of us have come up here to be with our husbands, to get ahead, for it all. We came and it's not true that life is easier [here]. It's true that one gets ahead here, you have a little bit more

possibilities, but one suffers a lot. Starting first with the type of work you get, the language, and there are people that look down on us. And even people of our own culture that speak English, treat us bad."

***Pizcando Sueños* is a project of Fabiola del Castillo and Fran Ricardo and Robin Lewy of the Rural Women's Health Project. For more information about the *Pizcando Sueños* project, or to read other articles in this series, please check our web site at: [www.rwhp.org/pizcando](http://www.rwhp.org/pizcando)**