

**Life After Deportation:
Surviving as a Dominican Deportee**

BY
EVIN RODKEY
B.A., Indiana University, 1999
M.A., University of Illinois at Chicago, 2008

THESIS

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Defense Committee:

Mark Liechty, Chair and Advisor
Molly Doane
Gayatri Reddy
Alaka Wali
Amalia Pallares, Political Science and Latin American and Latino Studies

This thesis is dedicated to my wife Lisa. Without her I never would have been on this track, let alone stayed on it. I further extend this dedication to our three children, Ramona, Daphne, and Theodore, who have made everything better (even you Theo; though you are just days old your presence has helped push me through to the end).

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SUMMARY

This thesis is the culmination of an ethnographic study centered on the survival strategies of deportees from the United States living in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic. The focus is on people who moved to the U.S. at a young age and later faced deportation as adults for conviction of a crime after spending many years—near lifetimes in many cases—in the U.S.

Over the course of five trips to Santo Domingo, I conducted participant-observation with many deportees, assessing their adjustment to living away from their home, family, and friends in the U.S.; living conditions and quotidian livelihoods; and economic survival strategies. I found that many deportees worked in call centers for U.S. businesses that have outsourced this work. In order to more effectively assess this facet of surviving as a deportee, I conducted participant-observation by working in a call center, completing a training program for call center agents. I further conducted interviews with seven core participants, asking questions related to their conceptions of citizenship, belonging, immigration policy, deportation policy and the overall process of being deported. I used their responses to build on theoretical understandings of citizenship and transnational migration.

Through my work I found the conceptions of citizenship carried by deportees varies widely. Some of their views reinforced the legitimacy of the nation-state, whereas others supported “postnational” conceptions of citizenship. Regarding survival strategies, I found that working in a call center (as well as with tourists in some cases) allows many deportees to apply transnational strategies, linking them back to their home in the U.S. Though a diverse group, taken together, the views and experiences of deportees are strongly shaped by having grown up in the U.S. Indeed, their presence in their country of birth complicates notions of “home.”

I. INTRODUCTION: THE DEPORTATION SITUATION

“We’re on the edge of snappin’, most of us, you know. We get treated bad, we go to jail a lot here. It really traumatizes us up, man.”

--Ramses, from part of a lengthy explanation following a structured interview when I asked, “So what else do you want to tell me, how do you *feel*?” He had requested to tell me more about how he feels following my formal questions (Interview, May 30, 2010).

“[My mother] said, ‘Well, you know what you need to do now, you have to get a job.’ The next week I was working. I went to [the call center] and the following week I was working and being there, love it, I’m good [laughs].”

--Sandro, from part of his response to my question, “What do you think of the Dominican Republic (Interview, May 22, 2010).

A. Introductory Remarks

I arrived in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic, for the first time, on a Tuesday in May of 2008. On Wednesday morning I took my first trip to the *Zona Colonial* (Colonial Zone, also known as the Colonial City). I had been told of the area by David Brotherton, a sociologist at John Jay College of the City University of New York who had published on Dominican deportees (see Brotherton 2003). I had spoken to him by phone and exchanged emails prior to my trip and he told me I would be able to find a number of deportees along *El Conde*, the bustling pedestrian mall central to that area. He even gave me the phone number of a guy named Manny¹, adding that he would help me out. I called Manny a couple of days later. But this day I just set out to see what I could find. I was hoping to meet former American residents who, after long-term legal residence in the U.S., had been deported after

¹ All names of deportees and people I interacted with in Santo Domingo are pseudonyms

facing conviction for a crime. I was interested in their experiences after deportation as they faced living in a place that is their country of birth, yet a place that is not their home.

B. **The Scope of This Work**

In this dissertation, I examine the deportation of long-term legal permanent residents of the U.S. who were sent to their country of birth, the Dominican Republic, after facing conviction for a crime. I have three main objectives in this study. First, I offer an examination of the deportation situation in the Dominican Republic from the point of view of those going through it. My intention here is to convey the lived experience of being a deportee, including the displacement deportees face and the consequences that brings. I use the data I gathered in a manner consistent with a point made by Brettell (2000:100):

It is important to emphasize that anthropologists, who perceive the disjunction between the ideal and the actual as a fundamental characteristic of human experience, tend to look at immigration policy from the perspective of the immigrant who acts, adapts, and often circumvents.

Brettell (2000:104) goes on to identify migration as a global process, but points to “central interest” in the “human dimensions” and the “lived experience of being a migrant.” My accounts of deportees surviving in the Dominican Republic are grounded in lived experiences and my conceptual material is always tied to empirical referents to make the point at hand.

For my second main objective, by using the experiences and perspectives of deportees, I offer analyses to advance understanding of models for citizenship and transnational migration. Key issues at stake here include matters of rights, protections, and implications surrounding membership, including “postnational” conceptions of citizenship. Also, I closely examine the role of state power in mediating constructions of citizenship and the role this plays in the lives of those deported. As for transnational migration, after detailing the main premises of this conceptual framework, I use the case of working in an out-sourced call center to demonstrate

how the lives of deportees represent a case of transnationalism not encountered in previous accounts of this much-discussed phenomenon.

The examination herein shows that the deportation situation is the result of unjust treatment, a creation of a problematic set of affairs that damages too many people to justify its continuance. Therefore, my third main goal is that, through an examination of my work, readers, regardless of political convictions, will concur that the deportation of long-term legal residents should be abolished and that immigration reform overall should be approached with a greater understanding of its complexity and the specific effects it brings to the people subjected to its processes.

As Kanstroom (2012:11) put it, “deportation law should be more grounded in well-developed principles of constitutional and international human rights law, including ameliorative discretion, and strong safeguards against disproportionate harshness, unforeseen consequences, and mistakes.” My data show that deportation is indeed harsh punishment. But, beyond this, I demonstrate specifically that the process is untenable and at odds with efforts to protect the rights of those within the borders of the U.S. I provide extensive ethnographic material to demonstrate these points. In doing so, I hope to strengthen the case against the process of deportation with close examinations of the person-level impact.

C. **An Outline of the Chapters**

Following this introductory explanation of the deportation situation, in chapter two I discuss the circumstances of my conducting research with deportees. Here I examine my subject position as ethnographer and matters of representing socially marginalized deportees. I also discuss the process of deportees narrating their stories to me and the effect this has on the ethnographic encounter and their own livelihoods.

In chapter three I review important contributions to our current understanding of deportation, as well as pertinent work on immigration. I begin by detailing some important aspects of how immigration and deportation have been handled in historical and contemporary contexts. I then review recent work on immigration and deportation, situating my work within it. In chapter four, I detail the conditions of emigration from the Dominican Republic that established the populations from which deportees arise, providing relevant economic and political background for understanding the deportable population. Related to this, I also discuss structural conditions in the U.S., with a focus on New York City, that have influenced the life courses of immigrants. In chapter five, I illuminate the deportation situation further by discussing relevant immigration policy, focusing on the 1996 landmark reforms. In doing so, I include detail on cases of deportees I worked with to demonstrate the lived experience of encountering these policies.

For chapter six I focus on the processes of deportees negotiating the significant displacement they face in the Dominican Republic. This includes a focus on the procedure for arriving in the country, as well as modes of getting by and finding work. Here I also focus on the strain of family separation and the effects of this hardship on surviving as a deportee. Importantly, material that speaks to living as deportee, conceiving of life in this way, and the displacement this whole process entails appears throughout; this chapter, however, focuses on key areas in which this is relevant to deportees' livelihoods. Chapter seven details the circumstances of working in call centers and the specific ways in which this involves transnational practices regarding surviving as a deportee. In making this case, in this chapter I also explain my personal experiences working in a call center.

In chapter eight I examine the implications these cases carry for citizenship, focusing on alternative conceptions of citizenship that reckon it as “postnational” and the application of these conceptions in the context of state power. This examination also includes direct responses from deportees regarding their thoughts and feelings on the concept of citizenship.

Finally, in chapter nine, the conclusion I revisit the role of state power with regard to its impact on noncitizens such as deportees. Second, I revisit the transnational practices entailed in working in a call center, demonstrating their support for this framework. This chapter, and thus this dissertation, concludes with a discussion of relevant actions for confronting the deportation situation.

D. **A Note on Methods and Procedures**

Over the course of my fieldwork, I met many deportees of a wide variety of ages, social positions, lengths of time in the U.S., and lengths of time in the Dominican Republic. The convictions that led to deportation varied as well, though most were drug-related. Other convictions of deportees I met included burglary, car theft, assault with a deadly weapon, and even murder; Carmen, the only female deportee I ever met, “cut a bitch with a razor blade,” as she characterized her offense.

The contributions to my project from these deported former U.S. residents cannot be overstated. Many gave great portions of their time and discussed quite personal, often emotionally challenging subject matter with me. Additionally, many helped me a great deal further with accommodations, hospitality, and help getting around. Their efforts made my project possible and I can’t express my appreciation enough.

My data come from experiences with several of these deportees, some of whom I knew briefly, but many others I spent a great deal of time with and remained in contact with over the

course of my trips. My research approach included a set of uniform interview questions with seven deportees, six of whom I knew well and spent time with over long periods and a variety of settings. Interviews were arranged, after explaining that, in addition to the casual notes I was taking, that I would like to add some formal interview responses. I felt formal interview questions were important for more precisely connecting deportees' feelings and interpretations to such matters such as deportation policy and academic interrogations of citizenship. All of the deportees I was spending time with agreed to this and many were enthusiastic about having their stories reported back in the U.S. Interviews, which were conducted in English², were recorded and took place in restaurants and other public places, workplaces, and homes.

For interviews, I asked questions organized by four main categories. With the exception of a man named Bosety, I knew all of these interviewees outside the context of the interview and over the course of multiple visits to the country. The first set of questions covered issues concerning immigration, with a focus on the deportees' knowledge of and feelings regarding policy and rights. The second set dealt with the construct of citizenship. For these questions, I wanted to get a sense of deportees' understandings of how they characterize the meanings of citizenship. Next came questions concerning conceptions of "race." Here I wanted to understand how deportees reckoned their position in "racial" classification. With African (and other) ancestry, Spanish colonial heritage, and being native Spanish speakers, labels such as "black," "Hispanic," and "Latino" can complicate ascribed Dominican "racial" identity. Finally,

² Many deportees were more comfortable speaking English and did not have as strong command of Spanish. Others were as fluent and comfortable in either language. None (who I worked with) seemed to prefer Spanish; however, it should be noted that my identity as someone who is likely not a native Spanish speaker (and indeed I am not) surely contributed to some not attempting Spanish with me. Nevertheless, most deportees I worked with were stronger in English and some even pointed out to me that they enjoyed talking with me precisely because I am a native English speaker.

I asked the deportees I worked with several questions regarding their thoughts and feelings on deportation, questions aimed at drawing out how they see this experience and how they live it.

E. **Getting to Know Deportees**

I spent several months in Santo Domingo over the course of five trips from 2008 through 2011. Over the course of my trips I spent time with deportees in a variety of settings, including the *Zona Colonial*, the homes of deportees, and workplaces. I also went out to eat with several, as well as attended various other events, including joining in on a birthday party for a deportee's cousin and even attending a seaside Formula One racing exhibition. (Despite their popularity in the country, I never found my way to a baseball game or a cockfight.) For one summer, I even lived with a deportee, Delio, who lived alone in a house long-owned by his family. Due to spending so much time with him, which included helping him with expenses in exchange for staying in his house, I gained a great deal of insight from Delio, such as details regarding his finances and his general livelihood and background.

Another important venue for understanding the deportation situation was my experience with call centers. Early during my first trip to the country, I discovered that many deportees found employment in call centers for U.S. businesses that have outsourced this work. With their fluency in English, which for many was more proficient than their Spanish, and certainly more so than Dominican Spanish specifically, this was a job deportees could thrive in. In order to examine the transnational practices entailed in this scenario, I found employment in a call center and completed a one-month training program.

All of these experiences began that first morning of waking up in Santo Domingo, when I set out to see what I could find in the *Zona Colonial*. As it turned out, a man named Miguel found me in short order. Miguel was a licensed tour guide; he donned the light blue button-up

shirt and lanyard that indicated this designation. At my request, he took me by an ATM; he then began walking me down to some nearby tourist attractions. I told him of my interest in speaking with people who had been deported, cutting short his idea of taking an American tourist around. After he knew what I was interested in, he introduced me to a man named Luis, one of many art dealers along *El Conde* who sells primarily Haitian-made paintings, many of which depict representations of Taíno art,³ out on display. Miguel and I then parted ways forever; I gave him some money for his help.

Luis told me he had lived in the U.S. for many years, in Washington Heights, the largely Dominican neighborhood in northern Manhattan in New York City. He said he had moved to the Dominican Republic because he likes it better, with less crime and nice beaches. Luis was friendly but was definitely a bit suspicious of me, asking, “What do you want to know about them?” in regard to deportees, following up with, “What exactly is your interest?” He offered that in Washington Heights, people would probably think I am a cop⁴. I assured him I was simply there to learn more about the experiences of deportees.

I mentioned to Luis that I knew David Brotherton, the aforementioned sociologist, as well as Luis Barrios. Luis Barrios is a Puerto Rican-born New Yorker who has been visiting the Dominican Republic for decades and is a colleague of and co-author with Brotherton at John Jay College. Brotherton had interviewed Luis a few years prior; my association with him legitimized my identity to Luis, and he accepted that I had no ill intent in speaking with him about deportees. Following, he began talking much more about the overall situation of deportation in the Dominican Republic. He told me the Dominican government should help set up deportees,

³ Art from the indigenous population Columbus and his crew encountered beginning in 1492.

⁴ After I came to know people, on a few occasions, I was told I initially appeared or seemed to be some sort of law or government official, including a member of the FBI and the CIA. Also, one person told me he thought I might be an actor researching a role. More on my subject position as a researcher can be found in Chapter 2.

pointing out the U.S. would never treat its own people that way. He added that because of lack of support many get in to crime in the Dominican Republic, including drugs, specifically mentioning crack (though, heroin use is quite common as well, as detailed in Brotherton and Barrios 2011). Despite his initial suspicions of me, my conversation with Luis had become friendly and he agreed to my stopping by the next day, adding he would talk to some guys before we next met.

I spoke with Luis a few more times over the next several days, which included his introducing me to a deportee named Miguel (who had the same name as the tour guide who introduced me to Luis) whom I conducted a brief interview with. In the meantime, I had also contacted Manny, the man whose phone number David Brotherton had given me, and conducted short interviews with several deportees he knew in the nearby, but significantly more economically depressed, neighborhood just to the north, *San Carlos*. Manny had been in trouble with the police in New York over the course of several years, including serving time in prison, mostly related to drug dealing and use. In 1991, he fled to the Dominican Republic, the place of his birth. So while not technically a deportee, if Manny attempted to re-enter the U.S., his police record would lead him right back.

Manny had worked with Brotherton and Barrios, assisting them with their research; he certainly knew how to arrange interviews for a researcher and broker the remuneration with the participants. We became close, and Manny was a tremendous help to my work. He helped me get around and get to know some people who I ended up working with closely. I would soon learn he also knew Luis well.

As I had guessed, I soon learned for sure that most of the deportees in this area know each other, whether or not they are friends, and a quite lengthy grapevine runs through the area.

In any case, after lunch on the following Saturday, a week and a half after the first time we had met, which had been on my first full day in the country, I strolled down *El Conde* and bumped into Luis again. We ended up talking a lot that day. Early in that conversation is when he divulged to me that in fact he was a deportee himself. From my notes: “I shouldn’t have been surprised. But I was” (May 24, 2008). In many ways Luis fit the profile of a deportee in that he spoke fluent English in a New York dialect, he hung out on *El Conde* all day, and seemed to know a lot about the deportee situation. But, when we had first met, he told me he had simply moved back to the Dominican Republic. I was new to this fieldwork and in my inexperience, and even naiveté, I had not yet learned much about the deportation situation and my subject position among deportees, and, consequently, how to interpret such situations.

Beginning in the early 1970s as a teenager, and more prominently throughout the early and mid-1980s, Luis engaged in many sorts of illegal enterprise, including dealing drugs and guns, culminating at the dawn of the crack cocaine era when he was arrested in a sting. He had moved from the Dominican Republic to New York with his family at age six. At about age thirty, the father of five, which included newborn twins, began serving an approximately sixteen-year prison term at a series of prisons around the U.S. Upon his release, which had been about five years prior to my meeting him, Luis was deported. Over the course of that first trip, as well as all of my subsequent trips, Luis, like Manny, would become my friend and provide indispensable help to my study of the deportee situation in the Dominican Republic.

As Brettell (2000:118) indicates, “Although migrants around the globe have common experiences, migration itself is a complex and diverse phenomenon.” Indeed, the experiences and interpretations of deportation detailed in this dissertation are varied and reflect the diversity among deportees, as represented by the contrasting accounts offered by Ramses and Sandro in

the epigraphs of this introduction. However, despite their differing worldviews, these deportees share similarities that bring them together in this dissertation. Both men were born in the Dominican Republic. Both men moved to the United States when they were young children. And while in their twenties, both men committed crimes that led them to the Dominican Republic. This is their new home. Not the place where they learned manners and how to safely cross a street. Not the place where they went to school. Not the place where they went to prison. Not the place where their children were born and still live. Rather, this is the place where they were born. But this is hardly home in any conventional sense.

II. CONDUCTING RESEARCH WITH DEPORTEES

“I thought I was, until I got deported. You know, I was always hanging out with Americans—actually, my friends from over here, when I used to talk to them on the phone, they used to say that I was Americanized.”

--Delio in response to the interview question, “Do you consider yourself an American?” (Interview, May 28, 2010).

“Yea, definitely. I never even wanted to come here, back here to my country. I never even came here to visit. One time with my mother. I didn’t care about this, I don’t like this.”

--Wilbur in response to the interview question, “Do you consider yourself an American?” (Interview, May 25, 2010).

A. **Introductory Remarks**

As a researcher representing the views and experiences of those who participated in my project, I am concerned with matters of identity, both of me as a researcher vis-à-vis my research participants and of the participants themselves in the context of narrating their stories to me. Much of the data for this dissertation come from having asked deportees questions and subsequently interpreting their responses. This process shapes what they tell me and how they tell it, as well as my ultimate interpretation of what I heard. Therefore, the nature of my relationship to them, which includes my identity as a researcher, is important for considering their responses. Also of significance are the ways in which the process of deportees recounting their stories and responses to me shape their own identities. In this chapter, I first discuss the nature of my research with deportees, couching these issues in literature regarding fieldwork and representation. I then move on to examining the related issue of how deportees construct their own identities through narratives and narrativity by talking to me as a researcher.

B. My Subject Position and Working with Deportees

As a native-born U.S. citizen, but one with experience branching into unfamiliar cultural territory with regard to living and working, I find the deportation situation and the displacement it entails particularly troubling. Having traveled a great deal and lived in places new to me where I had no established connections, including parts of the U.S. as well as abroad, I have long been intrigued by acts of culturally reinscribing oneself. Though my moves were voluntary and under much more auspicious (to say the least) circumstances, I nevertheless have had the experience of navigating new cultural landscapes and carving out new life ways on my own. I generally consider these experiences as opportunities that have been important to my growth and development. I also tend to look at them as enjoyable experiences.

However, the deportees I worked with faced forced relocation under distressing conditions. When I began to consider this project, with my experiences prominently in mind, I would ask myself, “Wow, what must *that* be like?” Underlying my interest in this project was an intrigue to explore a darker side of general cultural displacement experiences one can go through.

As for taking up the project, I had an interest in the lived experiences of immigrants, as well as an academic interest the relation between immigration and the U.S. political economy. In particular, the neoliberal⁵ restructuring of the global economy, which sent many U.S. jobs abroad, and legislative action increasing deportations seemed to be roughly coinciding. In other words, though a complex process irreducible to simple explanations, there seemed to be some sort of connection between this economic restructuring and anti-immigrant sentiment and the concomitant increased deportation that was occurring.

⁵ Neoliberal reforms and their effects on spurring immigration are discussed in detail in chapter three.

Recently, Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2013:285) have supported this notion by suggesting “possible linkages between the current wave of deportations and local labor markets for Latino immigrant men,” prompting them to ask, “Have Latino men and their jobs been declared disposable?” This speaks to a point made by Freeman (2000) who, in her work on offshored informatics, indicated that, “labor is integral to the transnational flows we are increasingly attempting to analyze and describe.” Of specific relevance to my project, Thomas (2004:10) indicates that, under these circumstances, “undereducated and unskilled young men have become increasingly marginalized from any promise of ‘development.’” Though I frame participants’ experiences within these structural realities, consistent with these researchers mentioned and others (e.g. Zavella 2011 and Gomberg-Muñoz 2011), this work explores the agency of deportees and a key objective has been to examine how they have “produced culture” (Thomas 2004:3).

With this in mind, when my wife Lisa, a former Peace Corps volunteer, told me about cases of deportations she was familiar with, it sounded too intriguing to pass up as a research endeavor concerning this matter. During her time in Praia, the capital city of the Cape Verde islands off West Africa, she encountered people known among some volunteers as “send-backs,” which were guys (those she encountered were all male) who had been born in Cape Verde, grew up in or around Boston (home to a sizable Cape Verdean diaspora), and then found themselves making their way in Cape Verde after facing deportation. She said they often felt alienated in Cape Verde and didn’t really know what to do, and since Peace Corps volunteers were American, many send-backs gravitated toward them and the familiarity they offered.

With my interest in Latin America and the Caribbean, I did some research and found the Dominican Republic would be an excellent site for a project to explore this phenomenon. In

particular, I was able to establish a connection with a researcher who had already been involved with studying deportation there (David Brotherton, the sociologist I mentioned before).

Furthermore I found that this country received about two- to three-thousand deportees per year. Though that's much less than the hundreds of thousands deported to Mexico, it seemed like a high enough rate to generate a large deportee population in a city with a more manageable population size (unlike, say, Mexico City).

Despite the Dominican Republic's reputation as a vacation destination, my experiences there were anything but vacation-like. However, due to the weather and the tropical imagery it brings to mind, I found many in the U.S. carried preconceived notions about my spending so much time in the sun-drenched Caribbean, offering such comments as, "Oh that must be rough." Thomas (2011:2), who works in Jamaica, mentions she deals with people's presumptions about conducting fieldwork in the Caribbean as well, pointing out that many imagine "what an anthropologist might do on a typical research day is lazily smoke weed on the beach while drinking rum from a coconut." Though this certainly was going on nearby, my days were mostly spent in the dense urban landscape of Santo Domingo, confronting poverty and hardship. This is a research site that proved abundantly fruitful for learning about the survival strategies deportees; and, though enjoyable and spent in splendid weather alongside the sea, my trips were hardly fun-in-the-sun getaways.

Prior to working with deportees in the Dominican Republic I had little experience spending such great amounts of time with people convicted of crimes. To my knowledge, I had never so much as met someone who sold drugs in the streets as a means of making a living. My background is generally one of middle-class privilege (for example, my parents encouraged and financially supported my involvement in extra-curricular activities growing up and, though not

college graduates themselves, supported and completely financed my undergraduate education), professional work experience, and, obviously, a high level of formal education. Furthermore, I am racialized as “white,” and none of the deportees I worked with would be. I have never lived in the Northeast U.S. (New York City or otherwise) or Southern Florida, which all of the deportees I worked with had.

These differences certainly affected my interactions, particularly my initial meeting, with deportees. As discussed in the introduction, when I met Luis while attempting to find deportees to work with he was quite suspicious of my intent. I did not appear to fit in. However, appearing to fit in too much can bring along potential problems in research as well. Zavella (2011) points out that during her research with Mexican migrants in California, some people assumed she herself was a migrant due to her appearance. The most egregious example of this occurred when a “white” man screamed at her from his truck to go back to Mexico. I, on the other hand, am completely confident no one ever thought I was a Dominican (and fortunately I never encountered such hostility for any reason).

That said, I know that many people assumed I was an American tourist seeking Dominican women, nightlife, and beaches, which could sometimes be a hurdle to initiating conversation and directing it the way I intended. My general appearance tended to match that of men there for those indulgences (though, in my early- and mid-thirties during my research, many were much older)—and plenty of men visit the Dominican Republic for such reasons. In the realm of fitting in, most researchers face impediments of some sort, such as Bourgois (1995), who had to contend with assumptions by many, including the police, that he was a drug addict due to his thin physique (coupled with his presence in a community known for rampant drug dealing), which led to harassment and even physical assault. Fortunately, I was able to avoid any

such harassment and assault. Nevertheless, false assumptions regarding my identity were sometimes issues I had to overcome.

Though separated on the basis of “race” and other cultural factors, the deportees I worked with and I did come together on the basis of gender and sexual orientation: male (though I did work with one female) and heterosexual. Based on my experience, this seems to have been important. Zavella (2011:20) echoes this when she points out that she interviewed primarily women, but that some additional interviews conducted with men by male research assistants yielded “quite colorful comments” that likely “would not have occurred if I had interviewed them.”

The guys I worked with often made comments to women passing by, as well as comments about women’s appearance to me. In some cases, the comments made to women passing by made me uncomfortable, such as “Hey baby, shake it like you can” and the like. Surely some of the women who were the targets of these comments could not understand English, which made me wonder to what extent, at least in some cases, the comments were more about appealing to me as a (fellow) American man. Though I had certainly witnessed disrespect toward women in the U.S., this brashness was mostly new to me. I did not care for it; but nevertheless it tended to serve as a bonding device between some deportees and me.

As I am now, I was married during my trips to Santo Domingo, and all the people I worked closely with knew this. However, this knowledge did not slow down attempts to match me with some of the (I must say, exceedingly attractive in some cases) women on occasion. While my marriage to me meant a block to such engagements, to most of them, it did not represent a restriction at all. One time when I passed on an offer, reminding a friend of mine yet again that I was married, he responded to me, “Yea, but you said she’s up in Chicago, right?” as

though literally not understanding what would be stopping me from being with other women while there. As for sexual orientation, multiple deportees made derogatory comments regarding passing by tourists who appeared to them to be “homosexual” or “gay” (the two terms I heard them use). I even asked one deportee what his problem with it was; his reply was something I had heard before in the U.S. and have always found disappointing, to say the least: “God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve.”

In any case, had these two characteristics about me been different, I am sure my relationships with the deportees I worked with—and thereby my research overall—would have taken a different direction, as it likely did due to the characteristics about me that were at odds with participants in my study. Indeed, Gomberg-Muñoz (2011) explains her foiled plan to join her participants and work as a restaurant busboy when she realized her “race” and gender would draw too much attention and disrupt the work of her participants. She joined them in other capacities, thereby changing the direction her research would take.

Zavella (2011:14) observes that ethnographic research is always “a field of politicized interactions” and “profoundly influenced by the myriad changes that are occurring in late capitalism though globalization and neoliberalism.” I showed up representing the U.S. to the deportees I worked with, which in turn led me to represent both the place they used to live and the place that expelled them. Zavella (2011:14) adds that ethnographic research is thereby “contingent on the subject position of the ethnographer.” Indeed, in these important ways, my subject position in relation to those I worked with shaped the fieldwork I conducted and thereby the interpretations I present here.

C. **Representing Deportees**

This work is not an ethnography of a particular locale, focusing on the people in that locale as a group. Rather, this work focuses on the individual people I worked with across locales, examining their experiences and interpretations of matters pertaining to surviving as deportees. That is, this work constitutes ethnographic engagements across settings and entails the reporting of life history from participants, taking into account the greater social and historical conditions that produce their stories (Burawoy 1991, 1998, 2009). My approach is consistent with Stephen (2007:31), who strives to “weave together the personal histories and narratives” of her research participants with “the larger structures that affect their lives and to highlight their creative responses.”

In examining the lives of the deportees I worked with I make extensive use of their own words and direct references to their experiences. A primary goal of this work is to allow the reader to hear what deportees say as they relate their experiences and perspectives. My intent is to present an ethnographic account of the lives of the deportees I worked with: their perspectives, and my perspectives based on my experiences with them, serve as the basis for this work.

Conducting research of this sort brings out a number of important issues regarding representation and researcher identity vis-à-vis his or her research participants (Clifford and Marcus 1986, Marcus and Fischer 1986, Marcus 1998). As Bourgois (1995:11) points out, in conducting work that entails “detailed examination of social marginalization” we will have to confront “the politics of representation.” Behar (1993:3) discusses her “discomfort about the close links between the fieldworker and the inquisitor as extractors of confessions,” which was compounded by her intense awareness of race and class differences where she was working, as well as by the way locals tended to position her perceived race and class status. She goes on to

discuss how the ethnographic relationship is based on power, even expressing her discomfort with her asserting herself in the encounter (Behar 1993). Zavella (2011:19) similarly expresses discomfort with the “potential voyeurism” society affords the poor and her position taking on such a role in her research.

Getting to know the participants one works with comes the process of understanding, interpreting, and, ultimately, representing what they say. Zavella (2011:22) points out that she does not use the experience of those she interviewed as “a facile window” into their “essentialized identities,” but rather sees “the ethnographic encounter, and interviews in particular, as dialogues between subjects and me at particular points in time.” Crapanzano (1980) in his well-known *Tuhami*, a life history account of the eponymous Moroccan tilemaker, also discusses some of these issues in a way still relevant today. Crapanzano (1980:ix) points out that ever since he first engaged in fieldwork as a student, under the tutelage of Margaret Mead, he had “been deeply concerned with the anthropologist’s impress on the material he collects and his presentation of it,” pointing to the problems with researchers proclaiming “neutrality and even invisibility in their field work.” Not only does he point out that this is acting in “bad faith,” but it presents “an inaccurate picture of ethnography and what it can reveal.” This can produce a “static picture” and actually limit the strength of the work. He adds that the anthropologist does not have a “privileged access to lucidity.”

I arrived in Santo Domingo a stranger to the people there, but ready to form relationships, however challenging this might be. Crapanzano (1980:134) likewise recalls arriving in Morocco a stranger having always been fascinated with the hero and heroine of Gabriele D'Annunzio’s *The Triumph of Death* and their “obsessive desire to know each other fully.” During my first trip to Santo Domingo, I had with me a copy of *A Tale of Two Cities*. This is a book I had been

assigned to read in high school almost fourteen years prior but had skipped. I was attempting to make up for it; and, I am sorry to say, I failed once again. Nevertheless, though I didn't make it far, I gleaned something from early in the text that speaks to this issue of working with deportees having arrived as a stranger. A day short of two weeks in the country, as I was beginning to contend with getting to know people and build relationships, I copied into my notebook a line that stuck out to me from the classic Dickens book: "A wonderful fact to reflect upon, that every human creature is constituted to be that profound secret and mystery to every other" (Dickens 1988 [1859]:16). This "wonderful fact" poses challenges for conducting ethnographic research—but it is also a constitutive element of the endeavor. It shapes what we do and the work we produce.

Though I do not attempt to express a particular portrayal, either positive or negative, of the lives of the deportees I worked with, this can never been completely avoided. In some cases, the data portray certain deportees in a positive light and point to the harsh treatment they have been subjected to. Other uses of data are not so flattering and thereby less complimentary to the deportees portrayed. Bourgois (1995:12) touches on this as well in relating his decision not to downplay the negative conditions he witnessed, noting this would make him "complicitious with oppression." Like Bourgois (1995:12), I present what I encountered "in a manner that emphasizes the interface between the structural oppression and individual action."

But in all cases, the portrayals are made by me and are shaped by my relationship with the participants. As Bourgois (1995:13) points out, though the research is a collaboration with the anthropologist and the participants, I, as the writer of this dissertation have the "final say" in how, or even if, what I was told will be conveyed. I attempt to portray the conditions of the people I worked with as clearly as I can, but as Crapanzano (1980:139-140) notes, "I do not

know when my theoretical confabulations, my observations and explications, result immediately from the encounter and when they result from the literary reencounter.” It is my hope that I can effectively convey the conditions of deportees and their feelings regarding these conditions.

D. **And Now Introducing: The Deportees**

Throughout this dissertation, I relate stories and circumstances from several deportees I encountered throughout my visits to Santo Domingo. Most of my data come from seven main participants, most of whom I knew relatively well and spent time with. Importantly, I also conducted formalized interview sessions with these seven participants and weave their responses throughout. For other deportees I worked with, I explain who they are and relevant background or circumstances to make the point at hand. For the seven deportees I conducted interviews with, I provide the detailed information on their lives here, beginning with Delio. My objective is to introduce the reader to the general circumstances regarding their backgrounds, their deportations, and their livelihoods in the Dominican Republic. It should be noted that in some cases the ages and the dates of birth they provided did not match up, so for these instances ages are approximate.

I begin with Delio (interview recorded May 28, 2010), because he was a key informant who I spent the most time with. Delio, who was thirty-six when I met him in 2010, was nice enough to offer that I stay with him and even live with him on my next trip the following year, an offer I gladly accepted. He was initially referred to me by a lawyer I had met who worked with human rights issues and had an interest in deportation cases. Part of her work included conducting phone surveys for research projects on human rights issues to the U.S. For this work, she employed a number of deportees. The work was not steady, but for many it provided at least

temporary work in which they could put their transnational skills to work. Delio had worked for her on and off for a couple of years.

He had moved to the U.S. at a later age than most I worked with, at age eighteen, after finishing high school in the Dominican Republic in 1991. After trying out Newark, New Jersey and the Bronx for a few months, he lived in a suburb of Boston around his mother and sister for sixteen years, which included a period of eleven years in which he did not so much as visit the Dominican Republic. For emigrating at age eighteen, Delio's English was remarkably strong; he said that in the U.S. he rarely spent time with Spanish-speaking people, he did not live around any Dominicans (beyond a few family members), and almost all of his friends were "white." He added he and his friends were big music fans, mentioning break-out rock bands of the time of his move to the U.S., specifically citing Nirvana, Alice in Chains, and Stone Temple Pilots as some of his favorites.

After about thirteen years of working in a variety of jobs, Delio began dealing cocaine in order to make more money. After three years of this he was arrested and deported in 2007. Of the seven interviewees, Delio was one of two with no children. He lived alone, though his girlfriend stayed over periodically. He liked to hang out at home and watch TV with a few bottles of Brahma (a Brazilian beer, which was the second most popular beer in the Dominican Republic behind the native Presidente); he was thoughtful and always willing to help me out (which often resulted in my buying some Brahma for the evening).

Sandro (interview recorded May 22, 2010) faced conviction for car theft⁶ and was about twenty-eight when I met him in 2008. He moved to New York City at age five and had been deported about two years prior, in 2006, after serving six years in prison and living in the U.S.

⁶ According to Sandro his conviction was inflated beyond the crime he actually committed. The circumstances of his legal ordeal are detailed in chapter four.

for twenty-three years. I met Sandro during my first trip to the country. I was walking around the *Zona Franca* (Free Trade Zone) where the call center where he worked was located; he was outside taking a break and agreed to talk to me. Sandro had a house in Santo Domingo with a new wife and a young daughter. He also had a son back in New York. Sandro was a good-natured person who would likely make a strong supervisor due to his easy-going charm that made him easy to talk with. In fact, he had become a floor supervisor at the call center where he worked, and this did not surprise me. He was always quite helpful with me, and when I would thank him he would always respond with, “Not a problem” and smile.

Wilbur (interview recorded May 25, 2010) is just three months younger than me; we were just short of thirty-two when we first met in 2008. He moved to New York City at age seven and faced deportation at age thirty in 2006, less than two years before I met him the same day I met Sandro, also while walking around the *Zona Franca*. Wilbur was taking a break outside a different call center and had no problem talking to me; he seemed quite interested in what I was doing and, though more reserved than Sandro, was quite willing to share his thoughts. He faced deportation for a drug charge he had incurred several years before. He was later arrested for a minor crime he did not commit and was quickly absolved from. However, in this process, his drug charge—from about a decade prior—surfaced and he faced deportation, despite no further trouble, working full-time, and raising his two children. Those children were left behind in New York and Wilbur lived alone in Santo Domingo, though informally with a girlfriend, in a house owned by his mother who was back in the U.S. In general, Wilbur was quite out of place in Santo Domingo. The place seemed to depress him; but he was doing relatively well, making money and living stably.

Ramses (interview recorded May 30, 2010) was about thirty-six when I met while him walking with my friend Manny on *El Conde* in 2010. Manny kind of knew him and introduced us, though Manny was weary of Ramses due to his transient nature. He moved to the U.S. at age two, in 1976, and had visited the Dominican Republic in 1987 for a week, then twice in 1992. His next trip was when he was deported in 2000 at about twenty-six. Ramses spoke in a strong New York City dialect without the slightest hint of a Spanish accent in his words. He referred to *El Conde* with an American English accent: “The *Cahn-dee*.” He left behind a son who was about one when he went to prison for five years for engaging in a shootout. He then faced deportation, which was just over ten years before I met him. In the Dominican Republic, Ramses had worked in call centers here and there, but mostly roamed the *Zona Colonial* looking for opportunities to “hustle,” as he put it. Ramses had abused drugs, including cocaine, during his time in Santo Domingo, but had been clean for about year when I met him. He often had no place to stay; sometimes he rented a room if he could. He was intelligent but quite down on himself; I think, even given his obvious structural constraints, he was capable of thriving more successfully than he was.

I met Balbuena (interview recorded June 2, 2010), who was convicted of burglary⁷, while he was on a lunch break not far from the call center where he worked near the center of the city. Balbuena moved from the Dominican Republic to Washington, D.C. at age thirteen. He spent only a year there and then settled with his mother and siblings in Tampa, Florida. In 2004 he began a three year plus prison term and then was deported in 2007, after about seventeen years in the country, three years prior to my meeting him. He was married with two young girls in the

⁷ Like Sandro before, Balbuena’s conviction apparently was inflated, in his case from trespassing to burglary. Along with Sandro, I detail Balbuena’s case in chapter four.

Dominican Republic; he also had a son back in Florida. Balbuena was doing well as a manager in a call center and quite reflective of his life circumstances when we spoke.

Bosety (interview recorded May 24, 2010) is the only interviewee I did not get to know well. He was referred to me by the same lawyer who had referred me to Delio, having worked for her conducting phone interviews as well. Bosety was thirty-three years old in 2010 and had been deported less than a year prior to my interviewing him, in September of 2009, after serving six years in federal prison for selling drugs. He had moved to New York City from the Dominican Republic at age fourteen, so spent about eighteen years in the U.S. Bosety was a father of two children living in New York with their mother and lived with extended family in Santo Domingo. He had the strongest Spanish accent of anyone I worked with and, though friendly, seemed less interested in working with me. Nevertheless, the one time I met him, he was helpful and courteous.

Finally, Leo (interview recorded June 7, 2010) was nearing forty-five years old when I met him in 2008. He moved with his family to New York City, living mostly in Queens, at age two. His first return trip to the Dominican Republic came the year prior to my meeting him, at forty-three, when he was deported after many years of drug arrests. Perhaps not surprisingly, due to his length of time in the U.S. and the relatively short time since he had been deported, of all the deportees I met, Leo was the most out of place in Santo Domingo (though Wilbur and Ramses were close), a stereotypical New Yorker in language and demeanor. He was fortunate enough to have an aunt in the *Zona Colonial* take him in and provide him with a home. Back in the U.S., Leo had extended family, but no children. Like Ramses, Leo also worked in call centers at times; he had also continued his drug abuse from the U.S., which was an ongoing struggle. Leo was extraordinarily talkative, and, to be blunt, a bit of a “bullshitter” who had

much experience with unethical enterprise, such as phone scams. That said, I liked him very much. Despite our quite distinct backgrounds, we could talk for hours seemingly about anything. And as far as I know, he never attempted to cheat me. He was quite helpful to me and, again, probably due to his high degree of “Americanness,” he seemed to enjoy hanging out with me.

E. **Deportee Identity in the Research Process: Narrating Their Stories**

As discussed, my identity as a researcher is important for understanding how the responses of participants may be shaped by my relationship to the deportees. Also of importance to the research encounter is the effect this process has on the participants and the implications of this for their own identity formation. The narratives the deportees told me provided me with data for this dissertation—but they also reflect and further shape their own ideas about who they are. Thus, the research process has important implications for the worldview of the deportees, how they see themselves, and the action they take.

According to Somers (1994:606), “it is through narratives that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities.” From this perspective, it is important to see beyond only the process of relating narratives, or people representing themselves through the stories they tell. Rather, this view entails seeing their story-telling as ontological, that their stories aren’t merely a means of representing themselves, but play a role in how they see themselves and, in turn, drive action. This notion is supported by Biehl et al. (2007) who indicate that subjectivity is best understood as the result of persons’ actions, behavior, or performativity as opposed to serving as the source of actions, behavior, or performativity. That is, persons are constituted through their

social experience. Rorty (2007) extends this point by indicating that subjectivity is not an essence but rather a construction embedded in social relations.

This perspective links narrative and identity, which in turn links the concepts of action and identity, which allows us to more effectively understand the agency deportees exercise to reckon their social positions (Somers 1994). Close attention to the narratives of deportees offers a look into how what they tell themselves, articulated by recounting to me, serves to legitimate their identities in a system that has deemed them illegitimate. Specifically, many of the participants often took on dominant U.S. narratives and culturally positioned themselves outside the Dominican Republic.

Examples of this came out following such interview questions as “What do you think makes someone a good citizen?” Despite having been expelled from the country for a criminal conviction, their responses tended to emphasize the importance of good behavior, reinforcing a civic responsibility narrative in dominant U.S. discourse. Sandro’s response nicely represents this: “Someone who works, goes to school, finishes college⁸, and just stays out of trouble. A good citizen I call someone who goes by the law, who follows the law. Once you follow the law you’re a good citizen because you’re not getting in trouble, you’re staying out of trouble.” Sandro’s response when I had asked whether people who get deported deserve the same rights as other immigrants appealed to good behavior as well: “Not really, because if other immigrants are not getting in trouble, there’s no reason why you should deserve what another person who’s doing the right thing, who’s following the law is getting.”

Delio continued to set the trend of referring to good behavior, stressing the importance of work, as Sandro had also mentioned. Regarding good behavior, Delio even implicated himself

⁸ I was particularly struck by the reference to finishing college. Neither Sandro nor any of the deportees I worked with had graduated from college (though a few did have some sort of post-secondary education).

as an example of what not to do, almost as if forced to do so by the power of the civic responsibility narrative underlying his thoughts: “You know, do the right thing. Try to go, you know, work for a living, instead of doing the wrong things, like I did, you know. And, you know, take good care of your friends and family. And try to get along with the people you work with.” In a similar manner, Wilbur’s response stressed the importance of community integration: “Well, a good citizen is somebody that gets along with the other citizens and their neighbors, and they try to take care of where they live. That’s a good citizen.” Balbuena drew out the importance of the sort of community integration Wilbur touched on:

You cannot go to somebody else country and mess up their lifestyle. Let’s say for example, you’re a citizen of the U.S. and I’m not and I live right next to you and you always clean your front yard; but I live next to you and I’m always throwing garbage to your house. Come on, do you think I deserve to be in your country when I’m just messing up your country, getting it dirty every day? That’s just a simple example that I’m using. But that’s just reality, you know. Why you going to go to somebody else’s country and do what a lot of us sometimes do. Why don’t you do it in your own country?

I responded by mentioning the fact that he was moved to the U.S. by his mother when he was a child, in an effort to bring in the relevance of having no choice but to live in the U.S. and thereby not being a guest in the typical sense. He concurred, “I had no choice when I was a kid,” but added nothing further. In any case, in his response, Balbuena extended the civic responsibility narrative to the responsibility of private property ownership, even at the expense of incorporating himself.

Throughout interview questions and general conversation, the deportees I worked with often brought up myriad issues related to their position in Dominican Society. In some cases, deportees were generally fitting in and adjusting well. For example, with regard to growing up in Dominican communities in New York and elsewhere in the U.S., I commented in my notes,

“Though they’re not used to living here, for some, it may not be the shock it may seem. Difficult in many ways. But perhaps familiar in some ways as well” (May 28, 2008).

However, most of the deportees I worked with faced significant issues with adjustment, issues that often entailed significant discontent with the Dominican Republic, generating often biting criticisms. An employee at the call center where I worked characterized his impression of his arrival to the country a few years before in decidedly dubious terms: “The Dominican Republic: where shit stinks and piss smells,” evidently casting the country as inferior in markers of what he saw as development. Balbuena once commented more substantively, evoking the narrative of the U.S. a land of opportunity: “The U.S. offers you a lot of opportunity for you to become a better man, for you to succeed in life, for you to have a better way of living. The Dominican Republic do not offer you that.” Ramses spoke harshly of the people, clearly positioning his identity outside them:

You know, like basically Dominicans don’t give a shit—they don’t care about each other, basically. They’re all about money, or whatever you know. They’re always trying to like get better for themselves, you know what I’m saying. Make better for themselves; they don’t care about nobody else man, really.

For someone who grew up making his way in the streets of New York—where many were out for themselves and money was all-important (as it is in most situations)—this did not seem to me it would be so jarring. Also, pointing out that Dominicans “don’t give a shit” and “don’t care about each other” struck me as odd, since it was American authorities who had banished him from his home there. But then again, his narrative accounts of Dominicans were coming from someone outside the Dominican Republic, in a place less familiar, a place that was not considered home. Perhaps the attachment of these problems to a people and culture Ramses found unfamiliar, and even objectionable—yet now forced to be a part of—led to harsher and biased judgment. In any case, he clearly positioned himself outside the Dominican Republic.

Referring to the difference between cases of short-term residents of the U.S. and cases of long-term residents such as him, Leo pointed out, “‘cause some of them has only lasted, they got deported maybe three years in the country, so they’re really, they’re the product from here. They were a product already built here, so they’re not going to miss anything. They’re home.” To make the contrast, Leo indicated, “But for people that never actually traveled, this is a shock. And it almost cost me my life.” Leo continued,

This is a great country too, don’t get me wrong. I’m starting to love it, but it’s never my home, you understand. I was born here—I’m actually living in the house that I actually, was a kid, remember I told you I lived next door when I was a baby. So when I go out to the ceiling, sometimes out in the hallway, I try to remember when I was a little baby, but I can’t. But I can remember 42nd Street [laughs].

Indeed, Leo, as I mentioned, was quite out of place: a New Yorker lost in a foreign country. Leo almost always said “dollars” when he meant “pesos.” He also complained about the loud *merengue* music played through bus speakers and had a hard time with the way cars pull out and the traffic in general.⁹ I shared these two annoyances with Leo. As I recorded in my notes, “In these ways he’s like me—used to America” (June 8, 2008).

The same could be said for Carmen, who, as I mentioned, was the only female deportee I ever met. Though I did not conduct formal interviews with her, I did take note of several points she made in our conversations. Regarding being used to America, Carmen plainly stated, “I hate speaking Spanish, I fucking hate Dominicans,” following with, “Excuse my language, I’m so Bronx, I’m so Bronx.” She commented derogatorily on visiting a Dominican doctor “for whatever potions they got there” and frequently referred to Dominican customs and circumstances she felt at odds with, including clothing, romantic relationships, and general attitudes. She summed it up with a declaration making clear her discontent with the country and

⁹ Essentially, the convention is the opposite of the U.S.; cars have—or take, anyway—the right of way at intersections with pedestrians crossing.

her preference for the U.S.: “I’m going back by any means necessary.” By way of these narratives, Carmen and Leo, like Ramses earlier, positioned themselves outside Dominican society.

Luis (who, as I mentioned in the introduction, discussed his deportation with me and generally provided me with help), by contrast, was relatively well adjusted, generally getting along well, and fitting in among non-deportees. Regarding his position in Santo Domingo, I recorded in my notes, “I admire the handle he seems to have on himself as he is oriented in his situation. He knows where he is, who and what is around him, and what he and those people are doing” (May 26, 2008). Nevertheless, like Wilbur, Luis was prone to distancing himself from Dominican society and critiquing cultural differences, what might be called the “Dominicanness” of the locals. For example, he expressed his discontent with how Dominicans are not “on point” when, exasperated, he commented, “You say ten o’clock, they don’t understand that shit.” Indeed, having grown up in the U.S. as well, I also found different conceptions of timeliness frustrating.

A scenario at Delio’s house brought to light a set of narratives that incorporated identifying with the U.S. through material goods from there. When I was staying with Delio his older sister visited for two or three weeks, staying with Delio and other family members and friends. Ahead of her trip, she had sent a large box with goods for Delio and others, including towels, shower curtains, purses, kitchen wares, and canned foods. Delio mentioned she visits a place in Massachusetts called Hunger for Heaven and obtains canned foods. Delio was happy with the shipment because of the quality of the items, believing those that come from the U.S. are better than local products. Holding up the tag of a towel to me, he said, “See, this is Martha Stewart, made in India, so it’s better quality.” Over my time with him, Delio made several

references to the superiority of products from the U.S. (or, perhaps more accurately, those from U.S.-based companies), including parts for his ever-falling apart 1979 Datson.

Delio's appeals to the U.S. didn't stop at trivial household products. Regarding the political and economic state of affairs in the Dominican Republic, Delio commented, "I wish we were still controlled by Spain, because we would have their economy. We're independent, but we don't have shit. Countries that are controlled by a bigger country always have it better." He went on, "If the Dominican Republic were taken over by the U.S. like Puerto Rico, I would be in Massachusetts in two seconds. The first thing I would do is visit my mother." Once when speaking to Leo, he too made a comment that speaks to a belief in general U.S. superiority: "English should be the number one language in this country. Yes, it should be, it should be, because it's around the world."

Despite strong attachments to the U.S. that tended to entail strongly negative assessments of the Dominican Republic, when I directly asked deportees what they think of the Dominican Republic, ironically, responses included exceedingly positive accounts. Five interviewees began their responses quite simply: "It's great," "Oh, I think it's great," "Nice country, I love it," "I'm loving it," and "I love my country, I love my country." Two others offered more detail, one pointing out, "It's beautiful, the Dominican Republic. I love my country, really, you know," and the other even declaring, "Oh man, this is the best country in America¹⁰, man." Ramses even mentioned, "I wish I would have did the right thing out there in the States and would have came back here and retired maybe, you know."

¹⁰ Many people in the Dominican Republic (and, as far as I know, other parts of what most of us in the U.S. call "Latin America" and "the Caribbean") use the term "America" to refer to the overall region of the Western hemisphere. In the U.S., "the Americas" would more often be used for this purpose, particularly in academics, reserving "America" as short for the United States of America only. This difference led to some minor confusion when talking to some people in the Dominican Republic, prompting me to adopt the term "U.S. American" to refer to someone from the United States.

In my interpretation, these responses constitute an expression of narrative identity formation. In particular, these responses seem to function as attempts to cope with new surroundings by deportees telling themselves—and telling me—that their new environment, which is also a key part of their heritage, is ultimately good. Wilbur made a comment regarding adjusting to life in the Dominican Republic that speaks directly to this point:

But one thing I learned is you gotta make the best out of everything. If I gotta car, that's gotta be the best car, 'cause it's my car. So not enough people probably think like that, but I mean that's the way I see I have to think. Even though, if I was over there, I'd tell you I don't like it. But I'm here, so I have to like it, you understand?

“If you were in the U.S., you mean?”

“Yea, I would never come here.”

Here, Wilbur seems quite aware and even accepting of his rather artificially-placed position in Dominican society. Nevertheless, he remains in touch with his true feelings: that the Dominican Republic is not where he would prefer to be, that it is not his home. Golash-Boza (2014:70) found similar expressions in Jamaica, pointing out that one of her participants was “trying to convince himself that he wants to come to terms with his Jamaican identity and with the fact that he now lives in Jamaica” and that he “struggles with the feeling that New York is where he belongs, even though his deportation makes it clear that his official place of belonging is Jamaica.”

The preceding accounts constitute important implications for how deportees position themselves in their new home country and how what they express to me reflects how they see themselves in this situation and even how they live it. In many cases, they speak of Dominicans as “others,” making it clear their own perceived outside status. Their stories make clear that they position themselves outside Dominican cultural practices, and, indeed, Dominican society in

general. Their conceptions of their identities as elucidated through these narratives fits well with how Somers (1994:14) characterizes how she and other researchers had come to understand that:

people construct identities (however multiple and changing) by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories; that “experience” is constituted through narratives; that people make sense of what has happened and is happening to them by attempting to assemble or in some way to integrate these happenings within one or more narratives; and that people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public, and cultural narratives.

The deportees I worked with were living out episodes of their lives and recounting them, thereby further making sense of the meaning of their lives. Here we see that, as Somers (1994:13-14) points out, “social life itself is *storied* and that narrative is an *ontological condition of social life*.” Their narratives then can be read as attempts to narrate an identity that links them back to the U.S., by way of telling their stories to me. My conducting fieldwork with them brings out these stories; therefore, the ethnographic encounter, and my identity as a researcher, is instrumental in producing them. In the next chapter, I review important work from immigration studies and deportation and discuss some of the implications for my work and ways in which my work builds on these established contributions.

III. UNDERSTANDING THE SITUATION: RELEVANT RESEARCH FROM IMMIGRATION STUDIES AND THE EMERGING STUDY OF DEPORTATION

A. Introductory Remarks

In *The Deportation Regime*, De Genova and Peutz (2010:vii) note that “both scholarly and public discourse about deportation has been terribly disabled.” They add, “the social and political ramifications of deportation and the attendant condition of deportability remain very much underexamined and insufficiently explored” (Peutz and De Genova 2010:5) and point out that deportation tends to fall under the general realm of enforcement rather than be “recognized to be a distinct policy option with its own sociopolitical logic, as well as far-reaching effects” (Peutz and De Genova 2010:1). In other words, failing to take into account the social and political forces driving deportation will not allow us to effectively understand the process. With regard to increased deportations against the backdrop of militarized borders and increased security measures, De Genova (2010: 34) points out that “deportation has thus recently achieved an unprecedented prominence.” However, he is rightfully dissatisfied with the lack of corresponding academic scrutiny. In this chapter I examine contributions from immigration studies and recent work on deportation, positioning within it my work with long-term legal residents of the U.S. deported to the Dominican Republic after facing conviction for a crime.

B. Approaching the Study of Deportation

Though I began this dissertation by discussing Santo Domingo, where I met and began to work with deportees, in many ways the most important places for their stories are hundreds of miles away in the United States. With the U.S. celebrated by many as a “nation of immigrants,” immigration and its related processes hold a particularly interesting place in the minds of many in the nation. Golash-Boza (2012a) explicitly evokes this trope to open a discussion on detentions and deportations. However, though historically immigration tends to be seen as

celebratory in the national imagination, the subject tends to cast a quite different image in the current and recent political climate.

Importantly, the label of the U.S. as a “nation of immigrants” is a poor representation of the makeup of the nation. Coutin (2007) takes exception with the phrase as well and coins the phrase “nations of emigrants,” even titling the book the phrase comes from *Nations of Emigrants*. She argues that the new phrase, “highlights both the interconnectedness of nations and the fact that immigrants come from somewhere else.” After all, in pointing out that immigration goes beyond simply one country taking in immigrants, Coutin (2007:4) observes, “in addition, it connects countries in regional and transnational labor, social, familial, and political networks.”

Overall, the country is made up predominately of the descendants of immigrants (including, of course, some forced) from the last three centuries. Descendants of native peoples represent a relatively small portion of the U.S. population, contributing just over 1% (U.S. Census Bureau, State & County QuickFacts, 2012). The current foreign-born population in the U.S. is approximately forty million people or almost 13% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, How Do We Know?).

This means the U.S. is, by far, predominately a nation of native-born citizens. To imagine these people as some sort of immigrants because of their heritage obscures the very real situation of immigration for those today who face the hardships of leaving their homes to settle in the United States. The immigrants of today will bring about generations of descendants who, like most Americans now, will not be immigrants themselves. Nevertheless, though the U.S. is not exactly “a nation of immigrants,” indeed, millions of people who live in the country were

born in another country. They are immigrants. And they face an increasingly stringent and punitive U.S. immigration system that is turning out record rates of deportations.

These deportations stem from a long line of restrictive measures regarding immigration in the U.S. Ngai (2004) points out that in the last hundred years, measures restricting immigration have increased considerably and can be traced to the wartime nationalism of World War I, as well as the economic situation the United States had found itself in around that era. At about that time, the country's economy no longer *needed* high levels of immigration to feed the industrial systems it had been growing since the previous century. However, this restriction can be traced back yet further; indeed, it has been part of the governing system that has allowed—and thereby rejected as well—national membership since the inception of the nation (Chacón and Davis 2006). The history of naturalization acts in the U.S. shows a steady increase in restrictive measures for obtaining U.S. citizenship.

The first U.S. act regarding citizenship, the Naturalization Act of 1790, carried the now-infamous provision that only “free white persons” were eligible to apply for naturalized citizenship. Those eligible were required to hold a minimum of two years of residence in the U.S. and good moral character. Over time, members from other groups were granted citizenship; however, over that same time, more restrictive measures were also put in place, often along “racial” lines. For example, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 explicitly deemed immigrants from China, “racially ineligible” for citizenship (Chacón and Davis 2006).

Acts from the late seventeen hundreds well into the nineteen hundreds, continued this trend of restrictions and profoundly shaped the makeup of the country. For example, The Indian Removal Act of 1830 commanded the removal of Native Americans east of Mississippi River to reservations in Oklahoma (which would not become a state for another seventy-seven years), the

mass movement of indigenous people also known as “The Trail of Tears.” In 1868, the fourteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States granted citizenship to all persons born in the U.S. However, citizenship rights for Native American and Asian groups remained elusive, restricted by acts specifically pertaining to them that were not repealed for several years. The first time immigration law prohibited specified immigrants came *after* the fourteenth amendment in the Immigration Act of 1875, which excluded criminals and prostitutes from admission.

Restriction of this sort was further controlled with the advent of the national origins quota system taking full effect in 1924 (Ngai 2004). Importantly, Ngai (2004) points out that this system, in place until the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (also known as the Hart–Celler Act), re-mapped ethnic and “racial” boundaries based on new categories and hierarchies of difference. Nations had now been sufficiently racialized, and this system granted entry to proportionally many more northern Europeans, further securing a dominant national group based on “race.” In general, around this time, racialization, fueled by what could be called the “scientific racism” of the era, became more about differences between people (Ngai 2004:7-8). Without question, U.S. immigration policy and measures for obtaining citizenship have been selectively restrictive from the beginning.

More recent changes to how immigration is administered in the U.S. continue this trend. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in its early days fell under the direction of the Department of Labor before settling under the Department of Justice in the 1940s. There it remained until 2003 when, under the newly developed Department of Homeland Security, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) ceased to exist, having its primary functions refashioned into the new entity Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). This progression

nicely, if disturbingly, reflects the changing lens immigration has been viewed with over the years. From being primarily rooted in issues of labor, then to law-related matters concerning the Justice Department, and now to Homeland Security, the implication here is clear.

The need to address the circumstances and ramifications of all matters of immigration is immense, as immigration has become the fastest growing sector of federal law enforcement spending in approximately the past two decades, with spending on services to assist with settling in the U.S. trailing a great distance (Kretsedemas and Brotherton 2008). Also, enforcement and detention have seen substantial budget increases and have been given greater interpretive power for cases. As Morawetz (2000: 1949) put it several years ago, “Overall, the INS’s approach to enforcement suggests an agency mentality in which the principal goal is to demonstrate increased numbers of criminal alien deportations.” More recently, Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2013:278) indicate that “President Obama’s focus has been not only on deporting more people, but deporting more immigrants convicted of crimes.” From 2004 to 2011, Congressional funding for programs focused on criminal immigrant removal increased *thirty-fold*, from \$23 million to \$690 million (Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013).

C. Immigration Studies and Deportation

To begin framing the overarching issue of immigrants facing this punitive system, Menjívar and Abrego (2012) refer to the increasing conflation of immigration law and criminal law as “legal violence,” pointing to the undue hardship and suffering deportation inflicts on communities that face family separation. Rosas (2012:8) similarly speaks of the “direct and indirect political violence” entailed in the power relations of nation-states that makes certain people their subjects. Indeed, the coming together of immigration and criminal law and the power of nation-states have had a profound effect on the participants in my study. They find

themselves deported to a country they don't know well or at all. This section further outlines some important work in the realm of immigration studies that can be applied to cases of deportation to more effectively understand the experiences of living through it.

In examining the lives of Guatemalan immigrants in the U.S., Menjívar (2006:1000) focuses on how “immigrants’ legal status shapes who they are, how they relate to others, their participation in local communities and their continued relationship with their homelands.” In particular, she focuses on the “liminal legality” between the legal categories of documented and undocumented, exploring how the status of being in-between shapes various sociocultural spheres of life. She points out that, “immigration law creates and recreates an excluded population and ensures its vulnerability and precariousness by blurring the boundaries of legality and illegality” (Menjívar 2006:1002). As for participants in my study, though they were legal permanent residents, their deportation clearly demonstrates that their legal status was tenuous. They could live much of social life as citizens would; however, without citizenship, they nevertheless lived in a rather extended liminal position in the legal sense.

Abrego (2011) points out that the life-stage at the time of movement is crucial to informing the legal consciousness of undocumented immigrants. Members of the 1.5 generation, those who moved to the U.S. at a very young age, often do not know much about why their families migrated. Though not undocumented, this applies to most of the deportees I worked with as well. Having moved to the U.S. at young ages—and legally—most had not been concerned with conditions in the Dominican Republic or their legal status, which, as I pointed out, was tenuous. Abrego (2011) points out that members of the 1.5 generation do not feel they deserve exclusion associated with legal status. The (former) legal permanent residents I worked with expressed similar feelings. While he points out that deportation is a “concrete fear” for

undocumented immigrants (more so for first-generation as opposed to members of the 1.5 generation), as I go on to point out in chapter four, the legal permanent residents I worked with did not even know they could be deported. Thus, in this way, the way they live their lives with regard to legal consciousness tends to be different from that of the undocumented.

In general, the “context of reception” will be important in shaping how immigrants fare in the receiving country. This has been expressed in the concept of segmented assimilation, which points to differing resources immigrants have access to and the related differing outcomes in incorporation immigrants face (Portes and Zhou 1993, cited in Menjívar 2006:1002). In the case of deportees, the receiving country, the second one for their life courses, is the one where they were born. The context in which they are received is generally not welcoming and is riddled with obstacles to overcome. Therefore, while deportees’ assimilation in the U.S. was segmented when they were children, they again face segmentation as deportees in their “home” land. This time, they are seen as American and criminal and therefore forced to navigate a rather unwelcoming context of reception.

To further understand how immigrants find themselves in the social landscape, Zavella (2011) offers the concept “peripheral vision.” This condition “occurs when an event triggers our awareness and we gain a new perspective about possible options or meanings.” The feelings entailed in peripheral vision are “based on frequent reminders that one’s situation is unstable in comparison to those on the other side.” Further, the poor or those whose “daily lives are influenced by globalization” are more susceptible to experiencing the condition of peripheral vision (Zavella 2011:8). Deportees certainly face such a condition, particularly those in regular contact with the U.S., such as call center employees or tour guides. They can “see” the life they

used to have and develop a transnational subjectivity that Zavella (2011:9) characterizes as feeling “that one is neither from here nor from there, not at home anywhere.”

Finally, related to the process that take place in the context of reception, Stephen (2007:23) takes the transnational as a subset of a greater “transborder experience.” While not discounting the national, a transborder perspective seeks to account for the additional borders migrants are crossing, such as “ethnic, cultural, and regional borders within the United States.” Certainly, deportees face such conditions upon their return to the Dominican Republic. Many arrive in the Dominican Republic culturally American and must then navigate a new cultural landscape in addition to the new national border they have crossed. These contributions from immigration studies help situate the experiences of deportees, conceptually framing their situation. With this understanding of how the situation of deportees can be framed conceptually within immigration studies, I now turn to work that specifically addressed deportation.

D. A Close Look at the Current Study of Deportation

As mentioned, deportation has not received a great deal of academic attention. In reference to the importance of freedom of movement and its fundamental importance for basic liberty, De Genova (2010: 33) characterizes the position of deportation as “relegated to an ominous political neglect as well as an astounding theoretical silence,” further noting that its inextricable connection with national sovereignty is about the only attention it gets.

De Genova and Peutz (2010:vii) also stress the lack of engagement with deportation as an area of study by pointing to “the relative myopia and mutual inscrutability that characterize the insularity of academic disciplines” as a major cause. Whatever the causes, they are indeed correct that deportation has received little attention beyond guest appearances in treatments of immigration in general. The volume *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things* (2005), which deals not

with deportation, but with criminalized transnational flows (including immigration), echoes this concern in the greater sense:

As far as conception is concerned, moving people are typically categorized in relation to fixed social formations. The fact that mobile people are less visible to social scientists guarantees that they often appear in social theory as obscure, fleeting figures, as peripheral social actors with a lowly status in the world order, and as faceless outsiders who fit imperfectly into neat representations of social reality. In general, mobile groups are of interest primarily as they move between the units that count. As such, they are often taken to be deviant, dangerous, and out of control” (Abraham and van Schendel 2005:11-12).

Drawing on the work of another researcher, they add,

As David Ludden puts it, “Modernity consigned human mobility to the dusty dark corners of archives that document the hegemonic space of national territorialism. As a result, we imagine that mobility is border crossing, as though borders came first and mobility second.” (Abraham and van Schendel 2005:11)

This point on the relationship between movement and borders emphasizes that the very way in which we tend to see such movements of people is fundamentally flawed.

Though academic (or other) treatments of deportation are indeed lacking, the good news is that recently they have been increasing. The last few years have seen some extremely important publications that not only draw our attention to the importance of deportation as an area of study, but deeply analyze its history, the processes it encompasses, and its specific as well as broad consequences.

The Deportation Regime: Sovereignty, Space, and the Freedom of Movement, is an impressively multifarious collection of cases and perspectives edited by Nicholas De Genova and Nathalie Peutz (2010) that brings together analyses of deportation from a variety of academic perspectives and geographical areas. The areas of focus are predominately outside the United States (that is, cases in which the focus is deportation from countries other than the U.S.) in an effort to demonstrate the global impact of deportation. Furthermore, the focus is largely on the

deportation of undocumented immigrants, as evidenced by several references to deportation and its relationship to “‘illegal aliens’,” “‘unauthorized’ or ‘irregular’ migration,” “traversing state borders...without ‘permission,’” “undocumented migration,” “those who have allegedly violated the material and symbolic boundaries of ‘the nation,’” and other references to undocumented migration (Peutz and De Genova 2010:1-2).

As an important aside, readers will note that terms that differentiate undocumented migrants from any other sort of person have quotation marks in the original text. For example, when referring to people as illegal aliens and the process of undocumented migration, they write “aliens” and “undocumented migration.” The editors explain that they deploy this device intentionally “in a persistent effort to emphatically de-naturalize the reification of this invidious distinction” (Peutz and De Genova 2010:3). I support this convention and I applaud them for effectively explaining their use of it. Additionally, a similar convention and set of explanations are useful when identifying “races” with terms based on skin tone, such as “white,” and “black,” as well as “racial” terms that tend to refer to geographic origin, such as “Asian.” I adopt this convention in this dissertation.

This work offers theoretical engagements directed at framing our understanding of deportation, particularly with regard to state power. For example, De Genova (2010:39) indicates that the way migration functions “remains a permanent and incorrigible affront to state sovereignty and the power of the state to manage its social space through law and the violence of law enforcement,” adding a further appeal for its close examination:

Thus deportation in particular must emerge as a premier locus for the further theoretical elaboration of the co-constituted problems of the state and its putative sovereignty, on the one hand, and that elementary precondition of human freedom which is the freedom of movement.

In chapter seven I incorporate theoretical explanations from this work in my examination of citizenship and the role of state in configuring the situation of mass deportations.

Other recent works share my focus on cases of long-term legal residents deported after facing conviction for a crime. Important works by anthropologist Susan Coutin (2010, 2007, 2003, 2000) highlight the issues of surviving as a deportee as well, along with important discussions regarding implications for law. Coutin broadly examines emigration from El Salvador to the U.S. Her focus is the plight of Salvadorian migrants and the struggle for many to get out of that country and reside in the U.S., which includes gang affiliation¹¹. A facet of this is the deportation of adult residents who moved to the U.S. as children from El Salvador.

Among Coutin's points of focus is the trials and displacement deportees face in the country of their birth. For example, regarding these deportees, she points out the "disjuncture between their legal and social selves" (Coutin 2007:33). My work is situated the same conceptually, but it differs in that I attend to this condition as my primary focus. I focus far-reaching effects and implications, including transnational survival strategies involving call center work. In this way, I add to Coutin's discussion of deportation by detailing a case that demonstrates a previously unexamined facet of deportee survival in the country of birth. I incorporate Coutin's important contributions to understanding implications for citizenship and the legal dimensions it encompasses.

Golash-Boza (2014, 2012) has also conducted important work on deportation, even recently exploring the transnational coping strategies of deportees, referring to the process of deportation as "forced transnationalism" (2014:63). As she points out regarding a deportee in Jamaica she worked with:

¹¹ Anthropologist Elena Zilberg (2011) offers ethnographic analysis of life after deportation as well, focusing on transnational gang formation between Los Angeles and El Salvador.

O’Ryan uses transnational strategies to cope with separation from his family and friends. His emotional life is still in New York. He maintains constant contact with people there to “live his life,” as he put it, and his friends and family in New York are the most important people in his life. After seven years in Jamaica, he still finds it difficult to accept that his exile to Jamaica is permanent and that he cannot return to New York (Golash-Boza 2014:69)

She goes on to discuss the emotional conundrum inherent in relying on transnational strategies in this scenario. The deportees rely on these strategies to survive, yet, simultaneously, the strategies are a constant reminder of the alienation and exclusion they face.

Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2013) and Golash-Boza (2014) stress the gendered stigma many male deportees face as they can no longer send remittances but rather often receive them after deportation. In particular, they point to the shame male deportees expressed in needing additional support to survive, assigning the men to “a newfound position as ‘dependent’ instead of provider” (Golash-Boza 2014:72). Though she spoke to few women for her study (mostly because far fewer women are deported¹²), Golash-Boza (2014:76) indicate that while “many men feel emasculated by their inability to provide for their families, and even to fend for themselves as deportees,” women, “by contrast, find it normal that others should help them out, so long as they also help themselves.” Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2013:272) characterize the current phase of mass deportation as a “gendered racial removal program,” pointing to the disproportionate effects of deportation on males of color. Incorporating gender “as a construct that organizes social life” rather than simply as a “variable” is consistent with Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila’s (1997:550) important work on motherhood, addressed necessary adjustments to the transnational perspective.

¹² As detailed in Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2013), DHS had not publically released data on the gender (or sex) of deportees since 1997. For most of the early 1990s, female deportees constituted less than 10% of the total. In 1997, the proportion reached 16%.

Important work by Kanstroom closely examines deportation from the U.S. and its far-reaching implications, both in historical contexts (Kanstroom 2007) and the current situation, with a focus on the ramifications of sending people to their countries of birth (Kanstroom 2012). His focus is mostly on the legal dimensions of deportation, such as examinations of the process and its implications for the law. In this context, he also addresses the effects of return for the deportee, as well as the family left behind in the U.S. His insights prove valuable for understanding the full stories of deportation, rather than simply how it works. I incorporate many of his insights to help frame the overall situation of deportation; my work differs by focusing more on the lived experience, providing ethnographic accounts of living the process of deportation.

The most directly relevant book on deportation for my particular cases is *Banished to the Homeland: Dominican Deportees and Their Stories of Exile* (2011) by sociologist David C. Brotherton (whose earlier work I have mentioned) and psychologist Luis Barrios, the two researchers I was in contact with as I began my study. I went on to work directly with them in the Dominican Republic as well. Their book traces Dominican deportation in the broadest sense. First they look at emigration from the Dominican Republic and settling in the U.S., including matters of trouble with the law in the U.S., confronting the prison system, and, finally, the process of deportation. They then focus on living as a deportee in the Dominican Republic, focusing on stigmatization and survival strategies. They also cover deportees who face the prison system in the Dominican Republic, as well as those who return illegally to the U.S. Throughout, I use their findings to accentuate my own explanations of deportee survival.

Though my work focuses on the same issue in the same place, my work differs from that of Brotherton and Barrios in three important ways. First, I closely consider the role of

citizenship and state power in mediating the deportation situation. In Brotherton and Barrios, the authors focus more on issues of social problems, including drug use, prison life, and other matters pertaining to criminology. Second, though my work and theirs both focus on lived experiences of deportees and make extensive use of deportee testimonials, I use their words to speak to the theoretical issues at stake, as well as to their own subject positions as deportees. Finally, I demonstrate how deportees function as transnational migrants linking the U.S. and the Dominican Republic by way of work as call center agents. Brotherton and Barrios mention call center work, but it is only a brief aside and they do not treat it as an analytical category for the livelihood of deportees.

Without exception, these works on deportation are impressive and offer invaluable material to more closely examine this ever-increasing issue. My dissertation is an extension of the ethnographic work, imbued by the legal implications and theoretical engagements regarding citizenship and state power, but grounded in the lived experience of deportees. I build on the contributions of previous work by taking research on deportation to new realms primarily with my areas of focus on deportee transnational survival strategies, including call center work. Importantly, I also use the words of deportees themselves to speak to key issues, including their subjectivities and where they fit in the realm of citizenship. My analytic voice is heard throughout; however, my focus is conveying the experienced voice—the thoughts, feelings, and impressions, of those who have been deported. In the next chapter I provide an explanation of Dominican emigration to the U.S., which established the population that produced the deportees I would come to work with.

IV. ORIGINS OF THE DEPORTABLE POPULATION: DOMINICAN EMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

A. Introductory Remarks

These stories of deportation begin with emigration from the Dominican Republic of families with young children who grow up to be deported. Therefore, it is important to examine the greater conditions that foster this immigrant flow in the first place. Emigration from the Dominican Republic to the U.S. has been strong for over fifty years, giving rise to a large transnational population (Georges 1990). By the late 1990s, about one of every ten people of Dominican origin was living outside the Dominican Republic, predominately in New York City and nearby in the northeast (with the notable exception of Miami) (Duany 2004; Grasmuck and Pessar 1991). In this chapter, I explore the historical background of Dominican immigration and some of the relevant contemporary manifestations of these flows. I begin with a critical examination of the global economic conditions that frame it.

B. The Greater Context for Dominican Immigration

The significant flows of people from the Dominican Republic are rooted in a globalized economic order that sets the stage for such movement. In particular, neoliberal economics is especially important to the movement of people under conditions of globalization. Sassen (1999) points to a contradictory trend that emerges under neoliberalism. On one hand, neoliberal policies promote a drive to create border-free economic spaces. The easier and less regulated capital can flow, the better.

Yet, despite the unevenness neoliberalism evidently creates, opportunities to flee its negative effects have become more difficult to fulfill. That is, as borders have opened to the movement of capital, the pathways from the borders of the less economically and politically powerful to those of the wealthy and dominant are increasingly blocked to the movement of

people. This imbalance protects the economic interests of the wealthy and dominant, often to the detriment of the less powerful, which tend to serve in sites of production and resource extraction. Sharma and Gupta (2006) note the same trend regarding the effort of some states to stop the offshoring of U.S. jobs, all the while insisting on loose borders for the flow of capital to their advantage. They call this situation "the neoliberal catch" (Sharma and Gupta 2006:5).

Indicating the importance of neoliberalism for understanding how people live, Saad-Filho and Johnston (2005) focus on the accumulation and social discipline it entails. In particular, they cast neoliberalism as a world-wide strategy that carries out imperialistic goals of dominant nation-states. To carry out neoliberal goals, a powerful nation's ruling class forms alliances with locally dominant capitalist coalitions. As Saad-Filho and Johnston (2005) further point out, interest rate manipulation is the key tool for neoliberal economic policy. Neoliberalism, then, is about working with the intricacies of particular financial systems. Though neoliberalism entails exploitation, the internationalization of capitalism has always entailed exploitation (Duménil and Lévy 2005).

Neoliberalism is generally perceived as an ideology of the market and private interests rather than as state intervention (Ong 2006; Saad-Filho and Johnston 2005). Although the ideology appeals to faith in the market and the interests of private bodies, neoliberal momentum certainly requires state support. Indeed, the most basic feature of neoliberalism is systematic use of state power to impose (financial) market imperatives. This use of domestic state power is substituted internationally by globalization (Saad-Filho and Johnston 2005). For example, consider that most of the loaning practices of major banks over the several years precipitating the 2008 recession, though dubious, were legal. By enabling such practices, the state has been a powerful agent in the promotion of neoliberal economic interests. The state's maneuvers and

even machinations have made society "legible" by arranging the population in such a way that facilitates carrying out its functions (Scott 1998). Perhaps state intervention as it once was has decreased in the age of neoliberalism; but the state as an enabler is ever-important. Indeed, human rights efforts (Sharma and Gupta 2006) and welfare systems (Castles and Davidson 2000), though challenging to the nation-state's authority still rely on them to function. Ferguson (2006) argues that the state has not weakened, but rather it shifted much of its interests to business interests.

Suárez-Orozco, et al. (2005) point to preeminence of the postindustrial globalized economy and its "voracious appetite" for immigrant labor. In addition to the logic of contemporary economics, and the rise of communications and transportation technology, Suárez-Orozco, et al. (2005) cite large-scale immigration as one of the three main pillars of globalization, emphatically claiming, "First and foremost, globalization is about movement" (Suárez-Orozco, et al. 2005:3). The movement they refer to certainly concerns the capital, production, and distribution of the economic realm. However, most important, this movement concerns populations and cultures—people.

Addressing migration more directly, Suárez-Orozco, et al. (2005) note several specific ways that globalization has increased immigration. Furthermore, they point to the importance of taking globalization as the backdrop to an anthropological understanding of immigration. As for how globalization has increased immigration, globalized economies have been increasingly structured around a massive demand for foreign workers who move for the labor. Another reason globalization has stimulated new migration is its production of uneven results around the world. As globalized business has led to increasing profits for some, it has left few opportunities for employment and even devastated environmental and economic conditions in its wake (such

as the effects of NAFTA in Mexico). Many living under these conditions have responded by migrating.

In addition to the more concrete reasons that globalization stimulates migration, Suárez-Orozco, et al. (2005) also argue that new information, communication, and media technologies encourage new cultural expectations, tastes, consumption practices, and lifestyle choices. With relatively affordable mass transportation as a literal vehicle, immigration continues to be a metaphorical vehicle toward attaining a new media-influenced life. Yet as globalization destabilizes local economies and livelihoods, it generates fantasies that cannot be fulfilled for many others (Suárez-Orozco 2005). Over time, these processes generated massive flows of immigration from the Caribbean, including the Dominican Republic, particular cases I now examine.

C. **Characterizing Caribbean Immigration**

The Caribbean is known for its robust history of people from a wide variety of backgrounds moving in and around the region. The area was the first point of contact for European conquest beginning in 1492 and relatively quickly became the culturally and ethnically blended region it remains today. Following the infamous voyages from the Iberian peninsula, flows of migrants, mostly connected to colonization, from Britain, France, Netherlands, and Denmark, among others settled in the islands. The forced migration of Africans for slave labor, followed by Chinese and East Indian indentured workers, and later Arab migrants are only some the various historical sources of immigration that added to the diversity of the Caribbean (Castro 1999)¹³. The processes giving rise to the political and economic landscape of the Caribbean we have come to know were generally not peaceful (Galeano 1973); the region would go on to

¹³ See Williams (1984 [1970]) and Moya Pons (2007) for detailed accounts of the processes of settlement and colonization in the Caribbean, as well as the political circumstances of these processes, particularly with regard to international relationships to the U.S. See Moya Pons (2010) for a focus on the history of the Dominican Republic.

become the object of such a strong colonial presence that it also gave rise to a rich tradition of intellectual and literary counterstrikes in the works of Frantz Fanon, C. L. R. James, Paul Gilroy, and others that would address the racial injustice of such an imbalance of power¹⁴.

Regarding migration, due mostly to post-World War II changes in the world economic order, which is discussed in more detail later, the story of migration in the Caribbean took an unprecedented turn in the last century. For the first time, the region began experiencing mass emigration rather than immigration. A region built on relatively recent influxes of migrants was now becoming a main source of out-migration, fueled largely by economic opportunities elsewhere and the related economic downturn there.

The Caribbean now serves as one of the most significant sending regions for all U.S. immigration. This "immigration countertransition" makes the situation of Caribbean migration differ from what Castro (1999:1) calls the "immigration transition" in much of Europe and Asia. For many years, countries in Europe and Asia were leading exporting countries of immigrants. In more recent years, these countries have become destinations for immigrants.

Most Caribbean countries (and those of Latin America) have experienced the opposite trend. After hundreds of years of people adding themselves—and being added—to the region, Castro (1999) points out that migration into the Caribbean from outside it has virtually stopped. Nevertheless, migration remains a significant issue for the region. But rather than people moving in, people have been moving out in extremely large numbers (and in the case of return migrants, back in as well).

Though the Caribbean and Latin America experience international, but inter-regional migration, such as Haitians moving to the Dominican Republic, millions more have left the

¹⁴ See Torres-Saillant (2006) for more on recent conceptions on Caribbean identity in historical and contemporary contexts.

region for the United States, as well as Europe. In the U.S., although the number of migrants from Mexico dwarfs that of any nation of the Caribbean (or anywhere else in the world), Dominicans (as well as Cubans, Haitians, and others), have migrated in great numbers as well. Key factors for characterizing a particular migration situation include the size of the migration flows, the length of time they have been steadily in progress, and their impact on sending and receiving societies.

According to Castro (1999), these factors as they play out in the Caribbean and Latin America make migration from these areas the most significant migratory movements in the world. Comparing immigration rates from the 1930s to the 1990s shows the rate of increase from the Caribbean and Latin America was ten times that of the world average (Castro 1999). Legal migration alone from Latin America and the Caribbean accounts for about half of all migrations to the U.S.

Like any world region, emigration from the Caribbean has its own sets of circumstances and causes. However, Caribbean migration also shares general traits with other current U.S. migration patterns. These migration patterns are based mostly on the reorganization of the world economy following World War II and especially since the 1960s. The liberalization of immigration policy in the 1965 Hart-Cellar immigration act, especially family-reunification provisions, had a great impact on the increase in migration. As Suárez-Orozco (2005:10) indicates, "The best predictor of who will migrate is who has already migrated." Family reunification measures made migration in the wake of relatives much easier. The lifting of import-export restrictions and the implementation of the eurodollar market added migrants along with capital, goods, and information to the increasing flows generated by these measures (Sassen 1988).

However, not all countries became large-scale exporters of migrants. Therefore, we must move beyond general migration trends and simple explanations such as high population density and poverty caused by poor economic conditions and look for region-specific causes (Sassen 1988). For example, both the nations of Hispaniola, the Dominican Republic and Haiti, faced considerable poverty and economic stagnation long before their citizens began emigrating in large numbers. What about the Caribbean region and the Dominican Republic in particular spurred mass emigration?

For the Caribbean region, investments by the U.S. in manufacturing for export have had a significant impact on emigration from the area to the U.S. Intuitively, direct foreign investment in manufacturing for export should slow migration, as this investment spurs the need for labor in the home country. Indeed, with more manufacturing jobs comes a greater need for labor. However, Sassen (1988) points out that, ironically, this has increased emigration from Caribbean countries to the U.S. Palmer (1990) supports this idea by pointing out that foreign capital stimulates growth, but creates only a limited number of employment opportunities in countries with high unemployment

Therefore, most Caribbean migration is a response to poor economic conditions—but economic conditions with specific causes, namely U.S. economic and political involvement. Palmer (1990) adds that migration occurs even from sectors of the economy that have labor shortages. The structure of the economy in these situations is often based on monopolies and weak organized labor. This brings about overall slow wage rate growth and general unemployment.

A more specific problem arises as well. Job opportunities created for these manufacturing jobs are often low-paying and less prestigious. The result has been a significant

increase in the number of women entering the workforce in Caribbean countries. Therefore, men, as well as women after they are laid off in what turn out to be high turnover employment situations, are spurred to migrate despite the prevalence of manufacturing jobs (Sassen 1988). To put it simply, increases in manufacturing for export to the U.S. have increased migration to the U.S.

D. **A Focus on Dominican Migration**

Leading emigration to the U.S. from the Caribbean is the Dominican Republic, the birthplace of about 1.5 million American residents (Motel and Patten, Pew Research 2012). As for the origins of this movement, restrictions on emigration lessened after the fall of the Dominican Republic's thirty-year dictator, Rafael Trujillo, in 1961. Additionally, the election of Juan Bosch in late 1962, the first democratically elected president in the country, led to further political instability that would spur migration. Bosch served as president for approximately seven months in 1963 before facing a U.S.-supported coup that created a stream of middle class political refugees into the U.S.

The stream of migrants from the Dominican was increased by the U.S. Marine deployment to Santo Domingo in 1965, an occupation that lasted well over one year and ended with “former right-hand man of Trujillo,” Joaquin Balaguer, being installed by the U.S. and an Interamerican Peace Force (Brotherton and Barrios 2011:35). Further, this occupation created important political and economic linkages with the U.S (Crandall 2006). This process had already been in place, stemming from a six-year Marine occupation from 1916-1922, following U.S. political intervention in the interest of access to the Panama Canal and general political instability in the Dominican Republic.

Following the fall of Trujillo and the further intervention of the U.S. Marines, the Dominican Republic saw a ten-fold increase in emigration in the 1960s (Sagás and Molina 2004; Hernandez 2002; Torres-Saillant and Hernandez 1995). As these developments became established, emigration to the U.S. seemed more and more a viable option for Dominicans. Before long, the Dominican Republic was a leading sending country of emigrants, with diaspora communities forming mostly in New York City and nearby areas.

Sassen (1988) points out similar connections between the U.S. and Haiti, Mexico, and some Asian countries. For example, the *bracero* guest-worker program not only brought thousands of Mexican workers to the U.S. in the mid-twentieth century, but, more important for the long-term migration situation, it promoted the idea of emigration to the U.S. for Mexicans as an option (and of course Mexican migration was also quite high prior to codification in the *bracero* program).

This contrasts with popular notions that general underdevelopment in certain countries leads to migration. After all, the literacy rate and infant mortality of the Dominican Republic and many other Caribbean countries compare favorably with many so-called developed countries (Palmer 1990). As noted in Nash (1981), the relations between metropolitan countries and those considered "underdeveloped" spur migration.

Keeping all this in mind, the particular conditions in the Dominican Republic, however they may have been produced, should not be overlooked. Spurred so many years ago by Spanish conquest, the country was once home to a thriving sugar industry, which was closely tied to economic growth and nation-building, of course involving slavery and general exploitation, on the island (Mintz 1985, Derby 1998). Now tourism and free trade zones dominate the Dominican economy (Gregory 2007; Sagás and Molina 2004). These are two of the key

industries that lead to high rates of unemployment and underemployment for residents. Massive all-inclusive tourist resorts are typically owned by foreign investors who bring in upper-level staff members. Free trade zones are self-contained industrial parks where mostly foreign companies establish production plants with the benefits of extensive tax breaks and duty-free shipping (Gregory 2007). Due to this employment structuring, tourism and free trade zones mostly need inexpensive laborers (Sagás and Molina 2004; Gregory 2007).

The overall point is that U.S. involvement, in its most specific forms, tends to be a strong portion of the explanation for these migration patterns. General poverty and poor economic conditions do not explain enough. After all, the majority of countries with these problems are not major sources of U.S. immigrants.

With such a large population and nearly fifty years of influx, Dominicans in the U.S. have become quite diverse. Unlike Mexican immigration, immigration from the Dominican Republic is not significantly marked by illegality. Most Dominicans stay in the U.S. as holders of legal permanent residence rights (with "green cards"). Many others arrive with short-term visas and stay after, even long after, they have expired (which of course does transform their residential status into illegal). Only a small number of Dominicans enter and remain in the United States with false papers (Sørensen 1998).

For years Dominican migration tended to draw from urban areas and the middle class and more educated of local populations (Pessar 1990); though this began to change in the 1980s (Derby 1998). This resulted in class divisions among Dominican migrants, as well as conflict among them both in the U.S. and in the Dominican Republic. Even non-criminalized migrants who have returned to the Dominican Republic from New York have long faced discrimination for essentially being outsiders (Pessar 1997; Guarnizo 1997). Locals pejoratively use labels for

migrants such as "Dominicanyork" to increase social distance and to identify neighborhoods occupied by high concentrations of former U.S. residents. For example, some "Domincanyorks" have been known to visit the island and flaunt their relative wealth. Back in 1985, one-third of tourist revenues in the Dominican Republic were from Dominican-born U.S. residents returning for trips. About 60% of houses are purchased by Dominicans living overseas.

Remittances have served to keep the migration flow going (Palmer 1990). Indeed, the Dominican Republic has been a leading contributor to the massive increase in remittances over the last several years. From 1980 to 1990, remittances to Mexico, El Salvador, Colombia, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic grew 571% from \$700 million to four billion (Castro 1999). Taken together, migrants constitute the most important social group contributing to the local economy (Derby 1998).

However, Dominican return migrants can be cast as more and more of a threat as well, often seen as corrupting and polluting, and dangerous, "venal agents of 'transculturation' bringing foreign customs, language, and habits into the national body" (Derby 1998:476). And that's not even considering the "return migrants" who are the focus of this study.

E. **Tough Times upon Settlement: The Influence of Structural Conditions in the U.S.**

The geopolitical context for the movement of people and the specific process of emigration from the Dominican Republic are indeed crucial for understanding the foundations of deportation. Also of great importance is the receiving context upon settling in the U.S. In particular, the structural conditions of New York City with regard to opportunities for incoming Dominican immigrants during the years many deportees came of age is important for understanding the lifestyles that helped steer the behavior of those who would later find themselves banished from the country they had called home since childhood.

Many deportees had lived in Washington Heights in northern Manhattan, the largest enclave of Dominicans in the U.S. (Brotherton and Barrios 2011). Ramses, who lived there as a child in the late 1970s and 1980s before moving to Yonkers outside the city, characterized the neighborhood succinctly: “Washington Heights is a fucking ’hood, man.” Others lived in other parts of New York City, including other economically depressed areas of Manhattan, as well as neighborhoods in the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn (and a few not in the New York area at all) that faced escalating crime rates amid spreading poverty as the city deindustrialized.

It has been estimated that New York City lost over 800,000 industrial jobs from the 1960s through the early 1990s (Bourgois 1995). This brought about an economic restructuring that led many who would have held such jobs into service jobs with lower wages, less labor rights protection, and fewer benefits (Bourgois 1995). Importantly, this shift also led to lower rates of gainful employment all together, which in turn led some to greater engagement in the illicit economy and concomitant prison time. For example, Sharff (1987) notes a large-scale campaign in New York City in the mid-1980s against drug dealing that, in the span of only two years, led to over 17,000 young men, mostly street dealers, funneled into the prison system. More recently, Alexander (2010) has pointed to the racial imbalance of such large-scale incarceration as a form of social control serving a similar function to the Jim Crow laws of the South.

Engagement in such “underground” work, which tends to increase the chances of confronting the criminal justice system, for years had been understood to be a product of urbanization in general, which was thought to contribute to “the destruction of norms and values, creating a climate for illegal or delinquent activities” (Sharff 1987:19). Later, researchers came to understand that, as response to such chronic poverty, “a segment of the population *must*

engage in unreported or unreportable work” Sharff (1987:47). Importantly, she also points out that these conditions are imposed from above, as opposed to resulting from strictly bad choices or a “culture of poverty” mindset.

Gregory (1998:6) likewise refers to the misconception of “inner-city pathology” and the role of popular media in influencing many to see these problems as residing in the “moral economy of the isolated ‘ghetto’ household, rather than in the political economy of the greater society.” He indicates that this constitutes a “depoliticized vision” and a “race- and power-evasive view” that leads many to discount the structural conditions of poverty, of which racial marginalization is a part (Gregory 1998:6). Indeed, this economic restructuring and its effects carries important implications for racialization as well. In discussing the work of influential sociologist William Julius Wilson, Gregory (1998) also points to the deindustrialization of the economy in the U.S. that left many poor “black” people concentrated in urban areas and separated from the social—and financial—capital circulating in the so-called mainstream society. Drawing on segmented assimilation theory and referencing Portes and Rumbaut (1994), Brotherton and Barrios (2011:93) explain that,

It is not simply gumption, fortitude, and work skills that guarantee an immigrant’s future; rather, success is derived from how the different capitals that the newcomer brings, the social connections, the money in the bank, the educational background, etc., intersect with a range of opportunity structures, institutions, and the cultural milieu that are part of a reflexive socializing process.

As for Dominican immigrants coming of age in the 1970s and 1980s in New York City, Brotherton and Barrios (2011:82) point out,

These were not auspicious times to be trying to make your way as a young immigrant in the United States. The city was dirty, the infrastructure was in great need of improvement, the public housing (the largest in the nation) was in serious disrepair and highly segregated, and the public schools had gone through disastrous defunding [...] which had produced

horrendous statistics on drop-out rates and underperforming students, particularly those of color.

Also during this time gang affiliation was rampant and violence was commonplace. As a deportee interviewed by Brotherton and Barrios (2011:87) put it, “It is wild back then, man, totally crazy.” Part of the “wild” and “crazy” atmosphere, of course, was a flourishing drug economy. The money-making opportunities this afforded also, in many cases, led to an overall life course change. A response from a deportee interviewed by Brotherton and Barrios (2011:89), who remembered his stepfather, “Cookin’ up crack in the kitchen when I got home from school,” is telling of the impact the drug economy had on many children growing up around it. The deportee continued,

That’s the sort of shit I grew up in. What was I supposed to do, just sit there and do my homework? They used to put me to work, I swear. I used to be there like putting stuff in little bags and I’m like a kid. My parents were some of the first to be selling this stuff on the streets in the Bronx. That was my environment, can you wonder I grew up to be like this, like in this situation? How was I supposed to avoid it? (Brotherton and Barrios 2011:89).

Directly referring to situations recent deportees had faced, Golash-Boza (2014) also discusses structural conditions in the U.S. that influence decisions to engage in illegal behavior, leading to deportation. She points to a Jamaican deportee she interviewed who turned to selling drugs after not earning enough money as a messenger to move out on his own in the years following high school graduation. This decision certainly led to hard times—but it is crucial to consider the structural conditions of poverty and limited opportunity the man who made the decision faced.

Brotherton and Barrios (2011) point to the same problem with a Dominican deportee they interviewed as well, discussing the conflict between his immediate financial needs and continuing his education, which influenced turning to the drug trade

(and use) common to his neighborhood. As they put it, “He did not actively seek this opportunity; rather, it came to him in that it was embedded in his local ecology” (Brotherton and Barrios 2011:120). They specifically indicate the lack of references deportees they interviewed made to parental guidance, bonds with teachers, and involvement with community institutions such as churches. They also offer an important explanation for understanding such environmental influence:

This is not to say that such structural and cultural conditions predetermine that someone will lead a life of crime. Rather, the opportunities to commit crime, the social networks that lead to crime, the subcultures that seduce one into crime, and the set of definitions that make crime and other transgressions normative, as in Cressey and Sutherland’s (1978) notion of differential association, make the criminal pathway difficult to avoid (Brotherton and Barrios 2011:111).

One of the participants in my study, Bosety, specifically discussed some of the difficulties that can arise from living as a poor immigrant without significant access to resources and the limiting effects they can have. Though of course never explicitly referring to social structure, Bosety nevertheless made a clear case for its importance:

I think they should have more opportunity. Because it’s not because I go over there, I’m gonna have all the doors open waiting for me. You know what I mean, you gotta sometimes probably try to go to school. Or if I go to school, how am I going to live? So if I’m trying to do something to live, I can’t go to school, so it’s hard. When you go over there, you got your parents with you, like they take care of what you need. It’s more easy for you to go to school and learn something there, that you’ll be somebody in the future. Because I consider myself somebody, but I don’t educate myself enough to be better, you know. And that’s the way, because I didn’t have the help from my family when I go over there, so I had no choice but to take the street. My mother was a single, I got three sisters and three brothers. So it’s hard with everybody in the house, you gotta take care of the whole family.

Coutin (2005) relates that some Salvadorans she worked with pointed to the role of the U.S. government in funding some of the violence that forced them from their

homes in El Salvador. That is, the country forbidding their presence and denying their claims to asylum is also the country partially responsible for their being there in the first place. Similarly, long-term legal permanent residents learn the behaviors that lead to their criminal convictions in the U.S. If a young man turns to dealing drugs, he learned that behavior in the U.S., a behavior closely linked with the poverty, discrimination, and general conditions of his life in the U.S.

However, this behavior is generally construed to be the problem of the country of birth, as represented by sending he who seemingly caused the problem there. But his behavior is rooted in the conditions he faced in the U.S. urban landscape where he lived, not the country where he was born. In other words, deportees are banished from the very country that taught them the behaviors that led to their deportation. With this look at the context for emigration from the Dominican Republic and context of settlement in the U.S., to better understand this situation, I now turn to an examination of the U.S. immigration policy driving this deportation.

V. HOW TO GET DEPORTED: IMMIGRATION POLICY MEDIATING DEPORTATION

“Well, I don’t know, all I know is that they sent me back here for ten years. And I just finished my ten years now, May 17, like three weeks ago, my whole ten years back here.”

--Ramses in response to my interview question, “What do you know about immigration policy?” (Interview, May 30, 2010)

“Ain’t got no rights.”

--Bosety in response to the interview question, “What kinds of rights do immigrants to have in the U.S.; are they the same as everyone else? (Interview, May 24, 2010)

A. Introductory Remarks

Over the years I have been engaged in this research project, most people I speak with in the U.S. are surprised to hear of these cases. At first almost everyone assumes I am referring to people without legal documentation to live in the U.S. or people who were apprehended at a border. Whether they agree or disagree with the detention and deportation of *undocumented* immigrants, most Americans I speak with are not surprised that this occurs on a large scale. However, most are shocked to hear that long-term legal permanent residents can even be deported—I assume this is because of their perceived understanding of the word “permanent”—and often seem troubled by some of my stories. Indeed, as Kanstroom (2012:4) says of a story he relates concerning a man deported after living in the U.S. since he was one, “This story must surely be troubling even to those who favor strict immigration enforcement.”

After hearing surprise from people upon learning of these sort of deportations so often and facing the reality that this was not a well-known phenomenon, I decided I would ask the deportees I worked with themselves what, if anything, they knew about U.S. immigration laws.

In this chapter, I use their responses to frame a discussion of the relevant law and policy that mediates the deportation of long-term, legal residents, which is necessary to understand the situations deportees face.

B. **A New Era of Immigration Policy: The 1996 Reforms**

As it turns out, many long-term legal permanent residents themselves were taken by surprise when they found they were facing deportation. When I asked about the laws and policies in the U.S., most were at a loss. Responses such as Ramses's in the epigraph, in which he indicates, "all I know is they sent me back here," were typical. Leo, though he did mention a 212 C waiver (a form of relief from deportation; he would not be eligible for it, as it pertains to people still in the U.S.), he ultimately tinged his response with a tone of moving on from worrying about such matters when he told me, "Uh no, to tell you the truth, I'm, not even concerned about that anymore." Though in the context of a different question concerning immigrant rights I asked later, Balbuena indicated a rather profound lack of understanding regarding this matter: "It's equal. To me, it's equal. In the U.S., you have the same rights. As long as you have your resident card, yes." Sandro's ignorance of immigrant rights shone through as well: "The only rights we don't have is, like, we're not able to vote. But now I think I'm not sure but you're able to vote over there. You know, we have a lot of rights."

Delio took the opportunity to speak about the effects he experienced as a result of immigration policies. He characterized the laws as "strict" and explained how he felt immigration officials "abuse their power." When I asked him how so, he elaborated, "They don't treat them [immigrants in detention] like people, they treat those people like animals, you know what I mean, the kind of food they give you, the treatment they give you." Delio's response is consistent with reports of harsh treatment in detention centers detailed in Golash-

Boza (2012a), as well as Kanstroom (2012:8), who details a case of deportees in detention being told, “This is what you came here for: to suffer.” Despite his insights into treatment after the fact, Delio and most of deportees I asked lacked any substantive knowledge regarding the laws that mediated their deportations.

Wilbur, however, was an exception. Of the deportees I conducted formal interviews with, Wilbur was alone in providing any specific details on the laws that framed his forced move to the place of his birth, a place where he had not lived since he was seven years old, twenty-three years before his deportation at age thirty. “[In detention] they had all these books, law books about immigration, and Bill Clinton signed a bill in 1994, ’95—”

“And what was that?”

I’m trying to remember—Immigration Reform Act. And I read all that, you know, I read it, I went through it.” [...] “The thing is, it was incredible, because when I ran into problems with the law, it was actually the same year that Bill Clinton signed that thing. It was like two weeks after.

“When you got arrested?”

“Yea, when I was younger; so 1996, I think it was.”

Wilbur, of course, was referring to the momentous Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) signed into law, as he correctly recalled, by President Bill Clinton in 1996. Along with the Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) also of 1996, and the 2001 USA PATRIOT Act Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2013:275) characterize an “arsenal of new laws” that began to increase deportations over the last two decades and signaled the “comingling of national security and immigration policy” (Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013:274). IIRIRA in particular is the primary legislative action that altered Wilbur’s life course and that of thousands of U.S. legal permanent residents convicted of crimes.

The 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) brought about a new era of how immigration would be handled. IIRIRA enacted a number of restrictive provisions, such as cutting public services for unauthorized and legal immigrants alike. But in many ways the most significant changes wrought by this reform came in the form of new measures to facilitate deportations. Since the passage of IIRIRA in 1996, as well as the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) in the same year, the rate of deportation of non-citizens, which includes long-term legal permanent residents with criminal convictions, has increased over eight-fold, reaching 419,384 in 2012 (the most recent year for which data is available) up from 50,924 in 1995, the year prior to IIRIRA¹⁵ (U.S. DHS 2012, Table 39). Even a comparison of the year prior, 1995, to only the year after, 1997, shows a more-than-double increase from 50,924 to 114,432 people sent to their country of birth.

Often the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States is cited as bringing about increased enforcement of immigration laws. No doubt, this event, and the subsequent creation of ICE, led to stronger enforcement (Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013). However, as the more than two-fold increase in deportations from 1995 to 1997 shows, enforcement prior to 9/11 was strong, stemming primarily from the 1996 reforms. The push at the federal level to deport immigrants was well in motion by the time of increased anti-immigrant sentiment in the post-9/11 era. In other words, this push began under generally peaceful, uneventful circumstances without any manifest political catalyst. This is perhaps more disturbing, as it points to an endemic anti-immigrant consciousness among many Americans. As noted by Goldstein (2010:487), “security discourse” in the U.S. has been prevalent for a long

¹⁵ These are “removals,” which the Department of Homeland Security distinguishes from “returns.” Returns are deportations not based on an order of removal, such as apprehending people crossing a border. This number has been near or over one million, higher by several hundred thousand than the number of removals, every year since the early 1980s. Though in 2007 it dropped well below one million and has dropped considerably each year, ending up at 229,968 in 2012, which is significantly lower (just over half) than the number of removals.

time and is crucial to understanding matters pertaining to human rights under neoliberalism. Even prior to 9/11, concerns regarding “security” have influenced how many Americans perceive issues pertaining to immigration and criminality.

Fundamental to increases in deportable residents is expansion of the category of offense known as “aggravated felony.” This category of offense was introduced in 1988 in the Anti-Drug Abuse Act and carried deportation provisions for murder, drug trafficking, and illegal trafficking of firearms or destructive devices. Throughout the early 1990s, a series of immigration reforms expanded the category to include more classes of crime. Finally, with the advent of IIRIRA in 1996, any non-citizen, despite legal permanent residents or long-term status, must be deported if convicted of an aggravated felony. By this time this category of offense had expanded to include non-violent crimes that are classified as misdemeanors for citizens (Hing 2006; Kanstroom 2007).

As legal researcher Nancy Morawetz (2000:1939) wrote of classifying crimes as aggravated felonies: “As the term is defined, a crime need not be either aggravated or a felony.” Sandro spoke to this when he told me,

And my mom still, she’s not a citizen, she’s still an immigrant. You know and whenever let’s say, let’s say for example she’s going on the train and she just hops on the train, she don’t pay the train, just for that she can get kicked out of the U.S. Because when I was incarcerated, I seen a lot of people in there that you know were getting deported just for drinking and driving, just for hopping on the train, things like that. Just for not paying a ticket that they got.

Any crime that carries a one-year sentence, including those suspended or expunged, subjects any non-citizen to deportation. In other words, the degree of legality in these cases is mediated by the citizenship status of the offender, despite long-term legal permanent residence status. In effect, a crime is *more illegal* if committed by a non-citizen, a point that should give us pause when we consider the relationship between meting out justice and the most basic concerns

for general human rights. Importantly, and as several researchers have pointed out, the increase in deportations is due to expanding criteria for the "aggravated felony" criminal classification that subjects a non-citizen to deportation and not because immigrants are committing more crimes (Morawetz 2000; Hing 2006; Kanstroom 2007; Kretsedemas and Brotherton 2008).

IIRIRA coincides with mandatory sentencing and "truth in sentencing" measures, which has likely contributed to the perceived problem of the "criminal alien" population (Morawetz 2000: 1944). In general, as Morawetz (2000: 1945) indicates, "The likelihood of deportation is greater in communities that are subject to elevated levels of police activity and in which people are more likely to be arrested and prosecuted." Deportations for aggravated felonies make up a significant portion of all deportations. In 2012, removals for criminal offenses represented over 47% of the total: 199,445 people of the 419,384 total people deported were classified as criminal deportations (leaving 219,939 non-criminal) (DHS 2012, Table 41).

As for the Dominican Republic in particular, criminal convictions significantly contribute to the total deportations. In 2012 U.S. authorities removed 2,833 Dominican-born residents from the U.S. Of these, 2,168 people, or over 76%, were deported due to criminal convictions (leaving 665 non-criminal). The Dominican Republic ranks fifth of all countries receiving deportees from the U.S.¹⁶ All of these deportation numbers support Kantroom's (2012:8) description of an "unplanned *diaspora*" made up of former American residents forming in countries that receive high numbers of deportees. Kanstroom's term is instructive in its

¹⁶ Mexico is, by far, number one, receiving 306,870 deportees, or over 73% of the 419,384 total deportations in 2012. With just over one-tenth of Mexico's total, Guatemala distantly follows with 38,677. Honduras (31,515) and El Salvador (18,677) take third and fourth place. These top four countries received over 94% of the total deportations from the U.S. Next, the Dominican Republic, in fifth place, received a significantly fewer 2,833 deportees. Rounding out the top ten are five more Western hemisphere countries not far behind: Brazil (2,256), Ecuador (1,720), Columbia (1,499), Nicaragua (1,373), and Jamaica (1,311). From here the numbers drop significantly, with all other countries under 1,000 (though Canada is close with 933). The majority of countries in the world received fewer than 100 deportees in 2012, most far fewer (U.S. DHS 2012).

implications regarding the high numbers of residents the U.S. is expelling to other countries.

“Diaspora” refers not to simply living away from where one used to live, but, specifically, living outside one’s *homeland*. Indeed, in many cases, these deportees, though living in the country of their birth, are living away from home. Furthermore, their numbers have expanded so much that they can be spoken of as constituting a diaspora, or a large group living away. This process is indeed changing the national makeup of deportee receiving countries, in addition, of course, to the significant person-level changes it brings to those who go through it.

In addition to the expanding classification of what constitutes an aggravated felony, IIRIRA added several more substantive changes to immigration law that facilitated deportation. Prior to 1996 deportation was a two-step process. Step one functioned to determine whether the person is deportable. Step two was to determine whether the person should be deported. Here, the court could consider such matters as rehabilitation, impact on family integrity, and strength of ties to home country. IIRIRA has increased the number of people who meet step one and virtually eliminated step two. The United States now applies what Morawetz (2000:1938) has called a “one size fits all” test for determining deportation. The length of a sentence to warrant deportation was lowered from five years to one, which brings in such misdemeanors such as petty theft. Also, crimes involving “moral turpitude” were added. For example, any offense involving fraud became a deportable crime.

IIRIRA also brought about new definitions for “conviction” and “sentence” – a “conviction” came to include expunged and suspended sentences (or portions of sentences). Furthermore, a single conviction came to trigger deportation and bar relief from deportation. For example, one count of shoplifting with a suspended sentence was not a deportable offense until

two convictions, and even then it was not barred from relief. Now, one count of shoplifting with a suspended sentence is a deportable offense.

As for being barred from relief for, say, reasons of family integrity, under IIRIRA a judge does not even have the authority to take that into consideration. In the first five years of residence, a crime involving moral turpitude that could be punished by a sentence of one year results in mandatory deportation (even if the sentence is only probation or a fine). Though some of these convictions tend not to result in jail time, a person need not ever enter a prison to be deportable. IIRIRA also did away with a statute of limitations on deportation proceedings.

Wilbur, who we heard from earlier regarding his knowledge of the policies that mediated his deportation, recalled details that speak to these issues.

It happened two weeks *after* Bill Clinton signed that paper, because that's how deep I got into it, I wanted to know exactly when, and I looked at the date, 'Oh, look, I got arrested on May fifth. He signed this April twenty-fourth.' So it's probably less than two weeks, maybe ten days. So if this would have happened to me ten days before, I would have not been going through this. But just because he signed on this date. For ten days, you know, that's, I got a lot. So I'm here because of those ten days, basically.

Wilbur's investigation of the legal circumstances surrounding his case is impressive. But he was incorrect on this last point. Wilber pointed out that had he been arrested just before the enactment of IIRIRA rather than just after he would have remained in the U.S. It's possible his deportation would have taken longer. But he would not have been safe from IIRIRA's severe reforms. In a particularly controversial section of the law, the U.S. justice system applies the stiffened penalties of IIRIRA retroactively.

C. **Policy at Work: Cases of Conviction Leading to Deportation**

Speaking at length with several deportees about their crimes that led to deportation brought forth some disturbing circumstances that speak to bigger-picture issues surrounding

deportation, immigrants in the U.S., and indeed, the U.S. justice system. As might be suspected among populations of relatively low socioeconomic status immigrants, unfortunately, stories of police mishandling and even inflated charges were common.

Though I have no reason to doubt them, it should be pointed out that I have only the given deportee's side of the story. In any case, it appears that some of the deportees who participated in my study, though guilty of something, were not always guilty to the degree they were charged. In particular, I use Balbuena's and Sandro's stories to point to some flaws in the U.S. justice system that show cases that lead to deportation are not always so clear. It's hard not to assume that immigrant removal was not at least part of the goal in how their cases were handled.

When I sat down with Balbuena for some interview questions, we began by talking about his time in prison, which we had just been discussing. Balbuena told me he spent forty months (three and one-third years) in prison.

"For what?"

"They said it was a burglary. Burglary of dwelling."

"They said that but it wasn't?"

It was not. 'Cause in order for you to commit a burglary, you have to have the intent. There's three elements that have to be proved: you have to have the intent to commit a burglary. You also need to force your way in. And you also need to take something in order for you to burglary, to steal. And I never did that. My intents was to run away. I never forced my way in; the door was open. And nothing was missing.

"What were you doing there, then?"

"Actually, they came in, I mean I was standing in the corner. They told me stop, I start running. I ran through somebody's house."

"They who?"

“The police.”

“Okay, why were the police confronting you in the first place?”

“It was an area where there was drugs around.”

“So they suspected you when they saw you?”

Exactly. And they said that they saw me giving something to a guy on the bicycle. And it was nothing—they tried to approach me to see if I was resident in that area. And when they asked me to stop, I just started running. Why I was running: I had been shot in my right leg. The same thing. Some guys came up to me and stopped and I stopped and I got shot. Next thing you know, when I saw the officers, I was scared, I started running.

“Because you thought that might happen again?”

Well, actually, they was in the uniform, they had their clothes on, so I was able to identify that it was a law enforcement officer. But at the same time, I was just paranoid and started running. So when I started running, went into somebody’s house. My intent was to escape, you know, escape. That was my intent, not to steal, you know. Burglary like I said is three elements that need to be proved: intent to burglarize the place. You have to have the intent in your mind to steal something from that place. You have to force your way in. And something needs to be missing from their house. And if those three elements are not being proved, that means there’s no charge. In this case, it should be trespassing instead of burglary. So, my financial situation at the time, I couldn’t get a private lawyer and I was dealing with a public defender. And I guess he did not do a good job.

Indeed, a problem further contributing to increased deportations, as well as how fast they go, is lack of proficient legal representation. Balbuena brought up the issue of his financial situation hindering him from sufficient legal representation, an indication of the guiding influence of social structure on life outcomes. In fact, “bad lawyering” in particular has been identified as one of the seven most common causes of wrongful convictions by the non-profit organization The Innocence Project (Rodkey 2015 in press). The organization cited such issues as cuts in funding, overworked lawyers, and even incompetent lawyers.

Regarding the handling of his case, Wilbur reported, “The lawyer told me, he was Dominican too, by the way. He was a crook. [...] And I noticed that the judge kept saying, ‘You keep selling these people dreams; I told you don’t come back here with the same’— ‘You said, ‘Selling them dreams’?’”

“Yea. The judge told him.”

“Told your lawyer that?”

“Yea. And he was like, ‘No.’ He’s a crook. And she said, you know, she told me, ‘Your lawyer’s a crook,’ and this and that and, ‘He tells everybody the same thing.’”

Sandro’s case also reveals a flawed justice system, replete with corruption aimed toward immigrant removal. Sandro is a laid-back, good-natured person—and, despite its circumstances, he remained so when relating to me the story of his conviction that preceded his deportation. His is a story disturbing enough to shake the faith of the most loyal adherent to the U.S. justice system:

You know, they convicted me of a robbery that I was actually never done, I never committed a robbery. I was convicted because what happened was I was with a friend of mine, and the friend of mine I was with he was my co-defender. So after we came out on bail, he got locked up. Let’s say after we were going to court, he got locked up three months after that and since he got locked up three months after that, he pleaded guilty to that other case. And since the judge gave him concurrent sentence, we call it concurrent, to run together, he pleaded guilty. In that case, it makes me guilty. So if I go to trial, you know he’ll have to go back to trial again. He already pleaded guilty, he says yes, we did this. You understand? So they gave me an all right sentence, because I was guilty.

“I thought you said you weren’t guilty?”

I was guilty of one part but I was not guilty of—they charged me with car-jacking, robbery in the first. But it was actually not car-jacking. It was a car that was on outside, and we just got in the car and left. I was guilty of joyriding, and they got me guilty. Actually, before I was going to trial, and before I went to trial, I put in a private investigator. And the private investigator went to the guy’s house and said “Hey, you know this kid is being charged with this and this and that. And he said, “Yea, and you know I’ve always been wanting to talk, but the

reason I put in those charges is because I was told I needed to put in those charges.” He was pushed to put in those charges. And he spoke with my mom and everything.

“Who was pushed?”

“The victim. The victim actually, when the police went to the victim they told the victim to say that we car jacked them, that I had a gun and the other guy had a knife. But there was no gun and no knife.”

“Why did they do that?”

“He just said that’s what they told him to say.”

“So you hired the private investigator to find the victim, and the victim told you that?”

The victim told my mom and he told the private investigator, and he actually wrote a letter, I think I have the letter there too. And you know he said that he said I know, because they we’re giving me twenty-two years for the charge. And he said, and I know it’s wrong and it’s wrong. For example, I got locked up at 8:15—I got in the car at 8:15 and I got locked up at 8:20. That was just five minutes in the car. I mean there was not time for me to get out of the car or anything because right away they started chasing us, because the car had a, I forgot how you call it, a signal that it sends so they know the car is—a lowjack. So they caught us five minutes after that, but still told him to say that we got him with a gun and a knife. Then when they found us, there was no gun, no knife, no money, no nothing. You know so they still charged us with that. I was fighting my case for two years. I said I’m not going to plead guilty. And they just giving my sentence at twenty-two, okay I give you nine, I give six, I give you this. And I ended up doing six years.

“Did the owner of the car tell you why the police—“

No, he told my private investigator, and my mom, he said “They just told me to do that. If I don’t press those charges, I could go to jail.” Because he’s Dominican too. He’s Dominican. So he didn’t want to press those charges. We never, he didn’t even know who we were, we were never close to each other. He was inside a building, he got out the car, he went to help a lady inside the building with a bag of clothes. And that’s when we were going by—two young ignorants [laughs]. We just got in the car and said, “Let’s go.” So we got in the car and we just left.

D. **Living the Immigration Reforms: Locked up and Shipped Out**

IIRIRA calls for mandatory detention, even when pursuing administrative appeals. This makes appealing much more difficult, especially because detention centers can be far from where the person lives. Because of these difficulties and the added expenses it can entail, often detainees don't even try. Earlier when I had asked Delio whether he knew of any particular laws regarding U.S. immigration policy, he began to explain his treatment in detention, lamenting being treated "like animals." Delio stayed on this issue when I later asked, "Do you think any changes should be made to immigration policy, immigration laws?" He responded,

Like the way they speak to people, you know the way they treat people when you're in there. You know, they treat you like you're an animal, like you know, like, 'Sign here,' 'I hope you never come back to my country,' 'I don't know why you guys come here if you don't belong here.' Stuff like that, they tell you.

Delio was in a jail in Massachusetts, just a few miles from where he had been living, for about a month. He spent another month in an upstate New York jail. From there, he stayed in four different jails in Texas for about another month before leaving for the Dominican Republic. Attuned to darker side—the business side—of the U.S. prison system, Delio added,

Well, let's say in a day, it's probably, it costs the jail, you know the prison, it will cost the prison like five dollars for a prisoner. And they probably get like 200, between 250 and 300 dollars a day for each prisoner. So they probably spend on you five dollars a day and then they keep the rest... that's why they keep transferring you from one jail to the other. 'Cause you know this guy gets something, then the other guy gets something and the other guy gets something, you know what I mean?

Peutz (2006:223) also spoke to deportees who "claimed to know what their deportation was costing the INS and what it was earning those involved." And indeed, Delio's comments support Golash-Boza's (2012b) notion of a growing "Immigration Industrial Complex" in the U.S. Borrowing from the notion of a "prison industrial complex," itself an adaptation from the

“military industrial complex,” the implications of this are dubious for potential amelioration of immigrant treatment. The “industrial complex” part of these terms implies an inextricable link with the interests of those with economic and political stake. If immigration restriction, legal enforcement, and increased deportation remain in the economic and political interest of those in power, an “Immigration Industrial Complex” will only grow and bring about greater misery for those it affects.

Ramses, who had been living in Yonkers, New York, detailed a similar set of experiences:

I thought I was going to get freed into the U.S. INS comes to see me, over there in Attica. Now it was like, “Oh, blah blah blah, we got, after you finish your time here, we have to take you down to the INS on Varrick Street.” You know Varrick Street, their headquarters downtown New York, Manhattan. [...] From Manhattan, they took me to Newark; they got another holding facility over there. I lasted there like a month. After that they put me on a plane, they flew me down to Texas, and Texas they picked up a few, like a hundred more immigrants or whatever. They took us down to Louisiana. From Louisiana, there in Louisiana, I lasted like two more months. [...] And from there they deported us over here.

Other participants referred to their time in detention as well. Bosety reported that upon his release from federal prison he had to stay in “immigration” for about “fifteen or seventeen days.” Balbuena also referred to spending time in “immigration” following his release from jail. After being released in late December, 2006, Balbuena did not arrive in the Dominican Republic until about four months later, in April, 2007.

This, then, is how even long-term legal permanent residents of the U.S. are sent to the countries of their birth. This has important implications for how the U.S. state tends to view criminality in individuals and then lump those individuals together into groups. Coutin (2005:7) indicates that criminality tends to be viewed as a person-level condition as opposed to particular acts the person has committed, obscuring our understanding of such matters. She explains that,

“because law-breakers do not spend all of their time committing crimes,” individuals move between the blurred categories of “offenders and non-offenders.”

As she goes on to point out, a more appropriate understanding comes from the contributions of labeling theorists, who have pointed out the “power-laden and somewhat arbitrary” categorizations of criminal and non-criminal, which can instead draw attention to “structural processes that situate particular categories of individuals outside of society” (Coutin 2005:10). She goes on, “The notion that criminals are a distinct group is linked to practices that locate offenders outside of society” (Coutin 2005:8). Being sentenced to prison, being admitted into a so-called “half-way house,” and generally being seen as living beyond the “social order in a criminal underground” are all examples of such practices. Clearly, banishment to another country would count as such a practice as well. One of Coutin’s (2005:12) study participants even referred to deportation as “a sentence with no time limit.”

These procedures also have important implications for family life, as they break apart families, often creating more difficult conditions for those left behind in the U.S. Indeed, it would be difficult to deny that the penalties, and the treatment that follows, is harsh and creates more problems for family and others left behind here in the U.S., to say nothing of the banished deportee. These procedures are also expensive and taxing for the U.S. With these circumstances, one must wonder the justification; that is, what exactly does the U.S. get out of this? Peutz (2006:220) addresses the matter of deportees going to prison and then facing deportation, pointing to the “double punishment” this constitutes that “requires double the work and cost on behalf of the penalizing state.”

The structural realities of U.S. society, constituted by its complicated history, though not exact, may be the most effective means of explaining this. Brotherton and Barrios (2011:22),

referring to the work of sociologist and criminologist Jock Young,¹⁷ use the metaphor of the eating disorder bulimia to characterize this process of “circumscribing or thwarting citizenship.” Young (2007:32, cited in Brotherton and Barrios 2011:22) refers to a society that practices this as “one where both inclusion and exclusion occur concurrently—a bulimic society where massive cultural inclusion is accompanied by systematic structural exclusion. It is a society which has both strong centrifugal and centripetal currents: it absorbs and it rejects.”

Whatever the case, while discounting the claims to being an American, these procedures reify the condition of not being a legally defined American. Nevertheless, though not by birth, and though not on paper, these removal procedures affect Americans. And after they are deported to the Dominican Republic, their “Americanness” becomes a prominent feature of their incorporation and their ability to adapt to their country. In the next chapter, I discuss the processes of negotiating the displacement deportees face upon deportation.

¹⁷ Brotherton has also worked personally with Young, who died last fall, in November 2013.

VI. GETTING ALONG IN A NEW HOME: NEGOTIATING DISPLACEMENT

“‘Where?’ Man, I forgot I was Dominican.”

--Ramses on his reaction to being told in court that he would be deported to the Dominican Republic (Interview, March 24, 2010).

“Then I woke up and thought, ‘Aw, fuck.’”

--Delio on recounting to me a dream he had the night before that he was in the town in Massachusetts where he lived in for about sixteen years. He added that he dreams of it often (Personal communication, November 26, 2010).

A. **Introductory Remarks**

The point expressed in the lines provided by Ramses and Delio above is clear: they did not think of the country they were taken to as home. After all, in the case of Ramses, he was only two years old when he left and thirty-six when he heard the news he would soon be living in the Dominican Republic, far away from his young son in Yonkers, New York. As Morawetz (2000:1961) points out, cases such as his have received attention, albeit many years ago: a 1953 presidential commission proposed that “any person who was lawfully admitted before the age of sixteen or who had resided in the United States for twenty years should not be subject to deportation based on any criminal conviction.” This shows that “there comes a point at which we must treat a person as a member of American society” (Morawetz 2000:1962). Though a presidential commission made such a proposal, unfortunately, it has never come to fruition and members of American society continue to be banished.

Though a member of American society, Ramses and many others I worked with nevertheless faced this banishment and must build new lives in a new country. These deportees in the Dominican Republic, as I have established, are diverse, such that speaking of them as a

singular group serves little analytical purpose. Nevertheless, all deportees have something in common: they all have to face the economic, political, and cultural landscape of an at least relatively new country, negotiating their displacement. They all have to make their lives in a new home. They all have to survive.

In particular, deportees have to survive in a society that is, as we have seen, in many ways unwelcoming. Indeed, when deportees head off to get by, they face great deal of stigmatization in Dominican society. Brotherton asked an interviewee about this matter, to which he responded,

Well, news gets around, and plus when people see the difference in your physical, the differences in the conversations that you have with that person, most likely, they will ask you if you had been to the United States, “Are you deported here?” And you tell them, “Yes, I was deported here.” Right away, that’s it. They don’t wanna converse with you no more. You must be a criminal. You gotta watch out over here because they’re watching the deportees. Everything comes negative upon you, nothing comes positive. (Brotherton and Barrios 2011:207)

In my work, I spent most of time with deportees out of the context of mixing with other Dominicans. Nevertheless, I encountered several instances of stigma as well. Wilbur even spoke to this issue in the context of an interview question about a different matter:

But everybody else, they look at you different. And they look at us, because I heard them—one time I took the bus, and one of the bus drivers, he’s actually the owner, I think, and he didn’t know. Because you know I wear glasses, and I look all just quiet, and he never think that that’d be me. So, I remember, he said, “No, these deportees, they’re coming over here, taking jobs.” You know, so they’re upset at us. So I was like, you know it’s true though, it’s true. There’s a lot of us coming over here. And we need jobs. And we know more. That’s the thing, so, get ready.

Furthermore, a few people here and there made comments to me that reflected such suspicion. For example, one day in the *Zona Colonial* I ended up in a brief conversation with a woman who spoke fluent English. After I had told her about my work, she commented to me, “We’re concerned about it because they come here to be criminals, drug dealers. If you check

Dominican newspapers¹⁸, we follow the deported issues.” Another man I met a few times, who was a friend of a member of the family I stayed with during my first trip to the country, commented, “They just come here and make crimes.”

In the context of such sentiment, the process of deportee survival in the Dominican Republic is one of negotiation: their perceptions of the country as the place they must survive run against local perceptions of their very presence as an aberration in a place that would be better off without them. In this chapter I explore the variety of strategies deportees deploy to take on the new life project of negotiating their displacement in the face of the stigma and treatment in the Dominican Republic that surrounds them, strategies that tend to draw on their U.S. experiences and connections.

B. **Welcome “Home”**

One of my main research and ethnographic goals is to examine the displacement deportees face upon being forced to live in the Dominican Republic. If nothing else, deportees face the practical matters of literally navigating a new place. For example, Balbuena, from Tampa, Florida, told me doesn’t know his way around the Dominican Republic, and added, “But I could tell you how to get anywhere in Florida.” Though length of time spent in the U.S. can vary significantly, most of the people I talked with had lived in the U.S. for most of their lives, many with no or few memories of the Dominican Republic. Therefore, arriving in the country and making their lives there often entails significant adjustment.

This reality was palpable when I saw some of the faces of new deportees arriving at a police station for processing one Wednesday early in the evening. This is the procedure, at least at the time of my visit, for receiving deportees from the U.S. A plane (typically one designated for delivering deportees) arrives at the country’s main airport, *Aeropuerto Internacional Las*

¹⁸ Specific cases of Dominican newspapers reporting on deportees appears in Chapter five.

Américas, just east of Santo Domingo, full of people who, just a short time before, had been in the U.S. For many, the U.S. had been home for a long period of time. After disembarking, deportees board a bus and are driven to *La Casa de los Clubes* of the *Policia Nacional* in Santo Domingo's *Villa Juana* neighborhood¹⁹ where they register with authorities. After registration is complete, they are finished with the Dominican authorities and do not receive any form of further support: they simply head off to live as deportees.

I had heard about this procedure from some of the deportees I had come to know. Then on a Tuesday, while walking on *El Conde*, I noticed on the cover of a copy of the newspaper *El Nacional* (May 20, 2010) a large, boldface headline: “*Llegarán mañana 108 repatriados*” (108 deportees arriving tomorrow). Inside, on page four, a short story, featuring a photo of a past arrival with two men exiting a plane onto a tarmac, explained that this would be the largest group to arrive this year. Perhaps more telling was the detail provided in the first paragraph, that the 108 people arriving from the U.S. had been convicted of “*tráfico de drogas, asesinatos, robos y asaltos, falsificación de documentos, secuestros, frauds y violaciones sexuales*” (drug trafficking, murder, robbery and assault, falsification of documents, kidnapping, fraud, and sexual violations). Evidently, such stories were hard to miss; according to Brotherton and Barrios (2011) articles regarding deportation were published in the pages of major newspapers about weekly. Coutin (2007) reported the same case for the high number of deportees taken to El Salvador as well.

After seeing this headline, I then arranged with a friend, Miguel, a deportee himself who I had interviewed before when Luis introduced him to me when I was new to the country, to head up that way and await the arrival of the bus. We waited for hours, but finally, at about 6:45 in

¹⁹ Childhood neighborhood, prior to moving to New York City, of Leonel Fernández, the president of the Dominican Republic over the course of my trips there.

the evening, not one, but two buses arrived. After all, that week's lot was 108 people. On seeing two busses arrive full of deportees, in my notes later that night I commented, "In a way, it was a bit frightening. What are they going to do? What have they done?" (May 21, 2008).

To speak to that, as it turned out just three days later in a conversation with Luis, he mentioned that there is now more care to process deportees and have them make contact with their families. This procedure could be troublesome and even deadly for some. He indicated that several had cut deals to get out of jail and get deported. In other words, some had turned on others.

According to Luis, siblings, friends, and others would be waiting for the "snitch" and kill him almost immediately upon arrival. Apparently this had subsided, at least to a degree. The strategy of using "snitches" in the U.S. justice system has been known to lead to such collateral damage; the non-profit Innocence Project identifies the problems that can come with the use of "informants/snitches" among their seven most common causes of wrongful conviction (Rodkey 2015 in press).

A few more days later, Luis talked to me about starting a program for newly arrived deportees. In particular, he suggested I submit a proposal for a formalized, long-term program to get government funding to set up a "half-way house" to give deportees a place to stay and food to eat for their first three months. He added the importance of giving them the opportunity to learn a trade, to build on their strengths they put to illegal use in the U.S. He added that since I am a "white American" the Dominican government would listen to me. If he were to write it, "They'd be like, what the fuck is this?" he offered as though a matter of fact. In any case, deportees arrive with almost nothing, and, within a few hours go off and try to get by in the Dominican Republic.

C. **Getting By and Contending with Local Perception and Dominican Authorities**

I first went to Santo Domingo with a rather broad scope. I assumed deportees had some shared overarching experiences, but I wasn't sure what to expect. Later, I found that Golash-Boza (2014) identified five these common to deportees that have emerged from recent studies:

(1) unfamiliarity with the land of their citizenship; (2) deep despair about their future prospects; (3) the salience of state power to their lives in the USA and elsewhere; (4) a shift from being senders to receivers of remittances; and (5) the stigma attached to their status as deportees

With ideas of this sort in mind, I was ready to hear stories; however, I felt my work would be most effective with fewer preconceived notions. I wanted to discover for myself the lives of the deported people I would meet. Nevertheless, my main guiding question was always what do deportees do to get by?

In order to begin to negotiate this displacement, I wondered if any deportees form support groups, either formal or informal. Overall, three of the seven interviewees referred to having thought about forming some sort of group. Two even referred to being aware of such groups and having some sort of contact, but neither became involved. Brotherton and Barrios (2011) discuss two deportee support groups, one led by a man named René that began in 2005. I met René on a couple of occasions and, unfortunately, not much seemed to be happening with his group.²⁰ A few other deportees I knew did not take René seriously, one even mentioning he seemed more interested in politics and money than actually helping. I do not know whether this is an accurate characterization, but I do know René tried diligently to get money from me (and I heard of other cases in which he aggressively asked for money). In any case, such attitudes toward the group

²⁰ Groups in other countries have formed as well, including *Chans Alternativ* (Alternative Chance) in Haiti (Decesare 1998), as well as Conscious Youth Development Programme in Belize and *Homies Unidos* (Homies United) in El Salvador (Montaigne 1998). *Homies Unidos* in El Salvador is active in assisting the deported from Los Angeles and its members have contributed to the work of Coutin (2010) and Zilberg (2011).

leader certainly would not help with group formation. When I asked Sandro whether any deported guys form any groups, he immediately replied,

Gangs. Yes, for example, when I was in the U.S. I knew a lot about gangs. Especially being incarcerated, incarcerated you see all types of gangs. And those gangs that are in the U.S., now all those gangs are here. So you're able to know, you're able to see that the gangs that are being created here, those gangs come from over there. The reason for that is because it's the same gangs from over there here. For example, the Bloods. Bloods is actually a gang that's from over there. Over here, blood in Spanish is *sangre*, but they still call them Bloods here. So you know it's gangs that comes from the U.S.²¹

Delio seemed to associate deportee group formation with a negative connotation as well.

Delio was a self-described “loner” and noted, “But I have a thing in life, I think you're better being by yourself then being with the wrong crowd.” Bosety definitely saw group formation in negative light as well: “Na, that's not worth it, it's gotta be a stupid deported guy to do that.

Because what are you going to make out of that? Because they kill you here.”

“Who kills you?”

“The police.”

Ramses found himself engaged in less risky group behavior on occasion: “just like, hang, like us, like a little group like us, all the deportees hang out here on the Conde. A few of us get—hang out with each other, you know what I'm saying. Basically we keep it onto ourselves down here, 'cause we know English or whatever, you know.”

After a focus on group formation, I turned to inquiries regarding economic survival strategies. As discussed earlier, a number of deportees work, at least to some degree in the call center business. In the center where I worked, the salary came out to just over 11,000 pesos for a two-week pay period. This is about \$288 in US currency, which comes out to about \$3.60 per

²¹ I did not encounter any gang members. Brotherton and Barrios (2011) did, but, as far as I know, only prison gangs. For a detailed look at transnational gang formation elsewhere, see Zilberg 2011, which focuses on gang connections between Los Angeles and San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador.

hour. Though I am not sure how extensive or high quality the coverage, the job also provided health insurance. Additionally, we received a 75-peso credit (almost 2 US dollars) in the cafeteria each day, which could pretty much cover the cost of the meal, or close. For cost of living in the area, the salary was quite feasible. Also, it should be noted that, based on what I heard, this salary and the general conditions of this call center company were generally considered to be higher-end.

The period I worked at the call center was during the summer I lived with Delio, which I mentioned in chapter one. During this time he shared with me the details of his monthly expenses. With power, water, phone, and television service (which included an additional receiver box, which Delio considered necessary with his girlfriend around, “In case I’m watching baseball and she wants to watch something stupid”), his monthly budget for utilities was about 2,700 pesos/month.

Gas for a car was another matter. During the timeframe in which I observed, gas ranged from 211-219 pesos, or \$5.61-\$5.82, per gallon. Delio pointed out that since 38 pesos equaled \$1, and gas in the U.S. was less than \$4/gallon, it should be less than 152 pesos (38×4) in the Dominican Republic. Interestingly, Delio was using U.S. prices as the benchmark to measure prices in the Dominican Republic. Many taxi drivers responded to high gas prices by having their engines redesigned to run on considerably less expensive propane. In any case, Delio drove when he had to, but went days without moving the car much. Also, importantly, Delio did not have a car payment or, most important of all, a rent or mortgage payment. Though even for those who did, that salary, about 22,000 pesos per month, would afford modest living accommodations with no other income. For sure, many people in the country survive on far less money and work under less safe and comfortable conditions.

In other words, working at a call center, at least a more reputable and relatively stable one, provided what would generally be considered a “good job.” Though, as Freeman (2000:47) points out, working with technology and in an “officelike work setting” when assembly line and other factory work (or informal work or no work) is the next alternative can make the jobs seem more attractive. Informatics “keyers” she worked with in Barbados acknowledged they could make more money cutting sugar cane, but “prefer the clean, cool and computer-centered realm of offshore informatics—a powerful illustration of their valuation of this new industry’s symbolic capital and physical appeal” (Freeman 2000:47). Furthermore, in the case of the Dominican Republic, such jobs required the skill of English proficiency, which put general transnational migrants, those educated in higher ranking schools, and, of course, deportees in a relatively exclusive group of people who could attain these jobs. The center where I worked had a small division that hired monolingual Spanish speakers to handle callers who “*oprime numero dos*” on automated phone menus. These workers were paid significantly less.

Without steady work, such as in a call center, some deportees I worked with relied on money sent by family members in the U.S. Unfortunately, some deportees also add to Santo Domingo’s already substantial vagrant, or at least transient population. Most of the deportees I worked with I met in the *Zona Colonial*, an area of Santo Domingo teeming with people engaged in all sorts of practice, among them deportees trying to get by. As I indicated in the introduction prior to my first trip I had been pointed in the direction of *El Conde*, the pedestrian mall central to the *Zona Colonial*. As a case study in the profound shaping process of globalization, the *Zona Colonial* is a fascinating place, bringing together two related eras of conflict.

On the one hand, this area was established by re-appropriating native land not long after the orthodoxy of the Spanish Inquisition made its way across the Atlantic. The fact that the

politics, economics, religion, and general culture of this land are profoundly defined by this encounter is hard to forget. Nearby ruins of a variety of colonial-era structures, along with narrow streets named after Catholic saints, only reinforce this. On the other hand, in addition to being the origin of a massive colonial expansion, this area is also home to the results of its legacy—the disparities of a socioeconomically stratified city with certain sectors benefitting from tourism and trade while many live in poverty.

At the center is the aforementioned *El Conde*, a promenade that stretches across the entirety of the *Zona Colonial*. *El Conde* is a wide, bustling walkway densely packed with restaurants and shops of many sorts connecting several blocks between the often well-populated *Parque Colón* (Columbus Park), on the east and *Parque Independencia* (Independence Park) on the west. *Parque Colón* features the oldest Catholic Cathedral built in what would come to be known as the Americas, the *Catedral Santa María la Menor*, also known as *Catedral Primada de América* (The First American Cathedral). Construction began in 1512, in short order after the arrival of European Catholics. And of course the space's namesake, *Cristóbal Colón*, or Christopher Columbus as he is known in English, is represented in a rather large statue in the center.

Several blocks west down *El Conde*, all the way to the end, *Parque Independencia* is surrounded by squared-off streets, and serves as an interchange for the eastbound *Avenida Independencia*, which terminates there, and the westbound *Avenida Bolívar*²², which originates there. This results in vortex-like traffic conditions, mostly among *carro publicos* and *guaguas* (shared taxis and small buses, respectively, that follow specified routes and cost significantly less than traditional taxis—but are utterly crammed with people) and other vehicles.

²² The street is named for Simón Bolívar, the famous South American soldier and politician instrumental to the earliest successful independence movements from Spanish reign; Santo Domingo also features a statue of him on a horse elsewhere.

If you are able to cross from *El Conde* into *Parque Independencia* unscathed you will find a park much less bustling with people than *Parque Colón*, with a well-manicured setting and the *Altar de la Patria* (Altar of the Nation) at the center. This impressive structure, which you can freely walk into, though with armed soldiers around, houses the mausoleum for the Dominican Republic's founding fathers: Juan Pablo Duarte, Francisco del Rosario Sánchez, and Ramón Matías Mella.

The entrance to the park is the *Puerta del Conde*, a Spanish fortification which is the site where Sanchez raised the Dominican Flag on February 27, 1844 upon the capturing of the city from Haiti, which had ruled the region beginning in 1822 following the Dominican Republic's independence from Spain in 1821. Since then, Dominican Independence Day commemorates independence from Haiti, not Spain. The main thoroughfare through Santo Domingo, *27 de Febrero*, or simply "*veintisiete*" (twenty-seven) as it is colloquially known, serves as a constant reminder of the significance of this event in the country.

The *Zona Colonial* extends to other, mostly residential neighborhoods to the west and north. The Osama River, which cuts through the city, runs to the east. To the south is the Caribbean Sea, separated from the rest of Santo Domingo by the *Malecón*, a stretch of road that essentially functions as a freeway on the south edge of the city. Big trucks, cars of all sizes, and *motoconchos* (small motorcycles whose riders often offer informal taxi service) moved at very fast speeds, yielding for seemingly no one or nothing. Waiting for a big enough gap, sometimes for several minutes, then running like hell is about all you could do. In all my time there I never heard of someone dying while attempting to cross, but I don't see how this could be completely avoided on this road.

Within the *Zona Colonial* I spent a great deal of time in *Parque Colón* over the course of my trips to Santo Domingo. Hanging out in *Parque Colón*, at least during the times I was there, meant you would confront two main groups on a regular basis: shoe shine boys and pigeons. The shoe shine boys were relentless. Wearing shoes that clearly were not conducive to shining did not slow down their persistent solicitations a bit. However, at some point between my first and second trip to the country, the authorities cracked down on shoeshine boys infiltrating the area and these solicitations slowed down considerably. As for the pigeons, they significantly outnumbered the people in the park at most times and the Columbus statue in the center of the park could scarcely be seen without pigeons perched atop. Travelers from all around passed by for photographs with this massive statue of the park's namesake.

Visitors and locals alike occupied the tables of the restaurants adjacent to the park, a Hard Rock Café among them. Merchants selling all sorts of things approached you, especially if you appear likely to be American, as I do. Tour guides, as well as taxi drivers, were always ready to take you away. Some tour guides were those trained and licensed by the country and wearing the official blue button-up shirt and lanyard. Some were not. Female prostitutes and men who can take you to female prostitutes wander around here and there. On one occasion, when she attempted to engage me, I asked a young lady I saw somewhat frequently in the park her age: “¿Cuántos años tiene?” Her answer was not a piece of information I needed to make a decision on her offer. That was a standing no. However, I was curious. When “*catorce*”—fourteen—came back, I wasn't surprised, unfortunately. It was unfortunate in several ways—that she was a prostitute, that she had begun at such a young age, and that I wasn't surprised.

You would probably also see children playing and maybe even some nuns passing through. Sometimes, you would glimpse a wedding party outside the aforementioned *Catedral*.

It's a peculiar place. But, as I mentioned earlier, this area brings together the two related eras of colonial expansion and the socially stratified urban center that serves as the economic seat to a thriving region for tourism. These conditions have resulted in the area serving as grounds for many, including deportees, to wander around looking for whatever opportunities to survive they can find.

I met such a deportee, Diego, early on when my friend Luis, who I mentioned in the introduction, arranged for me to meet him on *El Conde*. Diego was amiable and generally good spirited, though a bit bedraggled from wandering the streets of the *Zona Colonial*. He told me he was born in 1962 and moved to New York City with his family five years later. For some reason, perhaps as a reinforcement of his connection to his former city of residence, somewhat frequently, he referred to living through the infamous New York City blackout in the summer of 1977 (when he was about fifteen years old) and the accompanying severe heat wave, both of which occurred alongside the string of murders by David Berkowitz, better known as the Son of Sam. References to this era continued as he also pointed out multiple times his perceived likeness to the actor Al Pacino, adding impressions from some of his career-defining early films. I did not find his likeness particularly strong, though I definitely could see how it would have been stronger in healthier days. The impressions weren't bad though.

Almost a week after first meeting him, I recorded in my notes, "Saw Diego again. He had just washed his blue shirt behind a church. The shirt was on him and still wet" (June 6, 2008). I happened to see him briefly again the following night. He was still wearing that blue shirt. On a return trip, close to two years later, Luis mentioned Diego was "fat" and being taken care of by someone, perhaps a brother. Diego had been deported for charges related to using crack; Luis also mentioned Diego was smoking crack again. Picturing Diego any degree of

obese is still hard for me to conjure, as he was significantly undernourished and frail last I saw him. However, unfortunately, I have no trouble picturing him hooked on crack.

Francisco was another deportee I met making his way in the streets. I first met Francisco in the *Zona Colonial* about a week and a half into my first trip to the country and proceeded to run into him on several more occasions. He approached me near *El Conde*, calling out to me, “Hey, American!” and indicating that he too had lived in the U.S. When I asked him why he thought I was an American he told me he could tell by the way I was walking. He then impersonated me, pointing out the evident confidence he feels Americans display when walking as compared with his account of Europeans, whom he also impersonated, though rather unflatteringly from my point of view. This may well have been the point—to essentially compliment me and situate himself with me culturally. If so, he was successful.

Francisco also told me he had been in the country for only two weeks. In my notes later that day, I observed, “Said he’s been here two weeks—but seems pretty thin and fucked up for that.” I went on to point out that he was, “Bugging out a bit, even fell into sleep for a second when sitting. Couldn’t tell if it was lack of food and sleeping on streets or drugs. Or both. I gave him a bit of money and he was quite persistent in attempts to get more” (May 26, 2008).

Almost two weeks later I saw Francisco again while I was walking east down *Avenida Independencia* toward the *Zona Colonial*. He was sitting outside a *colmado* (which are ubiquitous small open-air groceries that typically have plastic tables and chairs out front) eating a meal from a Styrofoam container. He told me a “gay black American” had just bought him some food. He added that the night before some security guards had beaten him up for sleeping where he was not allowed.

Wilbur, though himself doing relatively well financially with his call center job, spoke to the problems with getting by he had observed among several deportees: “It’s kind of bad, because bringing all those people over here, you know, there’s a lot of people that they don’t find jobs. Maybe they didn’t learn nothing over there, they come back with nothing, and to go nowhere.” When I spoke with Delio about such matters, he had mentioned a similar point: “I don’t understand that, you do your time there, why you gotta be a criminal here?” Bosety elaborated on this further,

And the government, they don’t make it easy, either. You’re coming over here, you go—me, I’ve never been in jail here. The only time I’ve been to jail is when they took me deported, that’s the only time I’ve been to jail. But I also got, how do you say that, I got a criminal record here. So how am I gonna get a criminal record in the Dominican Republic when I never make a crime? In the U.S., they can say whatever they want about me because I make a crime, I sell drugs, I did six years in jail. They got a point to say, “You’re a criminal, you’re not allowed here.” But here—I went over there at fourteen years old, so I come over here and they say, “Oh, you got criminal record all over the place.”²³ So the government, they basically close the door for everybody here, with a criminal record. So, if I wouldn’t have got that criminal record, I’d probably be somewhere else. They don’t even let us to go to another country—why? Let’s say I apply for a visa to Spain, I can’t go. I’ve never been to Spain, I’ve never been to Spain, so why I got the door closed to Spain. Why? Tell me why. [laughing] I’ve never been there, so why I can’t go there?

Given Bosety’s claim, it should be noted that a deportee is not necessarily barred from international travel. However, obtaining a visa could be made more difficult by having registered as a deportee from the U.S. Obtaining a visa would be relatively difficult for many Dominicans. I did not encounter any cases of this.

Ramses spoke to these issues as well, explaining his personal experiences regarding getting along and finding work:

²³ As far as I know, Bosety’s account was, at least in part, inaccurate. He should not have a criminal record in the Dominican Republic. However, he would be registered as a deportee, which is information that could be obtained by a potential employer; perhaps that’s what he was referring to by “criminal record.”

They don't let us work out here, try to do our thing out here, you know. Basically, they don't let us *live* right down here, man. They treat us wrong. You know, and we come down here, we don't get no jobs, they don't let us have no jobs. We got that deportation stuff on us, so we can't get no jobs out here. Everybody treats us different. We get locked up every day when we're walking around on the street. They see me every day walking around with a tattoo, "Oh, he's a deportee, let's lock him up. 'Cause he got thrown out of the United States or something," or whatever.

"Have you gotten locked up down here?"

"Oh, almost *every day*. Almost every day."

"You get lock up almost every day?"

"Yea, raids. Watch, you'll see, oh man, listen, you don't know man. I just came out the day before yesterday."

"How long were you in?"

Na, they just take us in for the night. Yea, I might be walking down here on the, strolling or whatever, trying to hustle or whatever, and they're like, "Oh, look at the deportee. Grab him up." Sometimes I don't even make my motel room and I just walk around [...] I stay in the parks, like the *Parque Duarte*, and sit down in the park with all the guys there, we listen to music or whatever until whatever time they leave. Sometimes I just nod on the bench. Sometimes I sit in the pothole [a broken out spot in the concrete], in the cafeteria in the front. I sit there and I just go to sleep, whatever, you know. That's how I do, yea. Stuff like that, man. It's this country, man. They send us back here, man, it's just like, we don't got nothing else to do. You don't know how it feels, man, to get kicked out of your, a country. Let's say you're American, right, let's send him to China.

As with Bosety's claim about being barred from international travel, it should be noted that, despite Ramses's claim, deportees are not necessarily barred from employment. However, being a deportee can make obtaining a *nota de buena conducta* (good conduct note), which is essentially a work permit, more difficult. Without this certificate, employment opportunities are significantly limited. Ramses's accounts of targeted harassment are consistent with accounts in Brotherton and Barrios (2011), who point to sweeps and investigations based largely on hearsay. An interview they conducted with the Director of the Department for Deportees even admitted,

“Whenever there is a crime in an area where we have deportees, we begin interrogating them. This is already a matter of police procedure” (Brotherton and Barrios 2011:204)²⁴. Additionally, proficiency in English, though a valuable skill for generating income, marks many deportees to the police as potential “drug sellers and violent gangsters” bringing back deviance from the U.S. streets (Brotherton and Barrios 2011:207).

Despite such treatment, some deportees fare much better; in many cases the connections deportees arrive with go a long way toward influencing their lifestyle in the country. Regarding his new home, Sandro commented,

I never knew the Dominican Republic, I can say I left here when I was five years old. Since I grew up in the U.S., my wife is American, my son is American. So I didn't really know the Dominican Republic exists. [...] Yes, at first it was hard, you know it's still hard. But once you do the right thing, it's nothing hard for you to have faith and look forward. The first year, honestly, I didn't know nothing here and my Spanish was terrible [laughs]. And you know I didn't know how to move around, like I said I left here when I was five years old. I didn't know how to go to the store and say, “Hey, give me sugar.” You know, the first year was tough.

Though his first year was tough, as for his entrance to the country, when Sandro was deported his mother and brother came the day before his arrival. They stayed for a few weeks to help set him up with living arrangements. Regarding how fortunate he was to have this assistance, he told me,

A lot of deportees here don't have any help. A lot of them will look for a job, a lot of them will look for the same things they were doing in the U.S., illegal things. A lot of them actually when they were over there doing illegal things, they were sending a lot of money here [to their families], so they just living out of that.

Some deportees were fortunate enough to have extended family in the area take them in. Leo represented such a case. When I visited Leo's home, which is that of his aunt in the *Zona*

²⁴ Siulc (2009), in an unpublished dissertation, discusses in more detail the role of police and local Dominicans in shaping the experience of living as a Dominican deportee and what this means for criminalization.

Colonial just off *El Conde*, he showed me his books, which included *The Jesus Papers: Exposing the Greatest Cover-Up in History* by Michael Baigent²⁵ and several by Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov.²⁶ Leo said he turned to these books for explanations for how using crack damaged him. He also told me he vows to go back to the U.S. He added that he even told the judge presiding over his deportation order as much. Leo ruminated on this with me one evening while sitting on a step at *Plaza de España*, across from *Alcázar de Colón*, the stone palace of Diego Colón, or Columbus, the eldest son of Christopher Columbus. Overlooking the Osama River behind it, Leo told me that he goes there often and fantasizes of getting out of the country on a boat.

Indeed, having this family support did not necessarily mean all problems of adjustment would be resolved. Though I am well aware that accounts of “natural” trouble makers are dubious at best, Leo could make one wonder. One time while out with him I spent about a half hour waiting at a bus station while he went to pay off some guys he had borrowed money from. Just the night before I had given him 500 pesos (around \$12) to go pay them off. They demanded more and one waved a knife and slashed Leo in the stomach. Leo told me the guy apologized; apparently he did not intend to actually cut him. This time I had given him 600 pesos. When he returned, he still had 200, which was a deduction he took for bandages for the knife wound. He said they agreed to this. He may have had more trouble with them, but if so I didn’t hear about it.

²⁵ This is a controversial book by a controversial author (who died last summer, in June of 2013) who was known for speculating on the life of Jesus Christ. I do not know exactly in what ways Leo was taking inspiration from this book, other than that it pertained to Christianity, a major source of inspiration for many people from the U.S.

²⁶ Aïvanhov, who died in 1986, might be best described as a “spiritualist” who taught, lectured, and published on his religious philosophy known as the Great White Brotherhood (note: in this usage, “white” does not refer, in any way, to “race”). Again, I do not know exactly how Leo was using these texts.

In addition to these troubles with the locals, Leo also faced health problems. This became clear to me when Leo showed me a photo of himself from back in New York City. In the photo he was wearing tight-fitting athletic apparel and holding his bicycle; he had worked as a bike messenger for a number of years. The photo was shocking to me because the man holding it looked almost nothing like the man in it. In about a year, the muscular, vibrant New York City bike messenger in the photo had become a thin, somewhat frail denizen of the *Zona Colonial* in Santo Domingo. Leo told me he had become ill from drinking local water not long after his arrival, which led to a massive loss of weight. Having no significant amount of fat to lose, Leo had lost his athletic physique. Leo further explained the problems he encountered upon arriving as a deportee:

When I first entered this country, I was dumbstruck, so I told you I went into a depression that, I almost didn't make it back. It's not like I can walk into a hospital and say, "Cure me," like you do in New York. Over here it's like, "You ain't got no money, oh you're dying [laughs]." So then you find your own cure and you say to yourself, "Oh my god, what have I done."

Leo was referring to drug use, which he struggled with in the U.S and in the Dominican Republic. His weight loss, at least in part, could also have been related to that. Though it goes well for some, getting by as a deportee is not easy. Since first wondering what deportees did to get by, as I gained experience observing and listening to stories about surviving as a deportee, I would eventually come to think, "So, what do deportees do to get by? Whatever they can, I guess."

D. **The Pull of Family**

When I asked Leo whether he thought any changes should be made to immigration policy, he centered his response on a reality U.S. authorities must face: that many deportees return to the U.S. after being deported, a phenomenon closely examined by Brotherton and

Barrios (2011). He offered, “It’s better monitoring them and knowing where they are than to send them and them becoming a ghost having to come back the U.S., ‘cause I know a lot of ghosts are living over there that nobody knows they’re there, half of the plane is already back.”

Wilbur had also once mentioned,

And you know, I remember this one guy, he was real big and strong, and he was like, “Oh, I ain’t got no family here. My family left.” That’s crazy. I said, “So what are you gonna do, my man?” And he was like, “I don’t know.” ‘Cause he was deported twice. He said, “I gotta keep going back because I don’t have nothing here.”

In what I assume is an extreme case, my friend Miguel once told me that a guy he knew on the plane down called him from New York City *the next day*. As Brotherton and Barrios (2011) found, the primary reason deportees returned to the U.S. illegally was to return to their families. Indeed, among the greatest concerns of the deportees I worked with was being separated from family members, including, in most cases, their own children.

When I asked participants, “Do you think you deserved to stay in the United States?” responses tended to refer to the strain of family separation. In chapter four I detailed Sandro’s account of facing an inflated charge that apparently involved police misconduct. Regarding whether he deserved to stay in the U.S., Sandro brought this up, but he first appealed to the problem of being separated from his family:

To be very honest, sometimes I say I do, sometimes I say I don’t. You know the reason I say I do is because I have my whole entire family there. And the crime that I was actually blamed for, the crime that I was guilty for was actually not the right crime that was committed.

Wilbur quickly replied with an “Oh yea,” and referred to the reckless youth that had been long behind him by the time his deportation was ordered. His cousin Edwin was down from New York staying with him for a few months and happened to be present when I asked this question. He said every year at Christmastime when his family gets together, they all cry

because Wilbur is not there. Delio simply offered, “Oh yea; I miss my family, you know, like, they’re all over there now and I’m here by myself.” Leo offered, “But when you have family there, it should be an exception, that you’re allowed to go to see a death of the family, and you got kids there and living there, I mean that, it sounds like a fair policy.”

Ramses did not hesitate responding that yes, he should have been able to stay in the U.S. He quickly elaborated, referring immediately to his son, as well as his length of time in the U.S. and his lack of connection with the Dominican Republic:

Why, because I got an American son out there, I was there for more than twenty years, that was my first time offense, you know, I did my, served my time. So I don’t know why they just threw me out [snaps fingers], they just deported me. They forget about my son and everything, you know, they just threw me somewhere I’ve never even been out here; I’ve been out here just a few times, just to visit. I never passed no more than two weeks out here. I don’t got nobody down here, only my grandmother.

Ramses’s grandmother lived in Santiago, about one hundred miles from Santo Domingo to the northwest; he occasionally made the trip to stay with her, but always returned to the *Zona Colonial* “because this is where my hustle is.”

I wasn’t surprised to hear Ramses respond in such a way that emphasized his connections to the U.S.; earlier when I had asked him whether he thought any changes should be made to immigration policy, he responded, “Of course, definitely, definitely,” and immediately referred to the problem of having children back in the U.S., specifically his son who had turned sixteen just the week prior. His son was just one year old when Ramses went to prison, where he spent five years before being sent to the Dominican Republic. At the time of our conversation that had occurred just over ten years prior. Due to poor family relations (involving a shootout with his wife’s brother), Ramses did not see his son while imprisoned in the U.S. prior to facing

deportation. Expressing desperation, Ramses added, “So I got, you know, I’ve been out here, dying to see my son. I can’t go back, and I don’t know what’s go—I don’t know, man.”

Balbuena also gave a quick and direct, “Yes” in response to my asking whether he felt he should have been able to say in the U.S. When I asked why, he delved into the circumstances of his family, how his behavior adversely affected them, and how he now knows better:

Why, because—I realize I was doing a lot of wrong when I was young and I was eighteen. I realize that. But, as I explained to you, as the judge, Judge Perry, when he sent me to prison, at first I was mad. ‘Cause I was gonna be away. But at the same time everybody deserves a chance, especially when you have a family. They depend on you. They probably *did* depend on me when I was in the street, and I thought it was right what I was doing. But then when I shake my head and realize what I was doing and I was in prison and every time I was calling from prison they were telling me what they was going through—my mother, my handicapped sister, and my son.

Just over three weeks in, I recorded in my notes,

Luis doesn’t dwell on the past. He acknowledges the harshness and unfairness of the deportation laws. But he focuses only on his own actions. He is a forward-thinking guy who does not long for what he can’t have. He thinks about where he is and where he’s going” (June 6, 2008).

Nevertheless, a few days later while talking with David Brotherton, the sociologist from New York, and me, Luis asked a lot about the possibility of return, keeping a quite serious countenance throughout. For example, he asked Dave about the laws, if changes would be retroactive and allow him to return.

Luis then brought up his kids and how they need him now, pointing out that he had not seen them since a prison visit in 1991. That was seventeen years prior. His eldest at the time of this conversation was about twenty-seven and the youngest, a set of twins, children numbers four and five, were about twenty. They were only a few months old when he left for an approximately sixteen-year jail term. He said he has with him letters they sent him in jail, all the way back to the first one.

I reflected on Luis's musings in my notes: "Though my view of him as looking forward and accepting reality is unchanged, I saw something a bit different in him during this conversation. Over the years he has become the type of guy who would be a great father—and he wishes he could be" (June 10, 2008). The next day, the last day of my first trip to country (June 11, 2008), while sitting in the airport awaiting my flight back to the U.S., regarding how little time he has spent with his family, I observed, "He's seen more of me already than he's seen of them in over twenty years."

Ramses had also not seen his son in many years. He went to prison when his son was an infant and, as mentioned, due to strained family relations, he did not see him during the five years he was incarcerated. Though he had not seen him, he carried a folded 5 x 7 photo of his son, from when he was about five, in his wallet and had spoken with him by phone a bit. He was concerned, as his son was "seeing a psychologist, not because he's crazy but because he cries for me." He added that his son does not know he was deported; he was "working into to telling him soon."

The only case of a deportee seeing his children again I ever heard of was Sandro and his son. When I spoke to him one day in late May, he told me his son would be coming for the whole summer after school let out in June. Unfortunately I don't know how this went, as I was no longer in touch with Sandro after that conversation, but he told me the plans were set. It was likely an interesting situation; he said his son doesn't speak much Spanish and his wife (in the Dominican Republic, not his son's mother in the U.S.) doesn't speak English. Though Sandro would be seeing his son, he and all of the deportees I worked with are forced to manage significant displacement and face the loss of family connections.

E. **Deportees Reflecting**

One day Delio showed me some photos from Massachusetts, including some friends and him at concerts for the bands Phish and Pearl Jam in the 1990s. We looked up his old places of residence in Massachusetts using Google Maps. He pointed out the window of the room in which he first started dealing cocaine and the area across the street where he used to meet people to make the sales. He was amazed we could see those locales on the computer screen simply by typing in the address.

Delio had shown me a photo of a friend and him standing in front of a place where he first lived when he moved to the U.S. in 1991. A small concrete landscaping wall, about a foot high, enclosed the bit of grass outside the house around the corner of the property. Right next to where they were standing the concrete had a relatively small but easily visible crack in it. When we looked at the Google image in 2011, we both noticed the crack was much bigger, pretty much all the way through the small wall. He commented that seeing those places made him want to “turn back the time.”

When I asked, “Do you think you deserved to stay in the United States?” all seven interviewees responded in the affirmative. At first Leo seemed to be the only dissenter when he shot back, “Hell no,” with a laugh, adding, “not the way I was.” Later, he added that he should have been able to return, that the U.S. should send people such as him out “for a couple of years, that way you wake up and say, ‘Hey, America is a good country,’ you understand what I’m saying?” When I asked whether he thought any changes should be made to immigration policy, Wilbur expressed the need for a more individualized, discretionary approach to deportation cases:

Well I think that things should be, like, they should have a judge that should really focus—‘cause I don’t think, they have like a quota, it looks like. They just

have to get, there's so many coming to be deported, that they have to hurry up and get these things going. That's the way I think. So, because you can tell, the lady that was my, I forgot, her name was Carrera, something, she was a Cuban native, she was Spanish somewhere I think. But she didn't look Spanish either, she spoke, you know. But anyway, she was telling us that the law says this and that's that. And it doesn't matter—you know how many family members I had in my courtroom? And then we were like, "Look, I got my whole family," I brought church letters, I mean anybody can bring a church letter. I brought a bunch of stuff. And she was just like, "No, it's like I have an order, and you have to go." That's basically what I got. This lady, she's not, she doesn't have the power, I don't think so. I think they should just make somebody—or maybe she did. But the law doesn't let her, and then they would be like, "Oh, what's going on, you're not doing a good job." But I think they should have somebody that really looks into things, like what you've been doing for the last couple of years and stuff like that.

Balbuena echoed this concern: "Actually, the only thing I can say about that is they should review why you are in prison. You know, even though, even though, yes, you are in prison—" "Do you mean to determine—"

whether you should be deported, that's what I'm saying. Because us, as human beings, a judge, a lawyer, a prosecutor, a state, we can make mistakes. And it can be understandable if you make a mistake because you're a human being, you know. And if the judge decided that you need to go to prison, which I don't, I don't want that for nobody, but if you make a mistake in your life, if you make a mistake that you deserve to go to prison, you deserve that, you need to go to prison. But at the same time, while you're in prison, now immigration should go now deep into the case, just not go for what they say, "Okay, he went to prison, he needs to be deported." It should be like, "Okay, let's review the case now, he's arrested for this, but let's read the police report." Because as you can see, for example, you're gonna hit me, let's say for example, a burglary. But then you hit me with burglary, burglary of an occupied dwelling. Then you hit me with burglary. Then you hit me with trespassing. That's three charges, but really it's just one charge—burglary. Why three charges when it's just one? You see? But sometimes they need to see if it really was a burglary, like in my case; there was no burglary. I never burglarized his place. You know, I never, I never forced my way in, I never took anything from his house, I never broke no window, a glass, broke the lock for the door, nothing. My intent was not that. So that's something they need to review. Okay, the guy went to prison, they probably—let's see if they did their job right. Or let's see if he's actually doing what they say he did.

As I mentioned, all the deportees I worked with felt they should have been allowed to remain in the U.S. Nevertheless, intriguingly, several referred to the redemptive quality of having gone

through the legal system and even facing deportation to the Dominican Republic. For example, at one point Leo mentioned, “I never, I never would have found my roots, you know what I’m saying?” Sandro elaborated more on the redemption of his legal troubles and the hardships of deportation that followed:

In my situation, a lot of times I don’t regret, you know, doing the time. The reason I don’t regret it because it made me who I am now. You know it’s like I got my high school diploma in prison. I got my, I got some university, I was doing university over there, I got a degree. You know, I got a couple of certificates that I actually did up there. So, sometimes, I say yes, it’s hard, I lost six years of my life. But a lot of times I don’t regret it because I was actually on a path where it was the wrong path. Who knows where I would have been right now if I would have never got incarcerated. Because I was on the wrong path, I was already getting involved with gangs and stuff. So, I probably would not be alive right now. That’s the reason why I don’t regret being incarcerated.

Balbuena offered a similar explanation with even greater personal reflection on the value of his legal troubles and his deportation:

You know, I was making a lot of mistakes in my life, which now, thanks to the judge, when he sent me to prison, the time that I was in prison showed me how to become a better man. It did, it did. As you can see today, I’m in my country, but I have improved myself. I’m the supervisor for a company that works for the U.S., you know, I’m a better father, I’m a better son, I’m a better friend. Before I was looking at the person, trying to see what I could get from them. And now I’m trying to see what I can offer them, which is different, you see.

“So how did prison help that?”

How, I was taking a lot of courses, I was actually hanging out now, now I was doing the same thing I was doing when I was young, hanging out with the wrong people, in prison. But now it was to *teach them*, to *show them* what I know now: “Hey, when I was young, people like you was using me. But now I have the same mentality that you have, and me and you in the same place and me and you sleep in the same room, but I can teach you what I was doing before and how I got that fixed. Now I can show you how to become a better man.”

Balbuena later offered,

And when my mother was telling me what she was going through, then I realized that she needed me. I realized that she needed her son. She was not married at the time, now she’s married, but she *needed* me, she needed me to be there for

her. My son needed me to be there for him. My handicapped sister needed me there. When I was in the street and I couldn't think about that, I couldn't—all I was thinking about is to have some nice tennis shoes, clothes, this, that.

Making his feelings regarding redemption absolutely clear, Balbuena added,

Then I realized that Judge Perry did a *favor*, he did me a favor, he sent me to prison so I can learn my lesson. I *did*. It helped me. It did help me. That time that I was sitting in prison, it helped me to become a better man, better father, better friend, better son, better brother—better human.

I asked him about his family situation now. He told me his son in Tampa was nearly thirteen. In Santo Domingo, he had two daughters, one almost two years old and one five months old, and he lives with them and their mother. While telling me about them he showed me his picture frame keychain featuring both of his daughters and added, “I’m a family man. I love to have my family, you know. I couldn’t have that in the past. But now it’s time for me to settle and have my family.”

Balbuena went on,

I’m helping Dominicans, a lot of Dominicans to think about themselves. I’m sitting down, telling them about my life, my past, what I was before and who I am today. I do it with deportees and not deportees and with people who are planning to go to the U.S. I do that. I tell them what the U.S. expects from you when you get there. I tell them how to be, how to act, how to work when they’re over there in the U.S.—what they gonna expect, what they gonna see, who they gonna have close to them. They’re going to have people telling you do this and you’ll make this amount of money in fifteen minutes. And you’re going to be like, “Yes!” But then, what’s going to happen after the fifteen minutes, what if you don’t get to the fifteen minutes?

In other words, Balbuena was using his American cultural sensibilities and experiences to help future immigrants fare better than he did. Regarding deportees in general, Leo expressed a similar idea: “they could prepare other people to go there, you understand, and tell them, ‘Look, I did a mistake.’ Even if they could tell them how to, how to go about things over there, and the thing is, they also think differently.”

When I asked whether they thought immigrants in the U.S. are good or bad for the country, all seven interviewees responded in a manner that included some sort of hedge. Leo said, “Uhhh, well, let’s say they’re good and they’re bad.” Ramses’s response, “Well, it depends, it depends, you know some go to do the right things, some go to the bad things, I understand that, you know,” was similar, as was Delio’s: “Well, that would be like half and half. Because you got good people and you got bad people.” Delio later commented that in Massachusetts he lived near people he identified as “Portuguese” and “Greek,” who he described as “quiet.” He added that, “Dominicans and Puerto Ricans there are more bad than good.”

In response to a different question regarding whether any changes should be made to immigration policy, Sandro spoke to similar problems stemming from immigrants in the U.S.:

But I understand, you know, especially with what’s going on with you know all this war going on and problems going on with immigrants in the U.S. Like for example, you know, drugs problems, that’s one of the main problems actually going on in the United States with immigrants, you know. You don’t see, actually, it’s, you know, let’s say 90% of the people that are dealing with drugs over there are immigrants. Because they bring it from let’s say Columbia, Brazil, Mexico, Dominican Republic. So then the 10%, is a very little percentage. And that’s you know, that’s something, I definitely see that.

In response to the question at hand, Sandro commented, “A lot of them hurt the country and a lot of them help the country.” After mentioning several cases of immigrants making positive contributions and doing the “right thing,” Sandro commented, with a laugh, “Now a lot *don’t* do the right thing.” When I asked him to elaborate, he referred to going to “the street” and trying to make “the easy money.” “That’s what we actually call it—easy money.” On a separate occasion Delio also referred to “easy money” with a much more personal account of transitioning into drug dealing in the U.S.: “I used to work there for like ten years. So I was being good.”

“Where did you work?”

“The International House of Pancakes, that was my first job.”

“Were you a cook?”

“First I was a dishwasher, then I became a cook. Then I worked for Pizzeria Uno. I think they have that in Chicago.”

“Oh yes, that’s where it’s from.”

Yea, yea, that’s—yea. And I worked, there I was a dishwasher too, and then I became a cook too. My sister worked there for many years. And I worked for the hotel, at the Marriot Hotel. And then I worked for Lowe’s Home Improvement. I worked for Papa Gino’s Pizza. I worked at Chuck E. Cheese’s, sometimes I wore the big mouse costume when they needed me to. I worked in a leather place called Travel Leather.

“That sells luggage?”

They made leather, like you know from the cow and stuff, from the animals. And there’s a lot of different places that I worked there, I can’t, I can’t remember, but it was about—I used to do landscaping—I worked like twenty different places, twenty different jobs. Then I decided to do what I did.

“Why?”

“You know, because I see other people doing it, I thought it was easy money. It was stupid. If I had never gotten into that, I’d probably still be there. Maybe with no money, but still living in the states.”

Though Delio was the only one to elaborate on his work history in his response, most of the responses also included some sort of reference to work, all echoing popular U.S. discourse regarding the willingness of immigrants to do work that most Americans would not want to do. Bosety remarked, “It’s not like we go over there and we’re gonna take over the country,” later adding, “They do the jobs some people won’t do, if you ask me the question, you want me to tell you the truth—white people, they aren’t going to the job for six dollars an hour. I know that, you

know that.” Balbuena continued the trend with, “Like there’s a lot of jobs that a lot of Americans won’t do that immigrants do. Pick orange, strawberry, construction work.”²⁷

These responses indeed show the variety of perspectives and complicated interpretations of deportees on the implications of their experiences. Regarding work, it seems that, even to these deportees, immigrants do little more “good” than provide their labor. They all felt they should have been allowed to stay in the U.S. And though some found deep personal value in going through the deportation experience, I never met any deportees who wouldn’t go back if they could. But they can’t, at least not at great expense and risk. In the next chapter I further explore negotiating displacement by detailing a form of employment many of these deportees engaged in, a form of employment in which they could deploy transnational skills and practices linking them back to the U.S.: serving U.S. businesses as call center agents.

²⁷ I noticed how Balbuena’s examples tended to reflect his being from Tampa, Florida as opposed to New York City.

VII. AN EMERGING TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION: DOMINICAN DEPORTEES AND CALL CENTER WORK

**“A lot of us know each other from the states, or from prisons.
A lot of us know each other, so we got along pretty good.”**

--Sandro on working in the call center business (Interview, May 22, 2010).

“Thank god for these call centers.”

--Leo when discussing his ability to earn money in the Dominican Republic (Interview, March 25, 2010).

A. Introductory Remarks

The transnational framework has been used to more effectively understand how migrants live in the U.S., as well as cases of return migration. As mentioned, Golash-Boza (2014:63) recently applied the framework to cases of deportees in Jamaica, aptly referring to the condition as “forced transnationalism.” Her focus is on the transnational strategies deportees use to confront the financial and emotional challenges they face after deportation. My focus is primarily the transnational practices that emerge in the realm of work, specifically call centers for U.S. businesses.

From early in my first trip I heard from deportees about working in call centers.²⁸ A number of deportees I spoke with casually referenced having spent at least some time in this capacity. Others, as it turned out, were building careers in this business. As I mentioned in the introduction, to more closely examine the transnational linkages with the call center business, I found employment in one. In this chapter I use the insights gained from this experience to

²⁸ Later, in Brotherton and Barrios 2010, Kanstroom 2012, and Coutin 2010, I also found brief references to this phenomenon.

elucidate how deportees working in the call center business constitutes a form of transnationalism. I begin with a look at the foundations of transnationalism.

B. A Close Look at the Transnationalism Paradigm

Transnationalism became a leading paradigm for understanding the experiences of migrants largely due to the framework put forth by Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc in the mid-1990s (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Basch et al. 1994). Glick Schiller (2003) points out use of the term as early as 1916 to describe immigrant relations across borders. On through to the 1980s and early 1990s, the term received continued use to refer to such connections. However, transnationalism as a conceptual framework for studying migration took form with the framing of multi-faceted migration processes codified in the work of these anthropologists. Guarnizo and Smith (1998) point out that transnationalism represents phenomena that are not entirely new but that had reached a higher level of intensity at a global scale by the end of the twentieth century. Tsuda (2004) observes that the transnationalism of now is different in degree from transnational movement of before, rather than representing a different kind.

To define transnational migration, Basch et al. (1994:7) explain it as a "process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement." Further elaboration brings out several key points to this approach. For example, the framework holds that the term "migrant" is more useful than "immigrant" to characterize those engaging in transnationalism. Migrants, as opposed to immigrants, develop networks, activities, patterns of living, and ideologies that span their home and host societies (Basch et al. 1994). "Immigrant" implies closure, as if a person has completed a process. Or, it implies there is no process taking place, but rather a singular event of moving from one place to another.

As for earlier approaches, Brettell (2000:99) discusses the predominance of categorization common to anthropology for so many years, which in the discipline's early attempts to theorize migration led to, of course, delineating types. For example, she points to the work of Nancie Gonzalez in 1961, who identified five types of migration ranging from "seasonal" to "permanent."

Rather than focus on a distinction between types of people—those who move and those who do not—Abraham and van Schendel (2005:13) point out that movement should be seen as an inherent quality of social bodies. They argue that movement by itself should not be seen as a primary marker of social distinction, but rather "relocated within an ensemble of social practices which are mobilized at different times for different reasons." Regarding how movement takes place, this leads us away from questions of "why" to "how." This also allows us to more effectively assess the meaning attributed to movement, with a particular focus on those doing the moving (Abraham and van Schendel 2005:13).

The transnationalism framework conceptualizes migrants as "transmigrants" who occupy social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders. Their courses of actions and modes of operation are embedded in a network of relationships, connecting them simultaneously to two or more nation-states (Basch et al. 1994). In other words, the realities of transmigrants challenge the almost natural tendency to conflate geographic space and social identity. A key element for Basch et al. (1994) is the multiplicity of involvements that transmigrants sustain in both home and host societies.

In *Nations Unbound*, Basch et al. (1994) offer four main premises of transnationalism that further contextualize the experiences of transmigrants. A detailed look at these premises can help characterize and explain transnationalism and frame the approach in

broader social, economic, and political contexts. Following this look at the major tenets of transnationalism, I discuss my own work in a call center and detail how the nature of the work provides opportunities for deportees to engage in transnational practice as well, thereby linking them back in a business relationship to the U.S.—the country that expelled them for criminal behavior.

First, transnationalism is inextricably linked with the changing conditions of global capitalism. Indeed, transnationalism arises in part from the globalization of the world economy, internationalization of production, and consequent construction of webs of new social relations (Goldin 1999). Therefore, to fully understand its operation, we must analyze the experiences of transmigrants within the context of global relations between capital and labor. Guarnizo and Smith (1998) point out that global restructuring has increased economic dependency of less industrialized countries on the more industrialized.

Furthermore, the political elites in countries with high sending rates have found that as emigration increases, monetary transfers by investors have improved their economies while remittances have added social and economic stability. These factors lead certain sending countries to promote transnationalism in an effort to reinvent their place in the world order. Indeed, with this increased mobility of capital have come new conditions for the mobility of labor as production sites have internationalized with foreign investment (Sassen 1988).

Though transnationalism can entail circular movement, it is important to note that this is not necessary for transnational livelihood (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997). It is therefore important to note that transnationalism need not be limited only to those who move between nations. For example, Smith (2006) points out that though transnational life usually involves travel, it can include the experiences of those who stay in close relationships with travelers. Aranda (2007),

employing phrasing from Levitt and Glick Schiller, notes that "ways of being" may not be transnational if the person does not move. Nevertheless, a person's "ways of belonging" can be transnational even after one-way movement. Though lives are lived locally, emotional and intellectual lives can be lived transnationally based on experiences in the past. Despite lack of circular movement, as Goldin (1999) points out, transnational identities are best studied in a way that emphasizes the fluid nature of ideologies, events, people, and locations. Some may be through moving; but they continue to be shaped by their experiences.

Production for export in poorer countries beginning in the mid-1960s led to the establishment of Export Processing Zones (also more recently referred to as Free Trade Zones), while major U.S. cities became centers of management and control of the global economic system. In other words, industry largely moved abroad and the "industry" of a few major U.S. cities became finance. The patterns of migration that accompanied these shifts took a different form from the large-scale migrations that preceded them. This sort of migration was linked to the development of the sending country and its place in the global capitalist order. To draw out this connection, Nash (1981), citing the work of Frank and Wallerstein, points out that underdevelopment is not an original state for a country and becoming developed is not a process of passing through stages: the now-developed countries were never *underdeveloped*.

As for those considered underdeveloped, this state should not be considered a reflection of that country's political, social, and cultural characteristics. Rather, the so-called underdeveloped countries are so as a function of their relations with metropolitan countries. As Nash (1981) points out, these relationships are embedded in world-wide capitalism. Working with these connections espoused in the work of Frank and Wallerstein, Nash (1981) points out

that these relationships have led to further migration. People adjusted to the changing capital order, and that adjustment for many took the form of migrating.

The second main premise of transnationalism casts it as the process by which migrants create social fields that cross national borders (through daily life activities and social, economic, and political relations). With regard to studies of migration, Brettell (2000:104) characterizes these attempts as “a macroapproach that portrayed migrants not as active agents but as passive reactors manipulated by the world capitalist system.” This is indeed an important issue, and we should keep in mind that for a given area, U.S. foreign policies and activities related to the U.S. economy should be considered closely to uncover migration patterns (Sassen 1988).

Sassen (1988) also points out that recent U.S. immigration could even be seen as a domestic consequence of U.S. activities abroad, as the mobility of capital creates new conditions for the mobility of labor. Castles and Davidson (2000) and Heisler (2000) note that the historical success of the western nation-states in dominating much of the rest of the world has ironically turned on the concept of the nation-state.

However, though they create social fields through their movement, this does not necessarily make transnationalism liberating, and it definitely should not imply that it is counter-hegemonic or always resistant (Guarnizo and Smith 1998, Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997). Tsuda (2004) takes this idea further, suggesting that not only is transnational migration not necessarily enabling and emancipatory, but, under some circumstances, the processes can be destabilizing and disorienting. Tsuda (2004) argues that the transnational perspective can over-emphasize the subversive and counter-hegemonic nature and the liberating potential of the cross-border processes it examines. Indeed, transnational explanations, with their agentic analyses,

can downplay the structural realities these mobile people face that can constrain or direct actions and decisions, or even cause such movement in the first place.

The third main premise of transnationalism holds that bounded concepts that conflate physical location, culture, and identity limit what we can see and analyze. Approaches in anthropology and other fields, including those taking so-called postmodern approaches support such conceptualization. For example, exposure to media can create imagined selves and imagined worlds (Appadurai 1996). Regardless of one's take on such approaches, the point is that access to media in today's world in part creates identities that do not match up with location or local traditions.

When considering the experiences of migrants, we must not essentialize their character by assuming living in a certain place equals having certain experiences or even identities. Though, as Stefansson (2004) points out, such anti-essentialism can lead to claiming that the bond between peoples, culture, and territory has disappeared. Bounded conceptualization can be limiting, but the location of people is still of great importance to the identity, livelihood, legal rights, and social relations of individuals and communities. In reiterating that transnationalism is not necessarily liberating, Guarnizo and Smith (1998) warn that it should neither be seen as completely boundless or existing in a "third space." Rather, transnationalism practices are embodied in specific social relations, and the local sites matter.

Finally, the fourth major premise for understanding transnationalism concerns the relationship of transmigrants to the nation building processes of two or more nation-states. Their identities and practices are embedded in the nation building processes of these nation-states. For example, in 1993, Smith (2006) observed members of a Mexican committee working out plans for a new system of water pipes in their Mexican town—while standing and talking on a street

corner in Brooklyn. As Suárez-Orozco (2005) points out, Dominican politicians demonstrate the importance of extending their messages to all concerned Dominicans by conducting extensive campaign activities in New York City. All the while the experiences of transnationals contribute to the functions of the host society as well. Further, upon return for those who do return, migrants culturally transform "back home" with the "social remittances" they bring from the host country (Levitt 2001). With this close look at the transnational paradigm, I turn to an examination of the call center where I worked as a venue for transnational practices among deportees. However, first I detail my experiences in getting hired and going through training at the call center, processes that themselves speak to transnational linkages.

C. **My Call Center Experience I: Getting Hired**

On a Monday I arranged with my friend Manny to accompany me to a free trade zone, the San Isidro *Zona Franca*. I had been there before; as I mentioned in chapter one, this is where I met Sandro and Wilbur, who I ended up spending more time with and interviewing. Wilbur had worked at the call center where I would be applying, though he was at a different location at this point. The call center where Sandro worked was no longer in operation. The call center I worked for is a locally-operated business that held a number of contracts with American companies, mostly in the electronics realm. I would go on to work for the division serving a major television service provider. The call center is an American company with locations abroad: the television service provider had outsourced its customer support services to a company that had then offshored the work.

I entered and simply informed the desk personnel that I was seeking a job. After a brief screening I was told the company could use me more at their location on the other side of the city, which I was happy to hear as this was considerably closer (though not particularly close) to

where I would be staying. A phone call was made and I was told to report to the other location. Manny and I headed off by bus.

Upon entering the lobby I was first met with the blast of air-conditioned cool air that caused my glasses to fog in contrast with the tropical heat outside. At a large reception desk sat a young fully English-fluent secretary who looked up from up from her Facebook page just long enough to tell me to sign in and have a seat. I was far from alone among the lobby seats. As it turned out, every day, at least a few candidates are waiting to interview for a job. After I was set, Manny headed back to the *Zona Colonial* and, after about fifteen minutes, a Human Resources representative named Derek called me.

Though Americans or other foreigners working in these centers was not typical, some did. So, though I stood out, my applying for a job there was not so anomalous as to lead to questioning why I was there. Regarding her research in a data entry office in Barbados, Freeman (2000:15) points out due to her being a “white” American, “going under cover” was not possible. I, on the other hand, was able to work without disclosing my being an anthropologist. No one ever asked me why I was applying or working there, and I therefore never told. My objective was to assess the transnational linkages practiced through working at a call center. For this reason, and being a regular employee who had not disclosed this, I conducted no interviews at the call center.

I went on to meet Derek, who sat me down in the next room over, just outside the human resources office. I then proceeded to fill out three forms. First was a test with English grammar and vocabulary. Some of the items were generally more (relatively) difficult than I would have guessed, such as subtle has/have distinctions. Interestingly, several of the grammatical forms were those I hear used incorrectly on a regular basis by even completely fluent long-term or life-

long English speakers. Second was a test with general questions about computers and television technology. For example, the questions asked about some basic key commands, what “www” and “http” stand for (I knew the first one; I did not know the second), what cables to use for video connections, and so on. The third and final sheet was a personal information sheet to list previous job experiences, references, and so on.

After completing these forms came an interview. This mostly consisted of basic questions about work, such as how I deal with stress, change, and so on. Following these questions was a role playing exercise in which I handled a mock TV technical problem by reading through steps on a sheet I was given; in my scenario, a customer called to report a black screen.

Following my interview I was seated in a vacant training room to take a test over the phone called the Versant English Test, which I noticed had been published by the U.S. textbook and testing company Pearson the previous year (2010). Over the course of nearly twenty minutes, I had to respond to such exercises as repeating statements, taking three mismatched parts of a sentence and putting them in order, and providing simple answers to questions that mostly tested vocabulary.

Finally, I filled out more paperwork with human resources, forms typical to what I was used to from working in the U.S. On one of the many forms I filled out was the question, “If you are not a Dominican citizen, can you provide proof that you are eligible to work in the Dominican Republic?” It is illegal to work in the Dominican Republic without a *cedula* (a Dominican identification card; in the U.S., a driver’s license would be most similar, though a *cedula* does not grant driving privilege) or special permit. I had heard of one call center that adhered to this law. However, many others, including the one where I was, ignored it. I checked

yes, and that was that: I was an undocumented worker. I started right away, joining a training group that was already in its second day.

D. **My Call Center Experience II: Completing Training and Interacting with Trainees**

The contrast between the livelihood working in a call center can provide contrasted with unemployment in Santo Domingo is striking. For instance, I noticed just down the street from a call center a Jaguar car dealership, which on banners outside advertised a new model for \$69,900 (the price was listed in US dollars). Outside, a few blocks away, make-shift buses move up and down a busy main street moving the poor to and from potential, if not precarious money-making opportunities. Many on the streets beg for change, often barefoot and in tattered clothes.

However, inside the air-conditioned call center office building people dressed in business casual attire were busy working with technologically sophisticated telecommunications equipment, fiddling with smartphones while on their breaks, and eating lunch with the meal credit provided by the employer. In parts of Santo Domingo the contrast—how closely these ways of living exist together—can be a bit disturbing.

As for those who do work in the call center, the job consisted of receiving calls from customers throughout the U.S. who had incurred some sort of service problem or had an issue with billing (or wanted to make changes to their service). The call center floor was made up of, I would estimate, about one hundred computer stations separated by partial privacy dividers, though not enclosed in typical cubicle arrangement. The atmosphere was somewhat informal, though when people were logged in and ready to take calls, there was very little socializing beyond quick comments between calls. However, for breaks, including a lunch (or dinner) break, people typically ate on site at the cafeteria and socialized, mostly in English. Notably,

U.S. news channels, such as CNN, were typically playing in the cafeteria. The overall pace of work did not strike me as particularly intense or harried, though it was certainly steady.

The training schedule was 3:30 pm-12:00 midnight, Monday through Friday, for a four-week period. Following this period, Support Professionals, as we were known, move on to taking calls alone, but with more experienced Support Professionals nearby to assist. After two weeks of that, Support Professionals join a team and are full-fledged employees²⁹. The training rooms were full of a variety of people, some deported from the U.S., others living between the two countries, as well as a few Dominicans who simply were fluent in English.

The atmosphere of the training was mostly informal and very loose. At the end of day one (when I had not yet begun), the group watched part of the film *Cop Out*, a recent action comedy starring Bruce Willis and Tracy Morgan. At the end of the second day (my first day), Daniel, our trainer allowed us to watch more of it, during the last half hour of the shift. Daniel was a young Dominican who lived between Santo Domingo and the U.S. The day was filled with jokes from trainees and Daniel, jokes which reflected what I would generally characterize as part of an unprofessional and even immature atmosphere.

Alex was another trainer who came to us the following week. Though I could never confirm it, I suspected he was a deportee who was hiding this facet of his identity. I began to suspect this after he told us the story of how he ended up in the country. He explained that he had moved to the U.S. in 1976, at nearly five years old. Then in 2005, six years prior to my meeting him, his mother had sent him to the country to live with his grandmother to “straighten” him out (notice he would have been about thirty-four years old at this point). Interestingly, he even referred to this process as, “deported by my mother.” He said that when he left, at the airport, he ran into trouble. Evidently, after moving to the U.S. back in 1976, he had never

²⁹ I completed the training program only.

updated his legal permanent residence paperwork or Dominican passport. This of course would make him ineligible for international travel. However, he said, after some questioning, the agents let him go. Then once in the Dominican Republic with an invalid “green card” and invalid—and foreign—passport, he was unable to return to the U.S..

Alex therefore continued to live in the Dominican Republic and found work in the call center business. Due to my position as an employee and being concerned about inappropriate questioning to my supervisors, I did not feel comfortable attempting to confirm that he was actually a deportee. Nevertheless, I remain reasonably confident his story was fabricated—as he told it, U.S. agents allowing someone without proper documentation board a plane seems unlikely at best. Furthermore, he explained had been in trouble frequently back in the U.S., such as being involved in a bar fight in which he badly injured his knee. As he put it: “Testosterone was my worst enemy.” In any case, while telling the story of how he came to the Dominican Republic, in his prominent New York dialect, Alex was wearing a t-shirt with the names of famous New York City landmarks and places such as Brooklyn, China Town, Manhattan, Statue of Liberty, and so on.

Whatever the circumstances leading to Alex working at the call center, he too was part of the informal atmosphere. At one point he referred to a young woman with unusually large breasts for her body type as being “overweight from here to here,” gesturing with one hand over and one hand under his chest area. At another point a trainee made a reference to her having trouble balancing due to the disproportionate weight. Alex went on to top that by directly referring to the young woman as “Tits McGhee” on more than one occasion. She did not act at all offended (I am not suggesting she wasn’t, but merely pointing out that she did not express so) and no one else seemed to be, either.

Somehow in conversation, the fact that an early-twenties male trainee had never engaged in sex emerged. This was announced by a late-forties male who was born in the U.S. to Dominican parents (who had left the Dominican Republic immediately after the fall of the dictator Trujillo in 1961), but had returned for a change. He preferred to be called “Sarge,” in reference to his rank in the United States Marine Corps some years before. Another trainee then called out to our trainer, “Hey Alex, we’ve got a virgin over here,” pointing out the young man to the trainer and essentially everyone else in the room.

Two other trainees were questioning an early-twenties “white” American from North Carolina who had recently finished a two-year Mormon mission in the country, about his being a Mormon. Among their inquiries was whether he drinks coffee, is a virgin, and has ever masturbated, the latter question with an accompanying descriptive hand gesture. He simply calmly answered (no, yes, no). They went on to ask if he would marry his Dominican girlfriend (which he was in the midst of planning) if she drank coffee. He again simply calmly answered (no). Throughout training, several additional episodes occurred that fit this general tone.

Despite this behavior, Daniel, the trainer, was loose and informal, but quite serious about the company and the job. Alex, the other trainer, was the same. Alex was extraordinarily gregarious and animated; one of the trainees commented that he should be a stand-up comedian, and I have no doubt he could be successful in such an endeavor. He once related a story from a call that speaks to his sense of humor. During the call, he had to put a woman on hold in effort to resolve her problem, which he was not able to do. When he came back, she asked him if he had been able to resolve the issue. He said, “No, but I did just save 15% by switching to Geico.” His delivery style could make almost anything funny, and he followed up this story with his usual over-the-top laughter. Also, notably, the whole joke relied on referencing a well-known

series of television commercials for a major U.S. insurance company. Despite this general sense of humor, one time, when in the midst of the usual joking around, a trainee referred to a certain kind of customer as “stupid,” and Alex stopped cold. He responded, “Don’t call *my* customers that word. You have to *educate* them.”

Alex, as well as all the other personnel in management and training I encountered, was indeed quite serious about succeeding in this business. For personnel living between the U.S. and the Dominican Republic, success at the call center was important to gain experience for future endeavors. For deportees, it was one of the only jobs they could obtain and succeed in. There were several other employees at this call center who I know were deportees. And there were several more who, like Alex, I would guess were. At this particular call center, which was a highly regarded one, this status seemed not to be freely discussed. In any case, the call center was clearly defined by its connections to the people and practices of the U.S.

E. **Working For Home From “Home”: Call Centers and Transnational Practices**

In recent years call centers have risen around the world, taking advantage of advancements in communications technology that allow for lower labor costs for “off-shored” work³⁰. This coincides with what Freeman (2000:1) broadly characterized as “vast changes in labor patterns and technology in the global arena.” Freeman (2000:2) even likens the shift of information-based work offshore to “a newer version of the export processing model of industrialization embraced through much of Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.” She indicates that such work has been driven offshore mostly by attrition levels and sinking wages in the U.S. In Santo Domingo, call centers can be found in several parts of the city and, as it turns

³⁰ See Aneesh (2006) for a discussion of the growth of globalized call centers and its implications for “virtual” labor. Also see Mirchandani (2012) and Nadeem (2011) for discussions of (in the case of India) the relationship between working in off-shored call centers and worker identity.

out, provide opportunities for deportees to engage in transnational practice as they earn money to survive.

Around the call center itself, which was floor two of two in the building (above the training center), were several posters of the famous image of Uncle Sam pointing at you. Though instead of telling you he wants YOU for the U.S. Army, he was asking the Support Professionals, “What’s YOUR AHT?” AHT is an abbreviation for Average Handling Time, the average time a Support Professional spends with each customer who calls in. It is crucial for this to be low, in order to facilitate high call volume. This is key among the metrics Support Professionals are rated on for promotions and condemnations. The presence of these posters was one of many facets of the call center that demonstrated transnational connections between the Dominican Republic and the U.S.

An equally poignant reminder that the people and business practices of the call center were inextricably linked with the United States came on July fourth—that is, American Independence Day. On this day the door to the call center floor donned a picture of a waving American flag; on the wall inside hung a larger image of a flag featuring a superimposed bald eagle. For lunchtime, all Support Professionals received a ticket for a free hotdog and Coke in the cafeteria, which had been decorated with red, white, and blue balloons.

Like many places of business in the U.S., the call center allowed for “casual Fridays,” in which we could wear jeans, shorts, t-shirts, and the like (as compared with the usually required dress pants and button down shirts or skirts and blouses for women). The fourth of July was on a Monday, and we were allowed to dress in casual Friday clothes on that day and throughout the whole week in celebration of the United States of America’s 235 years of independence. Regarding dress, there were also occasional themes, including “beach week.”

Several additional, often more subtle reminders of the connection to the U.S. were all around, mostly centered in the comments and references personnel would make. For example, one of the trainees spoke of missing the restaurant Boston Market, specifically mentioning the creamy spinach. Alex, the aforementioned trainer, reminisced on eating at any of the many Ray's Pizza locations all around New York City. Further, Alex emphasized that "real football" was American football, not what Americans call soccer—precisely the opposite of what most Latin American or Caribbean folks (and most others around the world) would say. He also played American football on Sundays in an informal sort of league. Nevertheless, such references to the U.S. were also mixed with local references. For example, regarding the ID sticker of television service receiver boxes, a trainer referred to it as its "*cedula*," the aforementioned Dominican identification card.

The behavior of many of the trainees also represented transnational connections by drawing on cultural conventions derived from the U.S. When discussing training, I related examples that spoke to the informal and, by some standards, immature atmosphere. Some of the informality took the form of rather insensitive comments regarding race and ethnicity—comments that reflected designations for these categories typical to the U.S.

For example, referring to phone conversations with personnel in the Philippines office, accounts were often expressed with mocking imitations of Filipino accents. One trainee referred to men with South Asian dialects as "Hindu" and even "Habib," complete with animated impersonations. The same trainee erroneously pronounced "Arabic" like "Air-rah-bic" when referring to a language option offered in a particular television programming package. When rebuked by another trainee on the mispronunciation, she replied, "Sorry, a Habib-y," reflecting the usual ignorance that tends to accompany such comments.

More than one trainee referred to “black” women with the general term, “Shaniqua.” Other trainees on more than one occasion joked about foods associated with “black” people, including collard greens, fried chicken, and watermelon. Another trainee once wrote on the dry-erase board “Axe ≠ Ask” as an admonishment to those who tended toward such linguistic constructions more typical among “black” speakers.

Some, including Alex, the trainer, even made casual use of the word “nigger,” though not as an epithet, but rather in the sense it is sometimes used between two people racialized as “black.” However, it is worth noting that Alex would not be racialized as such. All of these comments seemed to be part of usual patterns of speech, gained from living in the U.S. This goes to show how “racial” and ethnic conventions derived from the U.S. are given their due in the Dominican Republic by those who carry them over.

Aspects of the business itself revealed several general connections with the transnational model as well. While discussing handling time zone differences across the U.S., Daniel, the trainer, invoked Benjamin Franklin and his role in the inception of day light savings time. He even quoted the Franklin aphorism, “Early to sleep, early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.” After the “early to sleep, early to rise” part, most of the class joined in and finished the quotation.

In general Daniel was concerned with successful business tactics, such as effectively conveying and expressing “the idea,” as he put it, and frequently pushing us not to be “Average Joe.” Though call center operators and, indeed, every employee of the call center itself, had no direct stake in the company, trainers and managers certainly understood the benefit of being strong team players within it.

Alex also delved into the personal-success-in-business realm as well such as by discussing choosing the “path” we’ll be on: “The opportunities are here, it’s up to you to take them,” adding that in as short a time as six months we could be in any number of upper level positions. He continued with commentary on how business works with such comments as, “Which cupcakes sell more, Hostess or ‘what-the-fucks’?” in an effort to relate the importance of branding. In another example reiterating the effectiveness of branding, he noted that by buying the clothing brands Hollister and American Eagle, “You are a walking billboard.”

Television service has become an extremely competitive business, as evidenced by the advertisements many of us are exposed to at near-constant rate. As it turns out, this competition runs among the call centers that provide customer support service to the television services providers as well. As part of our training, we learned that the provider uses twelve vendors, including the two in Santo Domingo, reaching as far as Manila in the Philippines. As Alex put it, “Eleven sites are trying to take our jobs.” He added, “If we make money, *you* make money.” Alex pointed out how there is more competition for call centers now. With companies looking all over for cheapest customer service costs, small operations have “set up a room with ten or twelve computers, and you got a call center.”

Upon visiting the training session, the Service Delivery Manager for the call center asked what you expect when you visit a Wendy’s restaurant—there was one nearby—to stress the importance of uniformity in following procedure when fielding customer calls. A trainee raised in Miami offered, “The only thing different here is the service,” to which she responded, “Yea it kind of sucks here.” She also mentioned that people here don’t look you in the eye. This was among the many comments throughout the training to reference aspects of Dominican culture in a derogatory manner. Alex went deeper than matters of customer service when he commented,

“With a little extra money, this is paradise. But you gotta know how to make it paradise. Because it can be hell. You have to know people and rub shoulders with a lot of people. Then when shit hits the fan, you got your umbrella.”

Other aspects of the business made the transnational linkages even clearer. The Service Delivery Manager, on another visit toward the end of training, further discussed the business and our role in it. This included a visual presentation, the first slide of which detailed why we are in business. There were two points listed under “We Are in Business To.” First was “Make a profit.” Second was “Deliver an exceptional customer experience.” We were further instructed to remember this equation: “Profit = Revenue – Expenses.”

Following the basic business lesson under “We Are in Business To” was “What Type of Business Are We?” The answer: “Outsourcer.” Though the company is obviously a television service provider, nothing about television service appeared on the presentation screen. However, to the right of the text was an animated image of money falling onto a pile of more money. Daniel spoke broadly about the economic relationship between the U.S and the Dominican Republic: “What affects there affects here.” Economically, he pointed out that some say the U.S. is coming to an end, like the Roman Empire, adding that China is now subsidizing much of U.S. economic activity.

A moment in a short promotional video detailing the advances the company has brought to television service, given the circumstances under which I was watching it, made the transnational linkages of the business clearest. Toward the end, after a reference to the company’s fourteen million customers, came several testimonials from celebrities extolling the company and its services. The testimonial from the well-known Fox News political commentator Bill O’Reilly I found most striking: “The [company] people are patriots.”

I watched this in another country, in a room full of people training to perform work for much less money than the company would pay residents of its own country. These are jobs that could be provided to Americans, who could use the money they earn to reinvest in America. Instead, to increase company profit, the provider has the work performed in foreign countries, which includes the labor of long-term U.S. residents expelled from the country, people evidently deemed unfit to live within the borders of the country, but whose labor will be gladly accepted from abroad. This represents a profound disconnect between popular notions of American business and how they represent the idea of the nation on the one hand and the operation of the global economy on the other. Indeed, this example, along with the others, demonstrates the close transnational connections of the call center business. Though call centers are key venues for finding work and connecting deportees back to the U.S., many utilize survival strategies outside the call center business as well, a discussion I turn to next.

F. **Finding Work Outside Call Centers: More Transnational Connections**

A key area to identify transnational livelihoods can be found in the call center business. However, other forms of work draw on transnational connections as well. Regarding finding work, Delio mentioned,

A few people they think like me, like most of the people you see working, like places like Punta Cana and Bávaro, and Puerto Plata. Like hotels, resorts—most of those people are deported. You know, they know the language and stuff. They don't say they're deported; they say they learned to speak English in the country, 'cause they're embarrassed to say the truth; not embarrassed, because if they say, "Okay, I'm deported but I need a job, you're not going to get a job." It's like being in jail when you live in the States and you say you've been in jail, nobody wants to hire you.

For Balbuena this extended beyond himself; he pointed out that he speaks with his two young daughters only in English so they will have more opportunity, such as working in a hotel.

Many deportees could be found engaging in some form of hustling or otherwise informal economic activity. Earlier I mentioned the prevalence of tour guides in the *Zona Colonial*, some sanctioned by the country's tourism department, some not. Many deportees joined the numbers of unsanctioned tour guides as well. Ramses told me the official tour guides get jealous because people like him speak English so well, they steal their business. He told me some had drugs planted on him, for which he did a year of jail time. At the time of this conversation, he had been out for about three weeks. He said it had aged him. He certainly didn't look good.

Serving as a tour guide took a variety of forms. Some deportees roamed *El Conde* looking for visitors to show around. This may mean simply serving as an assistant of sorts: running errands, arranging transportation, making arrangements for accommodations and restaurants, and helping with other tasks. In some cases, they could even get hired to drive or otherwise accompany tourists around the country, visiting destinations in the interior or beach communities on the north, northeast, or southeast coasts.

Some of the arrangements these informal tour guides would make for tourists were of a more provocative nature. In my notes, about two or three weeks into my first trip to the country, I commented, "*El Conde* on Sundays is pretty dead, with most shops closed. But *El Conde* is never dead. Something is always going on down there" (June 1, 2008). On that Sunday, I bumped into a deportee I knew, Jose, on *El Conde*, who told me he couldn't really talk; he told me, "I got some business going on." Not long after, I saw him walk by with a man who almost definitely from the United States or Europe and a woman from the Dominican Republic who almost definitely was a prostitute.³¹ Business was good, evidently.³²

³¹ Apropos Francisco's comment earlier about discerning nationality by style of walk, often I could tell an American from a European due to demeanor, countenance, clothing, or other cultural indicators, but this time I could not. However, I would have bet my last peso the woman was a prostitute.

³² See Brennan (2004) for a detailed account of the sex tourism boom in the Dominican Republic

In my notes a few days prior, I commented on Jose, whom I had seen a few times and briefly met while with Luis, “Jose is a smooth-talking, smooth-thinking, smooth-acting hustler. He strolls *El Conde* all day pulling girls to pimp out. He is persistent and, it seems, quite successful” (May 28, 2008). A few days later, I talked to him a bit more. He had moved to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida when he was five years old; at the time of our conversation, he was twenty-seven and been in the country for almost three years after facing drug charges. He had two daughters back in Ft. Lauderdale, ages thirteen and ten; he was fourteen years older than his eldest daughter, who was approaching the age of the girls and young women he spent his time arranging into prostitution for tourists in the Dominican Republic.

Luis seemed to have the steadiest flow of regular clients of anyone I knew engaging in the arrangement of tourists and women. On a particular occasion in my notes I recorded that he began working as an interpreter and guide on a Tuesday and said he’d probably be working with them through Sunday. One day I met a couple of guys probably in their late forties or early fifties visiting from Philadelphia, Fred and Philip. Luis had helped Fred before with women he had met through the web site Latin Euro, which is a popular resource site for American and other men to get in contact with foreign, to them, women. Both Fred and Philip are parole officers and both were quite friendly. Luis referred to other men he assists as “agents” and “marshals.” When I asked, he said they don’t know he has been deported. He added that they probably assume so, but have never asked.

One federal agent based in Atlanta called Luis every day. When I asked, “You mean, literally *every* day,” Luis responded, “Yes, every day.” Right then, the man called; I suppose the odds of that occurring weren’t so bad. The conversations weren’t long. He usually sort of checked on how things were going. The interims between actually being there to speak to him in

person weren't long either—he visited Santo Domingo once per month. This provided Luis with regular work, as he would help him with accommodations and translating. He told me this sometimes entailed waiting at a car for hours while the men were away.

One day on *El Conde* I bumped into Luis while he was standing at a corner with two American men. I spoke with all three of them for a few minutes. One said he is a surgeon in Texas, having moved there from New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina (which had occurred almost three years prior). The other was identified by Luis as a U.S. Marshal from Washington, D.C. I shook hands with both, then I was on my way. All of these cases clearly demonstrate that transnational strategies serve as an important set of practices deportees can draw on survive on the other side. In the next chapter I examine the implications of the deportation situation for notions of citizenship in the realm of state power.

VIII. LOCATING DEPORTEES IN THE SYSTEM: CONSIDERING MODELS OF CITIZENSHIP AND STATE POWER

“Cause they don’t treat you the same when you’re a citizen than when you’re an immigrant or you have a visa. It’s not the same.”

--Delio on the difference between citizens and non-citizens in the U.S. (Interview, May 28, 2010)

“You know how they’re gonna throw—they’re dying for us to do something wrong out there to throw us out.”

--Ramses in regard to immigrant rights in the U.S. (Interview, May 30, 2010)

A **Introductory Remarks**

The circumstances of Ramses’s deportation reveal a poignant reminder of the implications of not fully belonging to the nation, but rather being classified as a guest. As mentioned in chapter one, Ramses was deported for engaging in a shootout; he first told me this incident took place with “a Puerto Rican guy,” who he later pointed out was his wife’s brother. The other guy shot first and hit Ramses’s mother, who was caught in the crossfire, grazing her stomach: “thank god she’s a little chubby and it just grazed her, you know what I’m saying, but she caught one. I chased him; after I seen that, I chased him, fucking I shot him twice. He shot me once, you know what I’m saying.” The bullet from this shot hit Ramses in the upper thigh, exiting out the back of his leg. Both shooters were hospitalized and arrested that day.

Ramses did less than half the time as his wife’s brother, since he did not shoot another person as well (the other shooter had also shot Ramses’s mother). Ramses did five years, the other shooter eleven. However, the other shooter was Puerto Rican-born, not Dominican, so due to his citizenship status, after his prison term, he was able to go home to New York. Ramses was

forced to a country he had visited for about three weeks total since leaving it at age two. In this chapter I examine models of citizenship and the role of the state in configuring the deportation situation.

B. **Holding Citizenship: Important Implications**

All deportees, as varied as their stories are, occupy a rather unusual space in the realm of citizenship. We know they are not citizens, yet so many of them have lived as most citizens—with the legal right to live and work in the U.S. People with long-term legal permanent resident status in the United States, one might reasonably assume, are offered the same legal protections and basic rights, with the exception of voting, as citizens. If not, why would there be such status? But as it turns out, this status, while giving immigrants the legal right to live in the U.S., withholds a number of protections and constitutional rights. Legal permanent residents who face deportation profoundly complicate notions of citizenship and belonging.

Migrants go through obvious changes in the migration process by encountering new customs, languages, and social orders. However, among the most potentially powerful changes they encounter is coming to live in a polity where they do not hold citizenship (or at least not for a period of time). Most migrants take on the status of guests and live in a nation where their rights are drastically less protected than their citizenship-holding counterparts; those living in the nation-state are more vulnerable to exploitation if they are not naturalized citizens (Lewis 1990). Heisler (2000: 85) points out that T.H. Marshall, in his groundbreaking work on citizenship “advanced the proposition that the development of citizenship rights has important consequences for social inequality and social cohesion: citizenship rights have served to attenuate inequalities of social class and helped to integrate previously excluded segments of society.” Indeed, as Coutin (2007) points out, the rationales for removing non-citizens, particularly long-term legal

residents convicted of crimes, shows that the concept of citizen/alien is central to the U.S. deportation system. Peutz (2007:184) notes that, beyond mere removal of a body, deportation first renders the persons going through the process “‘outlaws’—persons excluded from the law and thus no longer protected by it.”

The deportees I worked with were well aware of this distinction. When I asked Delio whether he thought he deserved to stay in the U.S., in his response he directly appealed to the difference between citizens and non-citizens:

I think they should've given me another chance. Because they do give another chance to citizens. If I was a citizen, I would have been out of jail in a month. They would have gave me like some kind of probation or something; I would have stayed in jail for one month, then I'd be out.”

Sandro clearly understood the implications of lacking citizenship as well: “If I would have been a citizen, I wouldn't be here right now. You know, I would be in the United States. That's another thing about becoming a citizen.”

Coutin (2007) adds that the lack of citizenship justifies the denial of basic rights in these deportation proceedings. For those deported, the process they go through shows them they are owned, in a sense, by legal constructs. They are removed because they legally belong to another country; yet when they arrive in that other country, they are often seen as “from the United States” (Coutin 2007). Coutin (2007) goes on to point out that this process indicates that deportees fall between countries, belonging to both and neither simultaneously. Along the way, many non-citizens live in fear of deportation (De Genova 2005). Indeed, the implications and functionality of state membership play a profoundly significant role in the situation of migration and hold a particularly complicated position in examining the deportation of long-term legal residents.

C. **A Critical Examination of Citizenship and the State**

This examination of citizenship begins by discussing its relationship with the body that arbitrates such affairs: the state. In the social sciences specifically, the movement of people has been closely examined; however, some, such as Abraham and van Schendel (2005:13) note that the role of the state is not always given sufficient attention:

In noting the lack of attention paid to the state and its policies in migration theories, Aristide Zolberg criticizes social scientists for ‘focusing on the incoming streams [of people]’ and paying ‘little or no attention to the fact that the streams were flowing through gates, and these openings were surrounded by high walls.’ He adds that ‘*international* migration is an inherently *political* process, which arises from the organization of the world into a congeries of mutually exclusive sovereign states.

The authors go on to point out that,

Zolberg’s insight [that the state is often ignored] reinforces the taken-for-granted quality of the state in social science thinking, even where the presence or absence of the state is the fundamental condition producing distinct categories of moving people. (Abraham and van Schendel 2005:13)

Several researchers have probed the construct of citizenship in recent years, giving rise to widespread debate on the meanings and implications of this facet of nation-states often taken for granted. For example, the concept of “denizenship” has been around for a long time to denote the substantial social, civil, and even political rights accorded to long-term noncitizen residents in many democracies (Heisler 2000). For a more direct challenge to the concept of citizenship itself, Castles and Davidson (2000) indicate that globalization creates new challenges for citizenship. In particular, the migration associated with globalization complicates the idea of nation-state membership as we have come to understand it as the condition for citizenship.

A now long-standing issue surrounding examinations of nation-states revolves around questioning their continued legitimacy and whether their authority is weakening. This is particularly relevant to discussions of movements of people; the agency of moving people leads

many to discount the strength of the state and leads some to reckon its demise in the face of such transgressions by the people (Heisler 2000). Rather than a condition of nation-state membership, Castles and Davidson (2000) argue that we should conceive of citizenship in a way that is more attuned to the conditions created by globalization, which entail people residing in places where they were not born and even moving around.

They put it clearly: “The main thesis of this book is that a theory of citizenship for a global society must be based on the separation between nation and state” (Castles and Davidson 2000:24). They go on to point out that any such theory must “evacuate the nation part of the concept of the nation-state” (Castles and Davidson 2000:24), implying that the focus should be on residence in the state, rather than ascribed cultural belonging. They continue that this, then, requires not a new understanding of citizenship, but rather, “a new type of state that is not constituted exclusively or mainly around the nexus of territoriality and belonging” (Castles and Davidson 2000:24).

In other words, Castles and Davidson (2000) posit that citizenship should be based on residence. Since the movement of people and cultural interchange inherent in globalization make multicultural difference irreducible, their formulation of citizenship renders the link between nationality and citizenship anachronistic. Indeed, as they point out, the development of modern citizenship was linked with Western European and North American nation-states from the seventeenth century onward.

The problems Castles and Davidson (2000) find with citizenship as it stands stem from this link with the development of nation-states: because the nature of nation-states has changed under contemporary globalization, citizenship based on nation-states is no longer tenable and should change as well. They indicate that citizenship is meant to be universalistic and above

cultural difference. Yet, the concept exists only in the context of the nation-state, which is based on cultural-specificity. Among the many inconsistencies of linking cultural-specificity with a nation is Castles and Davidson's (2000) observation that currently the world has about 200 nation-states but over 6,000 spoken languages.

In the end, Castles and Davidson (2000) are not suggesting a way to more effectively understand how citizenship works in our current system, but rather how it should work in a different system, one in which it is not connected to nationality, but constituted by a political community with no regard to common cultural identity. This point is made clear. However, immediately following it the authors indicate, "Yet in a world of migrants and ethnic groups, citizenship cannot be blind to cultural belonging" (Castles and Davidson 2000:24). With regard to state borders, they note that they "cannot be abolished, as distinct states will remain the rule for the foreseeable future" (Castles and Davidson 2000:24). Rather, they imagine a system of states, but with porous borders. Rules for admission and people's rights would be based what they call "real societal membership" (Castles and Davidson 2000:24). These unclear assertions, and even contradictory lines of reasoning, reflect the difficulty that reckoning citizenship poses under the changing nature of national construction and concomitant global flows.

Other researchers have also introduced models for addressing the changing nature of citizenship under globalization. These include universal citizenship as advanced by Soysal (1998) and alien or non-citizen citizenship as discussed by Bosniak (2006). Under universal citizenship, people, such as guest workers and other non-citizens, are considered in the citizenship realm because of their incorporation into the legal and organizational structures of the society (Soysal 1998). Their status as people in the society, in the general sense, takes precedence over any formal status.

In particular, Soysal's (1998) model of universal citizenship goes beyond the nation-state and emphasizes universal personhood. After all, with the rise of universal human rights organizations following World War II, people have rights outside the nation-state. Citizenship in this conception is "postnational"; that is, rights would be extended to foreigners, as they would not be foreigners in the sense we have come to know.

In her alternative conception of citizenship, Bosniak (2006:7) argues that when we consider the "larger world frame" of citizenship, analyzing it within the context of a nation-state alone is insufficient. Similar to Soysal, Bosniak considers the general membership and rights of people in the society over the formal status of national citizenship. However, in her conception the nation-state still administers citizenship; it simply grants it to all its residents. Regarding such matters, Fox (2005) points out that the idea of "transnational citizenship" now is tricky because it is unclear how a transnational polity would be defined.

Indeed, these models would profoundly complicate the connection of citizenship as we have come to understand it as functioning in nation-states—which remain as the organizing political framework in the world. Heisler (2000: 85) points out that postnational citizenship downplays the importance of full political citizenship and inclusion in the nation-state as a necessary precondition for the "protection and well-being or integration of long-term noncitizen residents."

These postnational propositions, by definition, are difficult, as they locate the rights of long-term noncitizens beyond the authority and protections of individual nation-states. To reach beyond the framework of nation-states, to theorize citizenship, these theories appeal to "the context of global transformations" (Heisler 2000:86). No doubt, global transformations tied to

the profound political and economic interconnectedness of our era have drastically altered the way a polity is constituted.

However, we should remember that “the context of global transformations” is a set of circumstances; the places where migration happens are nation-states and the circumstances of nation-state sovereignty will take precedence. Abraham and van Schendel (2005:13) support this quite plainly: “Movement is never abstract. It always takes place somewhere; in the present world, it takes place on territory claimed by a state.” Publishing in 2000, Heisler (85) points out that “the new transnationalism is another manifestation of globalization.” This sort of movement is indeed inextricably linked with the general processes of, and even, in some cases, machinations of globalized economic endeavors. However, people who move are located in nation-states, bodies which are themselves profoundly shaped by these processes.

Regardless of one’s position on this matter, there is no arguing that the laws and thereby the authority of nation-states mediate at least the forced movement of people, however strongly guided by the forces of globalization. Postnational conceptions of citizenship are useful for pushing our understanding of what could be. However, when dealing with matters pertaining to immigration and deportation, we must keep in mind the political and economic realities that drive our current configurations of citizenship.

The application of citizenship policy plays a key role in generally promoting the interests of state sovereignty. Citizenship policy promotes exclusion and significantly contributes to the management of an uneven economic order to the benefit of powerful states. How citizenship plays out has everything to do with the configurations of nation-states and their orientation to one another. As long as these configurations and orientations remain, citizenship will operate in the interests of these political bodies, which, sadly, will entail the exclusion of many, including

deportees, the excluded group that serves as the focus of my work. We must keep in mind that this is a key function of citizenship policy. Perhaps what these conceptions of citizenship most clearly show is how unclear the concept can be under globalization and how subject it is to interpretation.

D. **Deportees on Citizenship and Belonging**

To further enrich understandings of citizenship outside the conventional reckoning, I asked the deportees I worked with about their thoughts on this complicated, and, for their life courses, bedeviling concept. Would the conceptions of citizenship offered by deportees, who were not citizens but mostly lived as citizens typically do, support these notions of postnational citizenship?

To begin, in interview sessions, I asked participants, “How would you define citizenship? What does that mean?” Most responses centered around “benefits,” “rights,” and “advantage,” such as when Wilbur commented, “And to me, I see like there’s a lot more benefits for a citizen, of course, there should be. I mean, why would you want to become a citizen if there’s no benefits? You know, there’s gotta be something.” After asking me to further explain what I meant, Balbuena explained, “Well, to me actually, it gives me the advantage to have the door open for a lot of opportunity that the U.S. offers to a lot of people.”

Similar responses invoked an even deeper sense of the legality of belonging to a particular state. For example, Sandro included in his response, “when you swear for a flag.” Ramses stumbled a bit, seeming to be dealing with an unfamiliar mode of thinking, and finally responded, “To be a citizen, you gotta take the oath, you know what I’m saying. Like lose your nationality and become that nationality, you know what I’m saying.” With these responses, Wilbur, Delio, Balbuena, Sandro, and Ramses clearly recognize the importance of national

membership to full legal inclusion, characterizing citizenship as a legal construct within the context of a nation-state.

Other responses to defining citizenship and characterizing its meaning appealed more to cultural factors. Leo, as he often did, elaborated quite colorfully, incorporating his underlying feelings and revealing a deep sense of patriotism. Importantly, his response moves beyond mere legal connections with national membership. He specifically evoked the attacks of September 11, 2001 in relationship to being a New Yorker. His impassioned response:

Okay, this is my deepest, this is my deepest thoughts here, okay. To me, after spending forty years in the U.S. and never coming out, okay, to me I was a citizen, I would die for my country. Not just somebody who came for three years and became a citizen—he ain't gonna die for jack. But you know like, I was probably the only one in the U.S. the day that those buildings went down, and thank god I had my little niece, my two nieces with me when the twin towers went down [voice racing]; I still get goosebumps, goosebumps; it was like they hit my home, you understand, I wanted to go fight, you know, you understand what I'm saying. And that's how I felt, I was like, "Oh no you *didn't*, oh no." I was like, "Oh my god." I went on my bike, I swear this is, if they find filming, they will see it, I went on my bike, everybody was coming out of the hospitals, there were hospital beds everywhere on the floor, and I was on my bike, I remember I went through those cars, where they sell cars, I took two of their flags, I put 'em on my bike and I rode it baby, 'cause, yea, "We here," you know what I'm saying. I rode it through the bridge, I was crazy.

"Were those American flags?"

Yea , yea! Because I was American, to me I was American, so nobody could tell me any different, and in my heart, it's still there, you know what I'm saying. And that's all I could say. The citizens that come three years, uh, just came into the country and they're a citizen already? You gotta be kidding me.

"So what makes you different? Because you lived there from a young age?"

No, it's, what made me different is because of my surroundings, the things that I knew, the things that surrounded me, it was like, it was home, I'm sorry but being a kid and watching this all your life and then you're not there anymore? Like walking around 5th Avenue with your trench coat, your leather trench coat, you know what I'm saying, listening to rock music, I'm sorry buddy. Or you're riding 5th Avenue on your bike, and you know what I'm saying, then you see the, you know, I could go deep.

During my first conversation with Leo he told me he had written songs inspired by his emotional response to the 9/11 attacks. Two days later while spending more time with him, including visiting the home of his aunt and his cousin where he also lived, we walked down to a music equipment shop not far off *El Conde*. Leo knew the employees and seemed to be on quite friendly terms with them. He asked one if he could borrow an acoustic guitar. The employee agreed. With my voice recorder capturing the moment, Leo performed one of his songs for me there in the store, sitting on a stool. Words and music by Leo:

“9/11”

Walking the city at night
All I do is look around
Walking through the early lights
And there's no one, not a sound

Buildings are falling
That's the last thing that they said
But words are falling
A thousand times inside my head

[chorus]

What will I do?
Now that you have gone and left me
All that I see
Is the devil laughing at me

Where is my love?
All I have is just the pain
Of losing you

Never see you again

Father I have sinned
I've seen the darkness once again
Fighting is not my thing
But they said the righteous will always win

Guide me into the light
So I can make this wrong to right

But most of all I pray
Just that there be peace on this earth some day

[chorus]

What will I do?
Now that you have gone and left me
All that I see
Is the devil laughing at me

Where is my love?
All I have is just the pain
Of losing you

But will I see you again?

I'll see you again
I'll see you again

I'll see you again
Oh, and I'll see you again

I'll see you again

Upon finishing his song, Leo added, "That's cool, right? That's the 9/11 one, baby; thanks man" (June 2, 2008). Peutz (2007:187) reproduced a piece of writing by a Yemeni man potentially facing deportation, which he titled his "Prayer for America," which expresses similar sentiment. The man who wrote it had not grown up in the U.S., and did not see himself as an American, as Leo did. However, he had grown to "love" America and its people, as expressed in a line from his prayer: "Best of countries and peoples, sincerely they love goodness and act by it, their hearts are the best among mankind on earth; they are the Americans" (Peutz 2007:187). Leo also expressed "love" for the U.S. and returned to the general sentiment of patriotism when I asked what makes someone a good citizen:

What makes somebody a good citizen, okay, it's, um, what makes someone a good citizen is a person that cares about—well, not everybody is going to care about people, especially in New York, I ain't gonna change that, are you kidding me, they'll walk over you as soon as you fall, you know. But um, what makes, it's a person who loves their country. That's it, I mean bottom line, I still don't

look at this as my country. Now I'm looking at it as okay, this is where my ancestors, this is my roots, you understand, but you know.

When I asked him about comparing the rights of immigrants with U.S. citizens, regarding the U.S., Leo commented, “even though it has its flaws, it's still a great, it's still a great country that I don't appreciate until now.” When asked whether he considers himself an American, Leo was simple and serious, again evoking patriotism as he had before: “Always. That's not going to change. And if I had to fight for my country—because I consider it my country—yea, I would. Even from here.”

“So do you consider yourself a Dominican?”

“No, I don't.”

With these responses, Leo clearly was not concerned with characterizing citizenship within the context of a nation-state. Rather, Leo robustly appealed to the connection between citizenship and, as Castles and Davison (2000:24) put it, “the nation part of the concept of the nation-state,” specifically pointing to nationalism and cultural belonging.

Other responses, though attuned to the legal definition of belonging, also went beyond this rather rigid understanding, evoking a sense of cultural belonging as well. Referring to his time in the U.S., Wilbur commented,

I actually considered myself to be more, like, American. I was Dominican, but I learned how to speak real good Spanish here. And people would make fun of me when I came back, like “Oh, you talk so funny.” I was, “Yo, I don't know what to tell you. Over there all I spoke was English. I worked in English, I studied in English.” I just spoke words, you know. And when I said a word, sometimes it came out a little messed up. [...] Yea, I mean people here, they still don't consider me to be like a Dominican. [...] I think, maybe, I don't act like them so much. Even though I've been here for so long, it's just not me, it's not the way I was raised. And I'm already thirty-three, so it's gonna be hard for me to be going and changing and stuff. I am who I am, that's it.

When I asked Balbuena, “Do you consider yourself an American?” he responded, “No. No, no, because I was born in the Dominican Republic, you know.” However, he then added a fascinating explanation to characterize himself as culturally American, comparing his way of thinking to the way he felt most Americans think, indicating how this differs from his impression of people in the Dominican Republic:

It’s like playing chess. Think before you move. That’s what is, a U.S. American, people in the U.S., before they do anything, they review it, they think, they sit down, and they look around to see what happened after you make that move. [...] Dominicans, they just do it, they just do what they gotta do. And then if something happens down the road, they say, “Wow, I should have did it like this.” That’s what I’m saying. Americans don’t do it like that. Before they do it, they sit down and review, and they say, “Well, if I do this, if I make this step—” [...] So it’s like, they like three steps ahead of you.

“So are you saying you’re like that?”

“Exactly.”

As Leo had, Wilbur and Balbuena both reached beyond the context of a nation-state and appealed to cultural belonging to characterize citizenship.

Ramses put it quite simply, also referencing the importance of work: “Well, you just go out there and do the right thing, just work and not get into, do nothing wrong.” Later, Ramses included an appeal to the importance of residence for establishing the right to remain in the country:

I know we make mistakes, but hey, like me in my case, I’d been over there for more than twenty years. I was there for so long; I never even became a citizen, you know. I never thought about my country. I was brought up in America. I was so caught up in the United States, you know. I never became a citizen, so basically I got deported, but I’m really like American, bro, you understand? So, yea, man.

For this final set of questions, with these responses, Sandro, Delio, Ramses, Wilbur, and Balbuena, all seem to point to a conception of citizenship that relies not on national membership,

but rather cultural factors, including work and residence, again reaching beyond the context of a nation-state when characterizing citizenship. Furthermore, many expressed an idealized state of residence in several cases.

Their responses tap into Ahmad's (2011:6) discussion of "worthiness" in which he explains, "the alien citizenship performed by noncitizens is deeply inflected by prevailing identities and characteristics associated with the status citizen, albeit one who is stylized and idealized." That is, in some cases, these noncitizen former residents "over-conform" to idealized forms of citizenship in expressing their feelings (Ahmad 2011:6). This allows the deportees who expressed such sentiment to more closely align themselves with their former home in the U.S.

E. **Contrasting Notions of Citizenship and Belonging: Deportees on Undocumented Immigrants**

After exploring the meaning of citizenship, I continued to explore other facets of how deportees I worked with felt about the implications of the concept. The people I worked with all held legal permanent residence in the U.S. prior to deportation. Undocumented immigrants tend to hold a much more controversial position in the U.S. Though surely the U.S. is home to many who feel animosity and even hatred toward anyone not native born, the concern of most seems to be rooted in issues of legality and national security (Kanstroom 2012). If immigration is seen as an acceptable ongoing process in the U.S., this is true only of immigration carried out through the proper channels. Would these interviewees who had migrated legally yet still faced deportation see it this way as well; would they see themselves as different from undocumented immigrants? In particular, what implications would this have for how deportees reckon citizenship?

When asked whether he sees himself as different from undocumented immigrants, Leo immediately appealed to some cultural differences:

Because you could, it's the way of living, it's the way they dress, they act, you know you're different, you know, I mean, you know, I don't think like they do; they came from somewhere else, so of course they were different, even though we talked the same language, you know.

Wilbur spoke of the difference in lifestyle, mentioning, "illegal immigrants, they gotta live like their hiding. You know, and they don't get to take advantage of all that there is to offer over there." Wilbur's characterization complements the notion of the undocumented living "shadowed lives" as detailed by Chavez (1997). When I had asked Sandro about the rights of immigrants in the U.S., his first response was, "You said legal immigrants or illegal immigrants?" immediately recognizing a distinction. Regardless, later when asked directly about his feelings regarding this distinction, he responded,

No, I never considered them different from me. You know I actually when I was over there I had a lot of friends that were illegally over there. A lot of friends from Mexico. You know and actually I used to help them out because they were all working in the car wash for two dollars an hour, one dollar and hour, and you know, it's bad.

Delio commented on the difference between his circumstances and those of an undocumented migrant when I asked whether he felt any changes should be made to immigration law. Delio's explanation reveals some interesting underlying thoughts on the difference between documented and undocumented immigrants. Initially, he focused on the disrespectful treatment from officials while going through the process, which I detailed in chapter four. Following those comments, he added,

And I wasn't even, I wasn't getting deported because I was an illegal immigrant. I almost became a citizen. The reason was, they got people from Guatemala, you got Mexicans, you got—once you get into an immigration prison, you get mixed with everybody else. But I was, because I was, you know, because of the, because I got caught dealing drugs. It wasn't because I was illegal.

Delio seemed to suggest a difference between being illegal as opposed to doing something illegal, which, to him, seems to be a lesser crime. This is interesting, as it aligns Delio with nativist Americans decrying “illegals” based on the fact that, because of their unlawful entry, they themselves are “illegal,” a designation that is not only inaccurate but “glosses the historical and political construction of immigration categories and diminishes the humanity of transmigrant workers” (Gomberg-Muñoz 2011). Also notable here is the contrast Delio makes between the crimes of being an undocumented immigrant and selling cocaine, as if for merely being a drug dealer he should be treated with more respect because he was a legal resident drug dealer. In any case, it seems safe to say that Delio sees a fundamental difference between documented and undocumented immigrants.

A number of Bosety’s responses evoked the distinction between undocumented and documented immigration as well, appealing to legal distinctions. When I asked Bosety, “Do you think anyone should not be able to be a citizen?” he responded, “They should be citizens, but they got to do it legal, you know what I mean?” A moment later, in reference to the prospect of his returning to the U.S., Bosety added, “But if I want to go, I’m gonna have to go illegal. And I don’t want to do that—I ain’t crazy like that to go back over there, na.” When I asked whether he thought he deserved to stay in the U.S., Bosety said he did,

Because I was, how you call it, a resident, I got my green card, I got my papers. So I don’t go over there illegal, if somebody make a crime there and they ain’t got no papers, they got more a right to be deported. But people who got their papers, I think they should get another chance, you know what I mean?

Part of Bosety’s response to my asking how he would define citizenship included, “I went over there legal, I didn’t go to New York illegal. I went over there because my mother took me over there with papers, with a green card, you know what I mean?”

As part of his response to my question about the difference between documented immigrants such as himself and undocumented, Bosety included, “That’s what immigration is for, for people with no papers. So why should people with papers be deported?” When I asked whether anyone deserves to be deported, Bosety elaborated on the difference between being documented and undocumented:

Like people without the papers, they’ve been working legal, they’ve got a good job and not being on the street, why they got to be deported? They’re not doing nothing illegal. They should control the immigration, how the people getting in. But when the people getting in, and they’re working, working, doing all of that, and they’re not getting into any trouble, why should they be deported? They open the country. No, people in the street with no papers, they’ve been doing bad stuff, yea, they should be deported, why not? It’s a chance that you gotta take, you know what I mean?

Here, Bosety makes a further distinction, pointing out that undocumented immigrants practicing good behavior essentially should be treated the same as those with papers.

Save for Sandro’s response, interviewees tended to see themselves as different from undocumented migrants, emphasizing both the legal distinction and cultural differences. In these cases, interviewees appealed to citizenship both in the context of a nation-state as well as to postnational conceptions. Deportees tended to position themselves in more legitimate spaces than those who did not have proper documentation to ever reside in the U.S. In this way, these comparisons allow deportees to reassure themselves that their presence in the U.S. was valid.

Taken together, these sets of responses regarding citizenship indicate that the deportees I worked with express a wide range of views regarding this concept. Some responses appeal closely to the context of a nation-state, while others support a more postnational notion of citizenship. In some cases, these varied conceptions even come from the same person. This variety is not particularly surprising, given that, as detailed earlier, even citizenship theorists who argue for a postnational understanding nevertheless also make claims that appeal to the context

of a nation-state. In general, reckoning citizenship under globalization is difficult; adding the cases of long-term legal resident deportees makes it no less so.

F. **A Closer Analysis of the Citizenship and the State**

In explaining how deportation functions as a regime, De Genova (2010:34) points out that deportation has become “utterly banal” and an “increasingly pervasive convention of routine statecraft.” That is, for De Genova, deportation has become a regime, functioning as an authoritative government-like apparatus. Referring to the work of Italian political philosopher Giorgio Agamben, De Genova (2010:34), points to the importance of identifying “the point of intersection” where we find “techniques of individualization and totalizing procedures” meeting. He identifies the process of deportation as such a point, arguing that “the whole totalizing regime of citizenship and alienage, belonging and deportability, entitlement and rightlessness, is deployed against particular persons in a manner that is, in the immediate practical application, irreducibly if not irreversibly individualizing” (De Genova 2010:35).

De Genova also draws on Agamben’s notion of “bare life.” In characterizing this concept, De Genova (2010:37) explains,

That is to say, ‘bare’ or ‘naked’ life may be understood to be *what remains* when human existence, while yet alive, is nonetheless stripped of all the encumbrances of social location, and thus bereft of all the qualifications for properly political inclusion and belonging.

In other words, this concept relies on frameworks for inclusion and belonging, but takes up where they leave off, placing the importance of social life directly on the people living it. As De Genova (2010:37) points out, for Agamben, “bare life,” then, is produced by state power and therefore a highly politicized condition.

With a reference to the productive nature of power, few readers would be surprised to find the incorporation of Foucauldian analysis that soon follows in De Genova’s examination. In

particular, he evokes Foucault's concept of biopower as "the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy" (Foucault 1978/2001; cited in De Genova 2010:43), but largely in order to draw out comparisons and differences with the arguments advanced by Agamben.

To reiterate, Agamben posits that "bare life" is a product of social relations, reminiscent of Foucault's notion of the relational nature of power. However, Agamben observes a "predatory relation between sovereign (state) power and bare or naked (human) life" (De Genova 2010:43). That is, under the conditions of bare life, we are subjected to political power (De Genova 2010: 37). In other words, where Foucault avoids attention to state sovereignty "in favor of a more dispersed and multifarious notion of power" (De Genova 2010: 44), for Agamben (2003/2005, 87-88; cited in De Genova 2010: 44), bare life is a "product of the [biopolitical] machine." Agamben recognizes that biopower provides the framework with which to understand the politics of our stage of modernity; however, he expands Foucault's famous concept to incorporate the prominence of state power in directing it. His focus is on the individual's power within the realm of state power.

This has important implications for the function of "race" in the context of state power and globalized flows. Interestingly, none of the participants in my study voiced concerns about the role of "race" in their personal experiences. Nevertheless, as Golash-Boza (2012a) demonstrates, deportation rates are disproportionately higher for Afro Caribbeans and Latinos compared to other groups, pointing to, at the very least, racialized effects of immigration enforcement. Rosas (2012:103) indicates, in reference to the lives of undocumented migrants, that "certain subjects are violently inaugurated, either directly or indirectly, through the racist political violence of the state. He later points to the "concomitant regimes of racialization and

criminalization” (Rosas 2012:137) and the how policing and acts of violence by sovereign states “occur along axes of race, class, and gender and are situated within global relations of inequity, which produce further extralegal practices” (Rosas 2012:143). Directly tying the role of race to the treatment of those who represent particular groups within the framework of state power, Rosas (2012:17) explains,

Certain populations have long been characterized as perpetually suspect, punishable, guilty, bad, and subject to policing and normative sanctions. It is here that racism and its product, race, are taken as exemplifying the myriad technologies of biopolitical states. Race becomes in this formulation the material trace of biopower; it is often lived as the submission to power within global relations of inequity, and the material constitution of politically differentiated, subjugated bodies.

Gomberg-Muñoz (2012:350) speaks to this as well, pointing out that,

U.S. political discourse has increasingly emphasized non-White workers’ “illegality” and “criminality,” masking the role of the state in (re)defining the legal status of low-wage workers and veiling the ways in which legal classifications maintain historical racial and class inequalities.

In reference to Marx’s notion of a proletariat as “a class with radical chains,” De Genova (2010:56,58) poignantly declares: “Deportation reminds us that the radical chains forged of a freedom without rights or protections may serve not simply to confine and fetter us in place but also to drag us mercilessly to the ends of the earth and back again.” He goes on to characterize deportation as “one more usurpation by the state of the sovereign power of humanity itself,” adding that freedom of movement, by its nature, “can only ever be a perpetual and troublesome affront to the self-anointed sovereignty of state power” (De Genova 2010:58). Due to the “relentless and inassimilable alterity” it poses on state power, freedom of movement necessarily opposes social order, which De Genova (2010:59) characterizes as “state power’s most cherished ideal.”

Indeed, freedom movement is potentially threatening to state power. Though we must keep in mind that though state power may configure a particular social order in a manner conducive to its needs, in the general sense some sort of social order would nevertheless emerge in the absence of state power. State power may cherish social order, but any community or social group relies on order at least to some degree and in some configuration. De Genova (2010:59) also characterizes the deportation regime as “a feckless and frenetic machinery” that represents “a tawdry caricature of the human freedom that always precedes it and ever surpasses it.” Though human freedom always has the power to subvert a regime of any sort, for purposes of critical examination, we must also pay sufficient attention to the structure of state power. That is, the state is also made up of people exercising agency in the interest of consolidating and furthering their own power.

Margaret Mead, the anthropologist to gain the most fame outside the field, is known for the quotation, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”³³ We must keep in mind that those who hold and exercise state power, though not “thoughtful” and “committed” in the way most of us like to use those terms, nevertheless are so in the interest of the advancement of their projects.

³³ This quotation is widely attributed to Mead; it is included in collections of famous quotes, and it is reproduced on posters, t-shirts, etc. paired with Mead's name and, in some cases, image. However, it should be noted that it does not appear in any of her publications.

IX. CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS AND ACTIONS

**Screwed up people everywhere, but I ain't got time to care
I feel lovely...**

**All kinds of souls down to the curb, but me help? Don't be absurd
I feel lovely...**

**Cause it's not a problem of society, if it don't affect me
And I feel lovely...**

**And I'm not guilty of your abuse, see it's all self-induced
And I feel lovely...**

**All your kind are like a pollution, lock 'em up quick, that's the solution
Lovely...**

--From "Lovely" by Suicidal Tendencies (from the album
Lights...Camera...Revolution, 1990)

A. **Introductory Remarks**

In this final chapter I conclude by revisiting the role of state power in the role of mediating the movement of people. As noncitizens deportees are profoundly affected by state power. Therefore, it is important to more closely examine their place in this system. Second, I detail how the practices associated with working in a call center support the premises of transnationalism. This is a key contribution of this project; therefore, I thoroughly examine the connections between call center work and the tenets of transnational survival strategies. Finally, I conclude with a brief discussion of how work such as this can be relevant and helpful for dealing with the deportation situation.

B. **Revisiting the Role of State Power in the Movement of People**

Relatively early in the debates on the continued role of the nation-state and its potential weakening in the face of globalized connections, Sassen (1996; cited in Heisler 2000) argued that indeed globalization has undermined the traditional nation-state, but offers a precise account

of what this means. Specifically, she argues that the nation—the cultural belonging component of the concept of nation-state—and the state—the political component that administers the territory—have become increasingly decoupled. This decoupling has led to national belonging and identity becoming increasingly detached from what they have come to mean over time.

Thomas (2004:10) likewise discusses that though the “cultural content” of the nation is increasingly beyond the legislative powers of states, globalization has not “heralded some postnationalist order, or a complete transcendence of the nation-state.” In other words, rather than posing a dialectic relationship between the forces of globalization and the power of nation-states, Thomas (2004:10) indicates that, “Instead, states themselves, as well as the relationships between states and citizenries, have changed.” According to this perspective, our attention should focus on the specific content of these changes and their effects.

Analysis of this sort constitutes a particularly useful interpretation of the perceived weakening of the nation-state. Understanding the decoupling process of the nation component and the state component and viewing it simply as change allows us to acknowledge the weakening, yet not conclude that state power is subordinate. Indeed, an acknowledgement of this weakness need not entail a conceptualization of the decline of the nation-state. This decoupling and the strength of the nation-state with regard to administrative power are not in conflict.

Menjívar, in her discussion of the liminal legality of Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants in the U.S. supports this as well. She points out that the condition of being between statuses “highlights the central role the state still plays in shaping and regulating immigrants’ lives” (Menjívar 2006:1001). She goes on to point out that decreased protections extended to noncitizens and increased militarization of the border make all too clear the prominent role the

nation-state plays in the lives of immigrants. Indeed, her case “attests to the enduring power of the nation-state in defining who belongs, who is excluded, and the formal basis for the rights and responsibilities of the individual in the state, as through its policies it channels individuals to different paths or assimilation” (Menjívar 2006:1032).

Coutin (2003:509) also notes the “seeming disjuncture between transnationalism and nation-based forms of membership,” but makes a case for the disruptions inherent in transnational movement and the power of the nation-state. As she puts it,

Although the logics of national membership and of global interdependencies are at odds, transnational interconnections can promote and be furthered by individuals’ placement in the very national membership categories that deny these interconnections” (Coutin 2003:510).

For example, she points out that some migrants seek legal status in the U.S. not to break with the old country, but precisely to connect more closely with it from the outside (such as by being able to more easily travel back to it) (Coutin 2003:520). As she points out elsewhere such “contradictory movements between nationalization and denationalization expose the interdependency of these processes” (Coutin 2000:593).

These cases, then, point to the reality that established and even increasing nation-state power and the movement of people work together. Freedom of movement and social order do not necessarily occupy opposing positions. Rather, freedom of movement and social order exist in a balancing act. We can argue that a given alignment constitutes an *imbalance*; however, they will always go together to some degree. When deportees exercise their agency after deportation by drawing on their transnational connections for survival strategies, they are doing so from a circumscribed position directed by state power.

C. **The Case for Deportee Call Center Employees as a Transnational Population**

As discussed, Golash-Boza (2014) has applied transnationalism to deportees by discussing the emotional connections deportees draw upon and the financial support they receive from the U.S. In my work, I have introduced another way in which deportees engage in transnational practices, by focusing on their work as call center agents. Here I demonstrate how the experience of working at the call center supports the premises of transnationalism.

Going back to the first premise of transnationalism, Basch et al. (1994) point to the inextricable link with the changing conditions of global capitalism. To begin with this premise, we must remember why deportees were ever in the U.S. in the first place—their parents had migrated for labor opportunities in the face of a changing Dominican economy evermore connected with the U.S. Many years later, I found some of their children, like their parents, seeking U.S. labor opportunities, but, unlike their parents, in the Dominican Republic. And of course, deportees were seeking these opportunities as a condition of their confinement to that country, a point that speaks to the circumstances of the second main premise, which is given the most attention.

The second main premise of transnationalism casts it as the process by which migrants create social fields that cross national borders (through daily life activities and social, economic, and political relations). Several examples of this have been detailed, such as U.S. cultural conventions practiced at the call center, the U.S. referents and associations employees used to navigate the job and their roles in it, the “racial” and ethnic characterizations borrowed from the U.S., and simply working for an outsourced business.

An interesting manifestation of this premise in the realm of call center work concerns the primary function of the job itself: speaking to people from all over the U.S. all day long. In

particular, this concerns the issue of passing as an American employee on the phone. I asked some questions that brought out important implications for this facet of the job as it relates to transnationalism. I asked Delio, “Are you trained to say you are not in the Dominican Republic or use a different name?” He responded, No, we’re supposed to say that we’re over there.

“That you’re in the U.S.?”

“Yea, we say we’re calling from Miami, that’s what we say.”

“They teach you to say that?”

Right, because we don’t want to say we’re calling from the Dominican Republic; if we’re talking about what have to do with the U.S., you know they’re going to say, “So why would I tell you anything—you’re calling from the Dominican Republic, why do you care?” That’s what they’re going to say.

“What about your name?”

I don’t know, I feel weird, some people change their name, but I feel weird, like I feel weird saying, “Hi, my name is John Smith,” you know what I mean. It’s like, it doesn’t sound real. I want to sound real, you know what I mean.

When I asked Sandro, “Are you ever trained to lie about where you are or use a different name?”

he responded,

Some call centers will do that. Some will say, “Don’t let them know we’re in the Dominican Republic.” Where I work, if the customer asks you, “Where are you located?” We’ll tell them, “In the Eastern and our main headquarters is located wherever our headquarters is.” Or if they keep asking, you tell them we’re located in the Dominican Republic. You know, there’s no reason to lie. You know, I understand a lot of customers that call, they know their personal information is in the system, and, yes, I don’t know who’s having my personal information. But for me it’d be the same thing if someone in the U.S. had my information and if someone in the Dominican Republic has my information. And actually, someone in the U.S. could do more with my information than someone in another country.

In these cases, we indeed see deportees creating social fields that cross national borders. In particular, they are literally creating names and places in order to occupy the social field of call center agent.

Another aspect of the call center business relevant to the premise of creating social fields that cross national borders concerns deportees working in call centers finding common ground among one another. When I mentioned my work to someone I had met while visiting a cultural center in Santo Domingo, she immediately brought up the hiring discrimination deportees face and the relatively high numbers who end up working in call centers. Someone who worked under her at a *Banco Popular* branch location left to work at one; he remained in touch with her and had mentioned working among deportees.

Indeed, Bosety commented, “Everywhere I tried to get a job, I get a job there, because they got a lot of deported people working at the call centers. Most of the people who work at the call center, they’re deported.”³⁴ Because they know how to speak English, they know how to deal with the people from outside here.” Sandro spoke specifically to the social aspects of working with other deportees:

You know, we do, everybody get along pretty good. Actually, in April, I did a trip, on a big bus to a river, where all of us, we went and had a great time. We always try to do things with everybody from work. You know, big bus, we went to that river and we had a great time. In my job we always try to get along. There’s always few agents [laughs] that messes up the situation. But we try to get along, with someone that needs help, we’ll talk to that person.

When I asked Sandro if he knew people who work at the other call centers, he responded, “Yea, because everybody from the call centers keeps moving around [laughs].” Other deportees confirmed working around other deportees in call centers and finding a sense of community.

³⁴ I cannot fully validate Bosety’s claim here. I do know that many people who work in call centers are not deportees and that the proportion can differ significantly depending on the center. Also, I am not sure which call center exactly he was referring to.

However, not all accounts of community in the call centers were as positive as Sandro's. For example, regarding speaking openly of being deported at work, Bosety commented,

I'm not going to go to no place and say, "Oh, I'm deported, can I get a job? [laughs]" [...] I mean, you can talk about it, but I'm not gonna go over there and—to be frankly, I speak to someone who's next to me and somebody probably that I know. But I'm not gonna be talking about my stuff, because people they're trying to hear what you know about—they want to find out something about you to hurt you, you know.

Wilbur had concerns similar to Bosety:

Na, na. The people here, it's all—wow. It's like people here, they get into your business. There's no like, shame in the game in this country. It's not like, "Oh, I don't want to make him feel bad." People, they just come at you. And they'll make jokes about it, because I've seen them do it to other people. And I'm pretty sure people, they probably imagine or whatever—I told a few people, because they were going through the same thing. Like this guy, he's been here for ten years, and he looks, you look at him, he looks like an Afro-American. He doesn't really speak Spanish, he grew up in Brooklyn. I told him and I told a few people, people that I trusted.

Suspecting several other people are in the same situation, Wilbur added, "I have a friend, he's always talking about, 'No, I can go back, I can go back.' And I'm like, 'Nobody asked you, so.' You know, those kind of guys, I think they're deported too. It's like, 'Nobody's asking you.'" Evidently Wilbur's friend was not seeking a community among deportees in the call center. As we see, in some cases, call center work fosters community among deportees. However, in other cases, deportees see it necessary to conceal their deportee status. These conflicting accounts reflect the varied experiences deportees face while creating social fields that cross national borders.

As I mentioned earlier regarding this premise (that transmigrants create social fields that cross national borders), Guarnizo and Smith (1998) point out that creating these social fields does not necessarily make transnationalism liberating, counter-hegemonic, or resistant. Indeed,

this situation entails structural realities that constrain the action of the deported employees. In *The Deportation Regime*, De Genova (2011:33) includes an epigraph taken from Hannah Arendt's essay "On Humanity in Dark Times." Included in that epigraph is a line that can be used to speak to the relationship between being deported and working in the call center business: "limitation of freedom of movement has from time immemorial been the precondition for enslavement." Certainly deportees working in call centers are not experiencing enslavement. Nevertheless, after facing deportation, options to legally earn money are significantly limited. Consistent with the point made by Arendt, these employment options are circumscribed by the limitation of freedom of movement deportees face.

Working in the call center, the third premise, that bounded concepts that conflate physical location, culture, and identity limit what we can see and analyze, was a given. Going into an international call center, I was certainly ready to observe and analyze beyond the boundaries of any one place. The people I worked with were physically in the Dominican Republic, but key aspects of their experiences and worldviews were derived from the U.S.

The fourth major premise for understanding transnationalism concerns the relationship of transmigrants to the nation building processes of two or more nation-states. Thousands of U.S. residents have been deported to the Dominican Republic over the years. During their time in the U.S., they were part of the national fabric, attending schools, working in jobs, and generally participating in familial and societal life. Upon deportation, their lives continue in these ways, but with the experience of having lived in the U.S. and having developed approaches and strategies there. Furthermore, many of these deportees have returned to the U.S. illegally as well, adding another layer to the nation-building process of the two countries.

As globalized business grows and deportations grow, this connection is something to watch for. Will we see a relationship between call center growth in a given area and rates of deportation to that area? Given the opportunistic nature of capitalist endeavors, this seems a reasonable possibility. This represents a rather disturbing cycle: born in the Dominican Republic, raised in the U.S., banished to the Dominican Republic, work for a U.S. company but from the Dominican Republic, using skills gained from growing up in the U.S.

D. **Trying to Help**

Last summer, in July of 2013, sixty-eight U.S. Senators voted to pass S. 744, or the 2013 Immigration Reform Bill, sending it to the House of Representatives, where, at the time of this writing, it remains (Kim 2013). Among the most controversial of its provisions is the process for granting citizenship, or at least legal status, to approximately eleven million undocumented immigrants. In any case, sweeping immigration reform may soon be a reality. However, for the long-term legal permanent residents of this country who faced deportation for conviction of a crime, there will be no reform.

On the other side, in the Dominican Republic, laws regarding citizenship are only getting tougher. Just last fall, on September 23, 2013, the Dominican Constitutional Court handed down a controversial ruling pertaining to citizenship in the Dominican Republic. For many years the Dominican Republic has granted citizenship to those born within its borders, with exceptions involving children born to diplomats or foreigners “in transit” (Semple 2013). However, throughout the 1990s, many civil registries classified all undocumented Haitians as “in transit” regardless of how long they had lived in the Dominican Republic. Finally, in 2010 a constitutional amendment defined undocumented residents as “in transit,” and the court’s ruling last fall (September 2013) “retroactively applied the definition to all the undocumented parents

of the children born in the country since 1929.” An estimated 200,000 Haitians are now living in the Dominican Republic without legal right (Semple 2013).

This material regarding exclusion on the basis of coming from the outside, despite being born in the country, has important implications for the deportation situation. In particular, these drastic measures regarding citizenship in the Dominican Republic do not bode well for greater inclusiveness for deportees. As we have seen, negative reaction to deportees arriving in the country is endemic. Across both sides of the bit of ocean separating the U.S. and the Dominican Republic, measures to improve this situation seem unlikely.

In my notes, ten days into my first trip to the Dominican Republic, I fumed, “It really hit me today—this is all a huge fucking mess, the likes of which no method of accounting for exists” (May 24, 2008). I was frustrated, already thinking about how little it seemed I could help with what was clearly a problem. Indeed, emotional investment characteristic of an “anthropology that breaks your heart,” as discussed by Behar (1997), had already begun to affect me; as I came to know particular deportees well and better understand their experiences and current positions, this only increased. Issues of this nature were on my mind five days later when I noted, “On my way to *El Conde* I walked by Francisco, who was asleep off to the side of the sidewalk. His body was configured as if he had landed there from space. I half-stopped. But I didn’t full stop” (May 29, 2008). Forty-five years ago the late Native American professor Vine Deloria, Jr., in his well-known work *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (1969) noted, in a chapter titled, “Anthropologists and Other Friends,” “Academia, and its by-products, continues to become more irrelevant to the needs of people” (Deloria 1969:93). This could be the case, but it doesn’t have to be—if we try to make our work relevant.

In my work, I asked all interviewees if they had ever been involved in measures for immigrant rights. None had, in any manner, and almost nobody even elaborated or spoke to the point: responses offered little more than “no.” Wilbur did comment, “No, I never really thought about it. It never really occurred to me until it happened to me.” *The Deportation Regime* leaves no doubt regarding the book’s aim: “We remain hopeful that this work may serve to refine the precision of the intellectual tools with which we and you, our readers, might aspire together to enhance the power of struggles to subvert and ultimately dismantle the deportation regime” (De Genova and Peutz 2010:x).

It is my hope that my work contributes to this effort as well. At the very least, this work shows that deporting long-term legal permanent residents entails significant displacement and disrupts the lives of not only the deportee, but family members and concerned others. More children in the U.S. are growing up without both parents and more communities are disrupted on both sides of national borders. Remaining in the U.S. would at least allow these residents, and the U.S. as a nation, a chance for greater inclusiveness. For more on how to help, Brotherton and Barrios (2011) offer a number of resources for learning more.

After finding my name online when searching for relevant materials on Dominican deportation, a lawyer in New York City working on deportation cases contacted me asking for any reports on this situation he may be able to use. We’ve kept in touch, and upon completion of this dissertation, as promised, I am sending him a copy.

With regard to the point expressed in the epigraph of this chapter, I certainly don’t want to move along feeling “lovely” as people face such unjust treatment. But I also don’t want to feel “lovely” because I’ve helped: I simply want to make useful contributions that will provide

help for everyone dealing with the deportation situation and seeking to more effectively understand it. I hope this helps.

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VITA

NAME: Evin Rodkey

EDUCATION: B.A., Psychology, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 1999

M.A., Anthropology, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 2008

Ph.D., Anthropology, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 2014

TEACHING EXPERIENCE: University of Illinois at Chicago, Columbia College, Loyola University Chicago, Oakton Community College, Roosevelt University, Northeastern Illinois University, St. Xavier University, Indiana University Northwest, International Academy of Design and Technology Chicago

HONORS: Provost's Award for Graduate Research Grant, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2010

Graduate College Presenter's Award for Student Travel, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2009

Graduate Student Council Award for Student Travel, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2009

Charles Reed Grant for research travel, Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2007

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP: American Anthropological Association

PUBLICATIONS: Rodkey, Evin. 2015 "The Innocence Project." *In* Latinos and Criminal Justice: An Encyclopedia. José Luis Morín, editor. Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO Greenwood. (in press)

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