



Pizcando Sueños/ Harvesting Dreams

The Voices of Mexican Migrant Women

Final Article in a Series of Five

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"...I would like them to achieve what I wanted but couldn't do before. For one reason or another my desires were frustrated."

Taking time to dream for many is a privilege, a little ray of hope that liberates us from our suffering, work, and worries. Dreams give sustenance to our will and desire to live. They guide a great part of our lives. Even though we may know that our dreams may not become reality, this guidance leads us to make decisions and to confront our responsibilities with energy and optimism. For the women of Pizcando Sueños, rarely do they take the time to dream.

The stories told by the 20 women of the Pizcando Sueños project, all Mexican farmworkers living in Florida, speak directly to their reasons for crossing the border. Many of their reasons coincide with the academic studies. But in their words, migration is an escape from hunger, poverty, and domestic violence and illustrates the emotion and detail of what leads people to abandon their homes. The dreams that lead them and thousands before them to migration, offsets these painful realities; the dreams of a better life for their children.

"Me gustaría verlas [mis hijas] realizadas, sí me gustaría verlas... con esa misma inquietud de estudiar, de superación. Esa inquietud, esa espinita que traen ellas ahorita de seguirse superando, me gustaría que ellas lo realizaran, que ellas llegaran a hacer lo que yo quise hacer y no lo pude haber hecho antes. Por una cosa o por otra se frustraron mis pensamientos."

"I would like to see them fulfill their dreams. Yes, I would like to see them... with this need to study, to learn more, this yearning that they have now to improve themselves. I would like them to achieve what I wanted but couldn't do. For one reason or another my desires were frustrated."

For most of the women, their personal dreams have been converted into what can be achieved for future generations. There were few women interviewed that identified dreams that focused on their own personal betterment such as studying, finding better work opportunities and personal improvement.

"Mi meta es aprender..., algo bien importante y bien necesario para mí. Estoy viendo la posibilidad de sacar el GED. Yo creo que con la ayuda de Dios...voy a lograr sacar mi certificado."

"My goal is to learn...things that are very important and necessary for me. I am looking into the possibility of getting my GED. I think that with the help of God...I am going to be able to get my certificate."

"Yo quisiera poder y sueño, tener mi propio trabajo, no depender de nadie."

"I would love the ability and I dream about having my own job, not depend on anyone."

"Para el futuro, no tengo sueños. Lo único que anhelo es tener un...(piensa) una fábrica o un taller de costura."

"For the future, I don't have dreams. The only thing that I long for is to own (she pauses) a factory or a sewing shop."

The dream of happiness and well being of their children becomes the women's own dream. It is here that faith and dreams interconnect. Women believe that when their children achieve their dreams, the women themselves will be compensated for their hard work and faith.

"Pues [les deseo] mejor, pues que no trabajen tanto como yo."

"I wish the best for them, so that they don't

have to work as hard as I do."

Para mi hija...quisiera que siguiera estudiando porque todavía es joven. Tiene que buscarse algo que realmente le gusta a ella..."

"For my daughter ... I wish that she be able to continue studying, because she is still young. She needs to choose something she really likes..."

"Pos mis sueños para el futuro son realizar a mis hijos, sacarlos adelante, y pos es mi única meta que tengo ... y eso es lo que a nosotros los padres nos toca..."

"Well my dreams are for my children to become something, to help them get ahead. This is what we as parents have to do, help them get ahead..."

"Salir adelante, luchar por mis hijos, sobre todo mi niña. Y si mi esposo quiere seguir conmigo...y si no al final del tiempo pues apartarnos, apartarme de él y [yo voy a] luchar por mis hijos, por que lo más importante para mí son mis hijos."

"To get ahead, struggle for my children, especially my daughter. And if my husband wants to stay with me, or if not we will end separated and [I'm going to] fight for my children. Because the most important thing for me is my children."

"...Que trabajen por ellas mismas, que sepan lo que es ganar un dinero y que sepan cuanto cuesta."

"That they work for themselves and that they know how to earn money and understand the value of things."

"El sueño más sagrado que tengo para ella (mi hija) es que no se me case, uno dice que cotorro que se le paso a uno el tren -Que se le pase, pero que no se case chica, por que echándose uno al matrimonio es muy difícil."

"The most sacred dream that I have for her [my daughter] is that she doesn't get

married. People say that not getting married is like missing the boat. I say, let it pass, so that she doesn't marry young. Because getting married young is very difficult."

The women of Pizcando Sueños focus little on the difficulties of their work, but dream that their children should have a better life and that their work should be less labor intensive and more rewarding.

"Los sueños que tengo para ella [mi hija] es que estudie y que sea algo profesional ya que yo no soy. Ando empinada cortando. Yo no quiero que ella sea eso. Quiero que estudie y que me mantenga (risas), que me mantenga al futuro (risas). Yo le digo que sea algo, dice ella que quiere ser enfermera.."

"The dreams that I have for her [my daughter] is that she study and that she becomes a professional, since I am not. I walk around bent over from field work. I don't want this for her... I want her to study and take care of me (smiles) and that she takes care of me in the future (smiles). I tell her to be somebody, she says that she wants to be a nurse."

"Yo le digo a mi hija- estudia harto para que no sufras, Dios nos dé licencia y se casen, tengan para tus papeles puedas trabajar, estar bien, es lo que yo quiero, es lo que les digo."

"I tell my daughter, study hard so she doesn't suffer. May God give us the opportunity to see them marry and that they get work permits to be able to work and that they be well. This is what I want and what I tell them."

Within the dreams expressed by the women for their children was that they treasure family life. Their dreams are that their families stay united and that their children, especially their daughters, find respectful partners.

"[Les deseo] la felicidad de que les toque un hombre bueno que las vea y que tengan su trabajo que su trabajo nunca les falte les digo a ellas, -que más quisiera para ustedes que les toque un hombre bueno."

"I wish for them the happiness of finding a good man that looks after them and that they never be without work-as I tell them, more than anything I hope that they find a good man."

"Que algún día sean buena pareja con su pareja que algún día sean buenas madres, que se quieran así mismas y que lleguen a lograr los sueños que ellas tienen, para sí mismas."

"That one day they find a good partner and that they be good mothers, that they love each other and that they achieve the dreams that they have for themselves."

"Pues yo nada más sueño que no les vaya a hacer falta nada a mis hijos, que todo el



tiempo estemos sanos, bien, que nunca se me acabe mi matrimonio que siempre esté con ellos, con mi esposo con mis padres y mis hermanos."

"Well, I only dream that my children never be without anything, that they are always healthy, that my marriage never ends and that we are always with them, with my husband, my parents, and my brothers and sisters."

"Que Diosito me deje crecer a mis hijos bien, que me deje a mí crecer con ellos, sanamente que mi matrimonio siga adelante, que sigamos siendo una familia y tantos sueños que tiene uno, que le pide uno a la vida y que con fe se hacen realidad".

"That God allows my children to grow up and that I can grow with them, that my marriage continues happily, that we continue as a family. And that all the dreams that one has, that you ask of life, come true because of your faith."

Women have faith that they will get by. Faith is their unwavering foundation. It is their dream of achieving legal status- that will relieve much of the stress and fear that they suffer and will allow the women to dream of bigger things.

"Quisiera poder arreglar [mis] papeles a través de los años que tenga acá y poder juntar para poderme hacer mi propia casa en México y sacar a mis hijos adelante."

"I would like to get my working papers

because of all the years that I have been here, be able to build my own house in Mexico and help my kids get ahead."

"Mis sueños...lo que más anhelo son mis papeles de migración y enseñarme a manejar bien y que mis hijos agarren sus buenas carreras y sus trabajos que no agarren ni un vicio".

"My dreams...what I desire most are my immigration papers, and to learn how to drive well and that my children get good jobs and that they don't pick up any vices."

The women of Pizcando Sueños realize that their dreams alone have not brought them to this point. The support that they have received from others is not forgotten. They all recognized those who have helped them get here and are committed to serving others.

" Yo quiero seguir adelante en todo lo que pueda hasta para poder ayudar a la demás gente, que de veras hay mucha gente que necesita ayuda. Yo quisiera que las demás personas se dieran la mano, porque a mí la gente me ha brindado mucho a mí, sí, porque es bien duro llegar así sin nada."

"I want to get ahead in everything that I can so that I am able to help others, because there are really a lot of people who need help. I wish that people would help each other, because many people have helped me

a lot, because it is really hard to come here without anything."

For the women of Pizcando Sueños one dream that was consistently voiced within the context of other questions and discussions is that of returning home to Mexico. But most state that it is an impossibility.

"El principal (sueño) es regresar a México, pero yo sé que es un sueño imposible si regreso, regreso para visitar nada más".

"My main dream is to return to Mexico, but I know that this is an impossible dream. If I return, it is for a visit, nothing more."

This dream of returning home has been superceded by the dreams of a better life for their children. Their children, if not born here, have grown up here and are deeply rooted in the U.S. Most women feel that they have come too far to see their children get ahead and that to return to Mexico would mean a trip home alone, leaving behind their children and grandchildren.

"Mis sueños más grandes son que mis hijos siempre salgan adelante...Dios me dé licencia de vier a mis nietos más, y ver hasta donde se puede ir y que vayan con bien todo."

"My biggest dreams are that my children always move forward...May God give me the opportunity to see more of my grandchildren and that everything turns out well."

Pizcando Sueños has projected the voices of Mexican migrant women, highlighting their individual realities and their common struggles. Each woman's story of crossing the border, of learning to work like men in the fields and their struggle to maintain family life and to preserve Mexican traditions have been marked by some victories and many painful moments and separations. The 20 interviews of these powerful farmworker women in Florida and the subsequent fotonovela and traveling exhibit have brought to life the stories and images of farmworking women. The stories of Pizcando

Sueños have served to unite farmworking women, to educate their daughters about the past and their mother's dreams for their future, to inform Mexicans at home of life en el norte, to illuminate barriers to providing services to farmworking women and has served to document how the faith, values, and traditions of the women are maintained, once in the United States. Pizcando Sueños is a documentation of what these women wish to tell the world and to pass on to future generations with the pride of saying:

"A pesar de todo, hemos salido adelante."

"In spite of everything, we are moving forward."

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 visit our web site at: www.rwhp.org/pizcando