

CAMP CARCERALITY: ON ABOLITION AND ETHNIC MEXICAN AGRICULTURAL

LABOR MIGRATION

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For my mother, Nora Diana Gallion; my grandparents, Herminia Quintanilla Zavala and Guadalupe Zavala; and my tíos, Marcus G. Zavala and Ismael Zavala, who shared their stories and the pain and joys of life in the fields with me. I hope I have made you all proud.

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ABSTRACT

CAMP CARCERALITY: ON ABOLITION AND ETHNIC MEXICAN AGRICULTURAL LABOR MIGRATION

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This dissertation explores commercial U.S. agriculture as a carceral system. It examines why the spaces that Mexican American/Chicanx migrant farmworkers encounter during their agricultural labor migration are carceral and how these spaces, and migrants' experiences within them, are represented across media. My carceral framework is influenced by the new directions in prison and abolition studies that do not center on just walls and cages, but understand carcerality as an expansive and malleable concept defined by social relations that result in what Ruth Wilson Gilmore calls the "organized abandonment" of specific populations. This dissertation explores the lived experiences of migrant farmworkers through the interdisciplinary analysis of novels, folklore, oral histories, documentary films and digital media, and ethnographic fieldwork at agricultural labor camps. I show through testimonios how the US state and the agriculture industry organize the spaces and social relations of the migrant trail to deny forms of mobility, bodily autonomy, and socio-political power to farmworkers.

At stake in applying a carceral framework to farmworker studies is understanding how agribusiness has long been a central part of carceral capitalism. Furthermore, it shows that farmworkers and their efforts to abolish the current agricultural system need to be recognized as integral components of the broader abolitionist movement due to the deep interconnection of their experiences with those living in other carceral spaces. The consequences of this analysis extend far beyond the fields, revealing an extended abolitionist collectivity that includes migrant farmworkers and people incarcerated across the country, including those in agricultural labor camps, prison plantations, and ICE detention centers.

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INTRODUCTION

CAMP CARCERALITY: U.S. AGRICULTURE AS A CARCERAL SYSTEM

Carcerality is in the air—it is all around us
—Christopher Harris

Introduction

There is an image that is forever impressed in my mind. It is the image of an early morning sunrise, the sun cresting over rows of closely planted crops extending far beyond the horizon. A morning mist lingers over the fields, defusing the light and turning the low hanging clouds an intense, electric pink and the sky above a rich indigo. There is a feeling in my body. In spite of the beautiful morning (it is beautiful, isn't it?), my hands ache. I look down and see that they are calloused and scabbed, fresh blood beginning to appear as the movement of my hands opens the many small wounds that cover them. To this day, I don't know if this image is partially born of memory or is simply a dream.

This visceral image lingered on the periphery of my understanding/consciousness until I encountered the words of Japanese American filmmaker Rea Tajiri who said in her film *History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*, “I had the feeling, this feeling growing up that I was haunted by something, that I was living in a family of ghosts. There was this place that they knew about. I had never been there, yet I had a memory for it. I could remember a time of great sadness before I was born...I had no idea where these memories came from, yet I knew the place.” For me, her words described my experience growing up as the child of Mexican American/Chicanx migrant farmworkers. I too felt haunted by something ineffable, something that suffused my consciousness, something ghostly. Though I had never been in the fields like the previous four generations of my family on my mother's side, I somehow knew the experience of agricultural labor migration

intimately—I knew the pain of forever searching for a place to rest; of toiling under the hot sun; of being confined to a slab-board, wooden barrack; and I knew the fear of encountering the fields’ many overseers.

My family’s story is typical of many Mexican American/Chicanx migrant farmworkers during the long 20th century. Relegated to migrant labor camps in the nation’s fields, they were forced to forfeit education and stable communities to eke out an existence following the nation’s seasonal crops. Crossing borders—geographic, cultural, and linguistic—was just a way of life.

My family’s labor history as farmworkers began in South Texas during the mid-1800s after the Mexican-American War. In my ancestral home of San Juan, Texas, my maternal grandmother, Herminia Quintanilla’s family owned a sheep ranch on the U.S.-Mexican border. Miraculously, the family was able to hold onto their land through the large-scale dispossession of Mexican Americans after the annexation of Texas in 1848 (Gonzalez, *Harvest*, 35-47) until the sudden death in 1920 of the family patriarch, Severiano Quintanilla, finally dispossessed them of the ranch, forcing the family into migrant farmwork to survive.

My maternal grandfather, Guadalupe Zavala’s, labor history began in the Texas cotton plantations after annexation. As an Afro-Mexican American/Chicano, or Blaxican, my grandfather’s ancestors were Black and Indigenous slaves who worked the South Texas cotton plantations—the most fertile cotton region in the country, and the last place in the U.S. to let go of plantation slavery, what we now celebrate as Juneteenth (Gonzalez, *Harvest*, 44). Born in 1937 in San Juan, TX, Guadalupe had a conflicted relationship with his Afro-Mexican racial heritage. By the time Guadalupe was born, his family’s racial history was already a South Texas legend. His mother, Virginia Zavala, was locally known as “*la vieja morada*” or “the Purple Woman,” a reference to her having the darkest complexion in the village (Herminia Zavala, 6.29.23, 17:22). Guadalupe spent his childhood in the fields, but joined the Marine Corp. at the age of 17. After serving at the tail-end of

the Korean War, he returned to South Texas, where he married his high school sweetheart, Herminia Quintanilla, in 1955. In the early years of their marriage, Guadalupe and Herminia made a living working as migrant farmworkers as part of Guadalupe's father's labor crew on farms across Texas, and, eventually, the Pacific Northwest. But traveling along the migrant trail of the 1950s was no less fraught with danger than working the fields. In terms of appearance, Guadalupe and Herminia were polar opposites. Guadalupe was short, stocky, with a dark complexion with prominent moles that defined his features. Herminia was slender and fair, so fair in fact that she was white passing except for the fact that she did not speak English (Guadalupe was bilingual).

Traveling as an apparent biracial couple through the deep South proved dangerous, as it brought further attention and scrutiny of their presence in white agricultural communities. Jim Crow and Juan Crow (the application of segregation and *de jure* racism to Mexican populations) collided in their marriage on the migrant trail, as Guadalupe's racialization as Black outside of the fields and labor camps meant that he was barred from even more public spaces and business (including grocery stores and restaurants) than other Mexicans, and my grandmother's lack of English prevented her from procuring food and shelter on their behalf. Their exclusion from public space was violently enforced, often by police, due to their complex racialization and in times of desperation on the migrant trail they would resort to a ruse: they would pick out a rest-stop diner near a major town and enter not as husband and wife, but as a white woman with her Black driver. Herminia would often tie a scarf around her neck and give the server or owner a note (that Guadalupe wrote) that stated that she was recovering from a throat surgery or illness, and was unable to speak. Her driver would be ordering food for her to-go. As Guadalupe recalled, this worked surprisingly well, but took a great

emotional and psychological toll on him, as it required an exhausting and shameful racial performance. In his own words, he had to be “a spic in the fields and a house nigger in town.”¹

These narratives, among others, were my introduction to the immanent violence of agricultural labor migration and were the early inspiration for this project. Growing up as a person of Afro descent within a Blaxican family, the legacy of plantation slavery and mass incarceration, particularly as they were practiced in Texas, were inextricable from my family’s experiences in the fields as migrant farmworkers. This was reinforced by other stories of the migrant trail and farmwork as told by their six children, including my mother, Nora Diana Gallion. Most pressing for me was the way that police framed each experience of race and labor for ethnic Mexicans in the fields and on the road—be it by protecting growers and delivering discipline on their behalf, or policing the migrant trail itself. I soon realized that the relationship between farmwork and policing extends far beyond their usual consideration in regards to farmworker unions and strikes and the police enforcing grower interests. As I argue in this work, policing has been an overdetermined and *determining* factor in the lives (physical, social, and psychic) of ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers long before the unionization movement of the 1960s. Encounters with police and the constant threat of police violence, and the violence they condone from others such as border patrol agencies and vigilantes, not only factored into the conditions of labor and migrants’ contractual and social relations to farmers and agribusiness, but also every other condition of their labor migration. It is this larger historical and psychic connection that is often left out of conversations on the relationship between farmworkers and police, therefore precluding farmwork from being included in discussions regarding abolition.

Motivated by my reflections on my family’s experiences as Mexican American/Chicanx migrant farmworkers, “Camp Carcerality: On Abolition and Ethnic Mexican Agricultural Labor

¹ Guadalupe Zavala passed away in 2010 before formal interviews were recorded for this project. He told the story of how he and Herminia survived on the migrant trail and about how he experienced race in and out of the fields often throughout my childhood.

Migration” explores commercial U.S. agriculture as a carceral system. It examines why the spaces that Mexican American/Chicanx migrant farmworkers encounter during their agricultural labor migration are carceral and how these spaces, and migrants’ experiences within them, are represented across media. My carceral framework is influenced by the new directions in prison and abolition studies that do not center on just walls and cages, but understand carcerality as an expansive and malleable concept defined by social relations that result in what Ruth Wilson Gilmore calls the “organized abandonment” of specific populations. My dissertation explores the lived experiences of migrant farmworkers through the interdisciplinary analysis of novels, folklore, oral histories, documentary films and digital media, and ethnographic fieldwork at agricultural labor camps. I show through *testimonios* how the US state and the agriculture industry organize the spaces and social relations of the migrant trail to deny forms of mobility, bodily autonomy, and socio-political power to farmworkers.

At stake in applying a carceral framework to farmworker studies is understanding how agribusiness has long been a central part of carceral capitalism. Furthermore, it shows that farmworkers and their efforts to abolish the current agricultural system need to be recognized as integral components of the broader abolitionist movement due to the deep interconnection of their experiences with those who have lived in other carceral spaces and systems. The consequences of this analysis of carceral space extends far beyond the fields, revealing an extended abolitionist collectivity that includes migrant farmworkers and other unfree people across the country, including those in agricultural labor camps, prison plantations, and ICE detention centers.

As an interdisciplinary project, I draw on methodologies from literary studies, media studies, sound studies, prison and abolition studies, farmworker studies, history, anthropology, and sociology. Key to my methodology is a consideration of the Latinx/Latin American literary genre of the *testimonio* (a form of life writing that involves an intermediary who is able to bring the story to a

wider audience) and its intersection with sound studies. I build on Barbara Harlow's classification of *testimonios* as a form of resistance literature and consider how the sound and speech acts produced on and through ethnic Mexican agricultural labor migration constitute what Rosaura Sánchez terms a "macrotext," or a collection of individual *testimonios* that can be analyzed collectively for the ideological positions that are present (Sánchez, 34-35), which allows me to explore how sound hermeneutics can give us insight into how ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers understand how carcerality structures their labor migration.

The *testimonio* excerpts included in this project function on multiple levels: as literary texts in their folkloric nature but also as spatial memories that demand an interrogation of the physical and psycho-social conditions of U.S. agriculture's carceral system. In this way, they not only add further evidence to the multiple ways that space and social relations are co-constitutive (Brady, 13). They are part of a much larger collective demand for the complete abolition of farmwork as it has been practiced since Reconstruction to today. Indeed, while I predominately feature my own family's *testimonios*, nearly every farmworker I spoke to in Idaho spoke clearly about how in their view the only solution to the inhumane conditions in the fields that they have experienced all over the nation is the destruction of the labor contract and migratory labor camp systems. They questioned why *their* bodies were expected to break working the land over others' and why they had to forfeit stable living in favor of displacement. From children to adult farmworkers, the demand was the same: they should have access to the fresh, nutritious food they plant, tend to, and pick, and they should be able to live in a house of appropriate size for their families while doing so. I see these demands as in solidarity with other farmworker populations' calls for an end to agricultural labor migration, such as the call of Oaxacan migrant farmworkers for "*El derecho a no migrar*" (the right not to migrate) (Rivera-Salgado, 99), or what journalist David Bacon has termed "the right to stay home" (Bacon, 262). Other's scholars who focus on Indigenous farmworkers, such as Seth Holmes and Jorge Ramirez-

López, argue that finding points of solidarity with indigenous farmworker movements and their rejection of the agro-carceral order, such as those of the Triqui farmworkers whom they study and know, is key to transforming “the food systems in which we all find ourselves” (Holmes & Ramirez-López, 2).

In addition to *testimonios*, I also draw on other Chicana/Latina traditions of personal life writing, what Chon Noriega et al. argue is key for researching and analyzing Latina life and culture. At various moments throughout this dissertation I include my personal experiences, both as the son of Mexican American/Chicana migrant farmworkers and as a researcher conducting fieldwork. My use of the personal is inspired by the long tradition of personal life writing by ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers (Álvarez; González; Ruiz-Arce; Sánchez, *Rows*) as well as the use of the personal in academic research on peoples who live under the constant threat of physical and social death by authors including Lisa Marie Cacho, Jerry Garcia, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Chon A. Noriega, Cristina Salinas, and Christina Sharpe. As Garcia points out, when paired with “rigorous inquiry,” the use of the personal can “[convey] a level of intimacy often missing from scholarly studies” (Garcia, *Aztlán!*, 4-5), something I argue is essential to the study of carcerality as well.

Fieldwork and Oral History Methodologies

As a project that emphasizes the aural as a fundamental component of the *testimonio* form, I oriented my fieldwork towards vocal recordings in addition to archival research. I recorded Herminia Zavala and Nora Diana Gallion’s *testimonios* during 2018-2023. These recordings were done in person at their shared home in Las Vegas, Nevada. Marcus G. Zavala’s *testimonio* was recorded via Zoom in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teresa Maebori’s interview was conducted at her home in Philadelphia in 2019. I conducted additional fieldwork in Idaho’s Treasure Valley

throughout the summer of 2021, where I conducted interviews with migrant farmworkers, labor camp officials, and community leaders and activists, primarily within Caldwell and Nampa, Idaho.

In regards to conducting fieldwork, I draw on insights from Debra Ann Castillo and Shalini Puri's *Theorizing Fieldwork in the Humanities Methods, Reflections, and Approaches to the Global South*. Like Puri and Castillo, I see "oral histories as a recognized and legitimate archive" for literary studies, as it allows for "movement outward from literary studies to [sound studies], music studies; performance studies at the intersection of literature and theater studies or with ethnography, *testimonio* studies, and subaltern studies" (Castillo & Puri, 3). I see humanities fieldwork as equally as important and valuable as primary textual analysis and archival research. While a common perception of what we do in literary studies is governed by the image of us sitting in the acetic, or even solipsistic, "life of the mind," I view literary and media scholarship primarily as a social endeavor, one that demands that we forge connections and *speak* to media makers, the subjectivities that are a part of that media, and those impacted by it to fully understand the social relations, systems, and ideologies that media both critiques and engenders. Thus, I advocate for the value of the knowledge produced in the "richness of ongoing relationships forged in the field" as well as in the "invigoration by the felt connection of academia with the world outside it, a sense of our writing as one part of a larger shared project and the intense pleasure at the conjunction of sensory and intellectual cognition (Castillo & Puri, 2). Indeed, these aspects of fieldwork animate this project and result in perhaps an unorthodox, but no less rigorous analysis of the experience of a life lived in the fields.

My oral history interview and recording techniques are drawn from both community and academic oral history methodologies. I include community oral history techniques due to my own positionality within Caldwell. While my ties to the town and region are familial and historical, as a descendent of the Mexican American/Chicanx farmworking community, I identify as, and share

some of the privileges of, a kind of community member. Several other descendants of farmworkers in Caldwell have shared with me the experience of knowing the fields and life in the labor camps without having labored or lived in them themselves, and many of my interlocutors in Caldwell and in the fields viewed my connection to the region and its people as a form of kinship. In honoring the care and forms of connection this community has offered me, I draw on the community oral history techniques detailed in Nancy MacKay, Mary Kay Quinlan, and Barbara W. Sommer's *Community Oral History Toolkit*. As such, all of my interlocutors in the field were given a copy of their interview along with the opportunity to detail exactly how they would want their voice used in this project and future archives and media.

My audio recording techniques were influenced by methodologies found in the *Oral History in the Digital Age Project*, a partnership between Michigan State University, the Smithsonian Institution Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, the Library of Congress' American Folklife Center, the American Folklore Society, and the Oral History Association directed by oral historian Douglas Boyd. My family's recordings, along with 20 other interviews of current and former migrants farmworkers and others involved with the Caldwell Labor Camp will be donated to the *Voces* Oral History Center at the University of Texas at Austin in the fall of 2023. While these interviews are recognized as oral history, I employ the term *testimonio* for several reasons. First, I use the term in reference to my interviewees' political goals in sharing their testimony. While the *testimonio* developed as a form of auto-ethnography within Latin America to contest state power and abuse (Beverly, 2004), Dolores Delgado Bernal, et al. and Rosaura Sanchez and the Latina Feminist Group, among others, have argued that the *testimonio* is a transnational form that has been shaped by Latinx populations within the U.S. Nora Diana Gallion, Herminia Zavala, and Marcus G. Zavala gave their testimony with the specific intention of it being made public to draw attention to the carceral experiences of both domestic and transnational migrant farmworkers. Their voices, along

with other former and current migrant farmworkers within my archive, explicitly state that they are staging an act of resistance to state and capitalist systems of exploitation and abuse in agriculture, bridging the Latin American and Latinx branches of the form.

Question of Indigeneity

The complexity of race relations and attitudes around H-2A guest workers and what constitutes “Mexican” identity in Idaho has made a careful analysis of the presence of Indigenous migrant farmworkers in the Treasure Valley and their experience of camp carcerality difficult. Within Idaho generally, “Mexican” identity has been perceived largely through the lens of the *Tejano* diaspora. As a result, Indigenous Mexican languages and cultures appeared to be at times an unknown, ignored, or policed aspects of the identity of Mexican guest workers. Some Indigenous migrant farmworkers whom I encountered in Idaho who could speak Spanish chose not to reveal their indigeneity to camp officials; while others made their indigeneity more perceptible by preferring to stay close to those with whom they shared cultural or linguistic ties. Overall, the farmworkers who chose to speak to me chose to have their comments on or identifications with indigeneity kept off tape. I respected this request, but I acknowledge that it has led to a gap in both the analysis and the voices presented.

Literature Review

The literature on ethnic Mexican agricultural labor migration is extensive, with scholarship generally divided between research on domestic migrant farmworkers and unionization and transnational migrant farmworkers, including undocumented workers and guestworker programs (Bacon; Foley, *Mexicans*; Garcia; García-Colón; Goldfarb; Hahamovitch; Holmes; Loza;

Maldonado; Mapes; Mize & Swords; Ogden; Pérez; Ramirez-Lopez; Rivera-Salgado; Rothenberg; Salinas; Sifuentez; Thompson & Wiggins; Quintana; Valdés).

In the last twenty years, studies on domestic Mexican American/Chicanx farmworkers have taken a regional focus, with scholars exploring the *Mexicano*, *Californio*, and *Tejano* diasporas across the U.S. In regards to the Pacific Northwest, Mexican American/Chicanx historians such as Erasmo Gamboa, Jerry Garcia, Errol Jones, Kathleen R. Hodges, Carlos S. Maldonado, Verónica Martínez-Matsuda, and Mario Sifuentez have detailed the longstanding migration, labor, and histories of social reproduction of ethnic Mexicans in the region. Jerry Garcia and the late Carlos S. Maldonado have edited and contributed to several anthologies, including *We Are Aztlan!: Chicane Histories in the Northern Borderlands*; *Memory, Community, and Activism: Mexican Migration and Labor in the Pacific Northwest*; and *The Chicano Experience in the Northwest*, that have significantly shaped our understanding of the long historical presence of ethnic Mexicans in the region beginning with their labor as mule packers aiding with the settlement of the Northwest and with mining operations during the Gold Rush years (Gamboa, *Introducción*, vii, Garcia, *Aztlan!*, 6; Delgado, 1-17). But their attention to the specific developments in agriculture and the regional and national migratory labor camp system provide key insights into how facets of camp carcerality have followed Mexican migrants or were imported into the Pacific Northwest from other states who relied on carceral solutions to the management of large Mexican populations, particularly Texas.

Sifuentez focuses on the history of the *bracero* program in the region in *Of Forests and Fields: Mexican Labor in the Pacific Northwest*, but expands our understanding of their labor by unearthing the use of *braceros* in the logging and forestry industries, including their conscription into firefighting brigades (Sifuentez, 32). He also documents the way *braceros* contested abusive working conditions, often by leaving abusive employers and settling in the Pacific Northwest, thus expanding

the region's Mexican population, along with how ethnic Mexicans working in forestry and the fields came to found the *Pineros y Campesinos Unidos Noroeste* (PCUN) union (Sifuentez, 101-117).

Nearly all histories or anthropological studies of ethnic Mexicans in the Pacific Northwest touch upon their deep interconnection with the region's Japanese American communities who not only share intertwined migration and labor histories with ethnic Mexicans but, as I argue, share experiences of incarceration. Historians, legal scholars, and anthropologists who have studied Japanese incarceration during the Second World War have noted how the Pacific Northwest was a particular focus of the Roosevelt administration's response to the attack on Pearl Harbor due to the prominent Japanese American population, including thousands of farmworkers (Daniels; Donald; Elleman; Reeves; Ivey; Kashima; Robinson). In the case of Idaho, local historian Patricia K. Ourada has detailed how local growers and the state government were fierce proponents of Japanese American incarceration during WWII and lobbied for the construction of the Minidoka concentration camp in Southern Idaho for the express purpose of using Japanese Americans for farm labor (Orada, 39). The federal government complied and initiated the Seasonal Leave Program from 1942-1945, sending Japanese Americans to many of the FSA's migrant labor camps as ancillary sites of Japanese American incarceration, including the Caldwell Labor Camp (Gamboa, 28-30, 46; Mize & Swords, 18; Ourada; 39-41; Okubo, 186). In addition, scholars revealed how the U.S. initiated a carceral response to entering the war that did not stop at the nation's borders, but ensnared Japanese Latin Americans as well by demanding that Latin American governments similarly put them in concentration camps (Connell; Gardiner; Ngai; Paik, *Rightlessness*). My work adds not only to the body of literature on the interrelation of ethnic Mexicans and Japanese Americans in the Northwest, but also on the experiences of Japanese Latin Americans by showing how the U.S.'s agro-carceral system transcends the nation's boundaries, exerting control over who is deemed a farmworker and a

carceral subject around the globe when the U.S. not only demanded that Japanese Latin Americans be incarcerated, but that they perform farmwork in the U.S. as well.

The Caldwell Labor Camp

In this dissertation I examine carcerality within ethnic Mexican agricultural labor migration through the case study of the Caldwell Labor Camp/Farmway Village in Caldwell, Idaho. This camp is significant because it has functioned as a critical node in several past and present carceral regimes, including serving as an ancillary site of Japanese American incarceration during WWII. This camp is also significant to my family's labor history in that members of my immediate family lived and worked in the camp from the 1950s through the 1980s. As such, understanding my family's experiences within the camp offers a vantage point to examine the Mexican American/Chicanx migrant experience in the Northwest and how the Caldwell Labor Camp functions as a metonym for the national migrant labor camp system's place as a "contested terrain of race, race relations, political mobilizations, and community" (García, *Aztlan!*, 1-2). Because I argue that Caldwell is a significant site in several past and present carceral regimes, what follows is brief historical overview of the campsite.

The Great Depression of the 1930s and the resulting New Deal legislation are watershed years in the history of migrant agricultural labor. This decade would witness some dramatic changes within US agriculture that would not only set the stage for a new wave of sustained migration of ethnic Mexican farmworkers to the Northwest but also give rise to the U.S. migratory camp system, a system whose built environment/material infrastructure and governing logics and practices would become the defining experience of Mexican and Chicanx migrant farm worker communities throughout the rest of the 20th century to the present.

As mass unemployment soared and the prices of many agricultural products fell precipitously, thousands, including some share croppers and tenant farmers across the country, turned to the road to California in hopes of finding work as migrant farmworkers. While many (though not all) of the more than 300,000 migrants who ventured to California during the mid-1930s were white, the image of the destitute and/or dispossessed white farmer turned “Dust Bowl migrant” or “Okie” came to dominate the representation of migrant farm work (Martínez-Matsuda, 19) during this period. These migrants were famously memorialized in John Steinbeck’s 1939 novel *The Grapes of Wrath* and in the now iconic photography of Dorothea Lange that focused on migrants’ living conditions and the writings of her agricultural economist husband Paul S. Taylor. These works helped to cement the belief that the Depression had shattered the figure of the Jeffersonian yeoman, the proof being in the living conditions experienced throughout the new phenomenon of the nonwhite migrant stream to California.

The reality was that the “Dust Bowl” label was a bit of a misnomer— the number of migrants from the titular dust bowl of Northwest Texas and the Oklahoma panhandle were proportionally few, accounting for only 6 percent of the migrants who made their way to California by 1938 (Martínez-Matsuda, 24). In addition, the majority of these migrants had never worked in agriculture. As FSA official Lawrence Hewes stated, “It is known that a good many [of these migrants] never saw a farm and have no intention of seeing one if they can help it. Some are mechanics, plumbers, carpenters or anything but farm people” (Lawrence, 178; Martínez-Matsuda, 224).

As contemporary scholars point out, as did many government officials working in agencies involved with agriculture at the time, the overall number of migrant farmworkers had been increasing well before the Depression. They attribute the underlying causes of the “crisis” (a now all too familiar word used to describe labor migration) of white domestic migrants that was portrayed in

popular media as a threat to the integrity of the U.S. agricultural system and the dignity and value of white citizenship. The presence of large numbers of white migrants was only proof of the fact that the U.S. had always relied on a racialized class of migrant farmworkers, a class that was now partially depleted due to the “repatriation” campaigns that terrorized ethnic Mexican communities across the country. In other words, the Depression only exacerbated structural problems within the capitalist U.S. agricultural system and its racialized regimes of labor (Martínez-Matsuda, 23).

The Roosevelt administration’s answer to the “migrant problem” was the Resettlement Administration (RA). Established in 1935 by executive order the agency’s stated mission was to aide displaced and dispossessed white and black sharecroppers and tenant farmers by offering financial services such as credit and debt adjustment. However, shortly after its founding the RA inherited a project from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERMA): two experimental campsites for housing Dust-Bowl migrants in Yurba County and Kern County, California. FERMA had agreed to build these camps based off a proposal from none other than Dorothea Lange and Paul S. Taylor. In the proposal they argued that state-operated migrant housing was necessary due to the fact that white migrants were less susceptible to forms of labor control traditionally used on nonwhite and those seen as noncitizen migrants, since they “could not be deported, battered, and denied an American standard of living” (Martínez-Matsuda, 27). Their report again presented an image of the white migrant as experiencing a devaluing of their whiteness as property (Harris, 1713), a problem that required immediate state intervention.

As the Roosevelt administration restructured its agencies related to agriculture in the late 1930s, the RA was transformed into the Farm Security Administration (FSA) in 1937. The newly founded agency embraced the labor camp model first developed in California but sought to expand it nationally, ultimately building and managing over 100 permanent and mobile campsites between 1935 and 1946 (Martínez-Matsuda, 8). This extensive network of campsites would be known as the

U.S. migratory camp system. Labor scholar Verónica Martínez-Matsuda has argued that its rapid expansion was the result of the overall progressive attitude of the FSA and its leaders and their intention to improve labor conditions for all migrant farmworkers (Martínez-Matsuda, 1-14).

Built through 1939 and officially opened on April 21st, 1940, the Caldwell Labor Camp was one of only two permanent camps built in Idaho, making it the center of organized migrant recruitment in Southwest Idaho. Upon opening, the camp certainly housed some “Okies,” though anecdotal evidence and oral histories from the earliest residents report that the number of “dust-bowl” migrants were few and that the majority of the camp’s first residents were displaced agricultural workers from within Idaho.

When Mexican Americans migrants first resided at the camp is still up for debate. Testimonial evidence from former migrants puts the earliest Tejano migrants arriving at the Caldwell Labor Camp in 1946 (Dittenber, 7.12.21, 53:45), aligning with the tail end of the *bracero* program in Idaho. While ethnic Mexican and other racialized migrants such as Filipinx farmworkers were initially barred from the first campsites in California first run by the RA, it is unknown if this was the case for Caldwell under the FSA. Some sources attributed to the FSA state that 120,000 migrants had traveled to Idaho between 1930-1940 (Dittenber, 4, Ourada, 32), but these figures did not count the seasonal migrants like those mentioned in 1935. Martínez-Matsuda also states that the 1930s through the 1940s were key decades for the South Texas migrant trails, concluding that “the migrant stream of mostly Mexican workers traveling from South Texas to other parts of the nation was far greater than any other interstate flow at the time” (Martínez-Matsuda, 11). While we may never know the first Mexican Americans who resided in the camp, the white migrant majority would be short lived, as President Roosevelt instituted the peace-time draft in preparation for World War II less than 6 months after the Caldwell Labor Camp opened its doors. This began a labor shortage that would only

increase in severity during the course of the war as white laborers traded field work for industrial and other war related jobs (Martínez-Matsuda, 4-7).

The need for farmworkers would be met by the *Bracero* Program (1942-1964), which historian Erasmo Gamboa argues is the true origin of the Chicano community in the Northwest. Between 1943 and 1947 the agreement between the U.S. and Mexico for farm and railroad labor would bring nearly 50,000 Mexican laborers to the region, 3,000 of which were housed at the Caldwell Labor Camp at some point during that period (García, *Aztlan!*, 7; Gamboa, 58, Mize and Swords, 154; Dittenber, 13). Caldwell's importance to the program's operation extended beyond the *braceros* it housed; the camp also functioned as the FSA's Labor Supply Center, a state-wide labor depot that ensured that every migrant in Southwestern Idaho would pass through the camp. This gave Caldwell the largest population of Mexicans in the state by 1945 (Dittenber, 13). Gamboa notes that given the many difficulties and instances of abuse within the contracting process (more on this later in the chapter) many *braceros* chose to stay in Southwestern Idaho, seeding a thriving ethnic Mexican community that would grow further with the addition of the Tejano Diaspora throughout the 1940s and 1950s.

While Caldwell was a key site for labor supply, it was also a site of tremendous labor abuse. Several of Mexico's conditions for sending migrants to the U.S. was that they would receive free, safe, and sanitary housing; transportation to and from their worksites; competitive, living wages; and that they would not be subject to discrimination. Frequent reports by *braceros* living and working in the Caldwell Labor Camp and the surrounding area attested to inhumane living conditions, wage abuses, and virulent anti-Mexican discrimination and violence, which prompted an investigation by the Mexican Consulate in 1946. Concluding in 1947, the investigation's report called out conditions within Caldwell and Nampa specifically, earning Idaho the ignominious distinction of being one of only two states barred from participating in the *bracero* program by Mexico—the other being Texas

(Jones and Hodges, 76; Ourada, 60). Mexico's refusal to send migrants effectively ended the *Bracero* Program in Idaho. The rest of the Northwest would soon follow that year when the federal government changed its subsidy policy and no longer paid transportation costs for contracted *braceros* from the U.S.-Mexican border (Mize & Swords, 27). With the (forcible) end of the *bracero* program in Idaho, growers were keen to continue recruiting ethnic Mexican labor and developed a complex recruitment system in the communities of the Rio Grande Valley. The pueblos of McAllen, San Juan, Pharr, and Brownsville became the major labor pools for Idaho agriculture for the next 75 years.

However, ethnic Mexicans were not the only ones to live and work in Idaho's FSA migrant labor camps during the war period. In late 1942, several months after the February signing of Executive Order 9066 which created the coastal exclusion zone for those of Japanese heritage and initiated their forced incarceration in concentration camps, several thousand Japanese Americans were recruited to work in Idaho and Eastern Oregon's sugar beet fields. Largely from the concentration camps located in Minidoka, Idaho and Tule Lake, California, these incarcerated Japanese American farmworkers were housed in Nysaa, Oregon, Rupert, Idaho, and the Caldwell Labor Camp as part of the Seasonal Leave Program, an agreement between the federal War Food Administration, state governors, and agribusiness to use incarcerated Japanese Americans as farm labor for the war effort.

Japanese American incarceration coincided with a great expansion in crop production in Idaho's Treasure Valley, a process facilitated by The War Food Administration assuming temporary control of the Caldwell Labor Camp and asking Idaho farmers to double sugar beet production from 48,000 to 100,000 acres (Dittenber, 10). Japanese Americans were integrated into the Caldwell Labor camp alongside ethnic Mexican migrants, certainly *braceros*, but possibly Tejanos according to oral histories, in order to meet the labor needs for this large increase in beet production. Previous

scholarship on the *Bracero* Program has described *braceros* as inhabiting sites of Japanese incarceration, as sociologists Ronald Mize and Alicia C.S. Swords have noted that “Placing workers in former Japanese internment camps and in tent colonies was justified by government officials and growers because they felt ‘*Braceros* deserved nothing better than their own homes in Mexico,’”— a startling admission that they believed Mexican farmworkers should live in carceral conditions *everywhere* (Mize & Swords, 93). According to the testimony of Teresa Maebori, a Japanese American who was born in the Caldwell Labor Camp in 1945 while her parents and siblings were incarcerated there, Japanese Americans in Caldwell lived and worked alongside ethnic Mexican migrant workers in shared conditions of surveillance and incarceration. At the end of World War II, the FSA sold off or liquidated the campsites, continuing to operate Caldwell as a transitional space for former Japanese Americans.

In 1950, the campsite was placed under the administration of the Caldwell Housing Authority (CHA), a private, nonprofit organization that until recently was funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The property was fully deeded to the Caldwell Housing Authority in 1956 (Dittenber, 32).

From the 1950s onward the camp has primarily housed Mexican American/Chicanx migrant laborers. During the early 1990s the camp was renovated, with much of the original architecture, including the wooden barracks that housed the majority of camp residents for 50 years, destroyed. As part of the renovation, the camp also received a new name: Farmway Village. Today, the campsite still primarily houses Mexican American farmworkers and other members of the Mexican working poor, however H-2A guestworkers from Mexico are an ever increasing presence in the camp (Dittenber, 13.9.21, 47:46-51:22).

My focus on how carcerality has operated in and through the Caldwell Labor Camp since its construction is counter to recent scholarship on the FSA and the migratory labor camp system’s

legacy. In *Migrant Citizenship: Race, Rights, and Reform in the U.S. Farm Labor Camp Program* labor historian Verónica Martínez-Matsuda draws on methods similar to my own “to demonstrate how migrants and FSA officials worked to incorporate Mexican Americans in the U.S. national polity” (Martínez-Matsuda, 11). I’m not convinced that a recuperation of the FSA is the answer to studying the Mexican American experience in migrant labor camps. This historiographic treatment of Caldwell has largely corroborated the image of it and other FSA camps as near-utopian spaces of economic opportunity and community development. According to Martínez-Matsuda, FSA labor camps were collaborative sites where the federal government and migrants came together “to combat the discrimination migrants encountered and the exploitive forces of corporate agribusiness” through manifestations of New Deal legislation that offered employment and access to medical and education services. However, the focus on the labor camp program as providing opportunities for migrants cordons off the site from its physical and media archeology, which, when recognized in its intimacy with other histories of confinement and carcerality, allows one to interrogate migrancy and its global (pre)conditions of carcerality. Hearing the migrants who lived and worked in these camps, and paying close attention to their first-person narratives, are central to understanding these (pre)conditions, as the interrelation between the status of migrant laborer and confinement is only fully clarified in the works that come out of these confined migrants communities. These narratives tell a different story than the one presented in state documents and archives, as migrants’ telling of their seemingly localized experience becomes an archive of these global carceral (pre)conditions.

Terminology

In speaking about agricultural labor migration, terminology can be fluid and ambiguous. Those who occupy spaces like the Caldwell Labor Camp/Farmway Village are *workers*, yet the camp is not their place of employment; they are called *residents*, yet their residency is contingent on their

status as workers *and* on the possibility of claiming of long-term local, state, or national residency, which is often precluded by the fact that they itinerant workers. To call these farmworkers camp *occupants* denies or ignores the social reproduction that occurs in the camp, as farmworkers within it do not just occupy space, but *make life* within it. Even the name of the camp itself can be ambiguous. During its construction in 1939, the camp was known as the Farm Family Labor Camp at Caldwell, but it has been referred to as the Caldwell Labor Camp in the Caldwell community for most of its existence. In the 1990s, the name was officially changed to Farmway Village, but to ethnic Mexican farmworkers the camp really only has one name: *El Campo*. For clarity, I refer to those who live or have lived at the campsite as residents, and I refer to the camp according to the historical period under consideration: pre-1990s as the Caldwell Labor Camp and post-1990s as Farmway Village. When I discuss the cultural memory of the site (both recent and past), I refer to the space by compounding its names: the Caldwell Labor Camp/Farmway Village. But most often I refer to the site as the *camp*.

Terminology for describing those with Mexican heritage is equally complex, given the incommensurate histories of British and Spanish colonialism in the Americas, between which Mexicans and Mexican Americans/Chicanxs often found themselves caught in the clash (Saldaña-Portillo, 17); the legacy of the Chicantx/ Brown Power movements; and 20th century immigration and labor legislation, which introduced several terms of legal short hand to describe transnational migrant workers from Mexico (“H-2A” to refer to workers on a short-term work visa, for example). As this project demonstrates, the U.S. carceral farmwork system has always transcended the nation’s borders and has racialized both domestic and transnational Mexican migrant farmworkers along similar lines (Baker, 12-14, 57-81, 128). When discussing shared lived experiences across national borders and citizenship statuses, I use the term “ethnic Mexican” to account for the shared impact of American imperialism and the U.S. state’s broad racialization of these populations. When discussing domestic

migrants, I use two different terms—“Mexican American” and “Chicanx”—due to the fact that Chicana/o/x are vexed terms for many in Idaho’s Mexican community. Older generations do not identify with the terms, even though many participated in the Chicanx Movement and farmworker rights movements during the 1960s and 1970s when the term “Chicano” originated. This is partly due to the fact that within Caldwell, “Mexican” is a racialized class and labor position regardless of citizenship or how many years a person has been a part of the community. As such, I use “Mexican American” if I am referring to individuals who do not identify with the terms Chicana/o/x, and, most often, “Chicanx” for farmworkers who do identify with the term.

Camp Carcerality

In Black studies scholar Christina Sharpe’s *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, she offers a new understanding of the structure and experience of antiblackness as something that supersedes systemic violence as the *total environment* in which we live. She articulates this total environment as *the weather*: “In what I am calling the weather, antiblackness is pervasive as climate. The weather necessitates changeability and improvisation; it is the atmospheric condition of time and place; it produces new ecologies” (Sharpe, 106). For Sharpe, this total environment was created under slavery and continues in the wake of slavery—“a past that is not past”—of which the many forms of incarceration that Black people experience today is an integral part: “What is the word for how we must approach the archives of slavery (to ‘tell the story that cannot be told’) and the histories and presents of violent extraction in slavery and incarceration [?]” (Sharpe, 113).

If we live in the pervasive, ongoing afterlife of slavery as the weather around us, then carcerality in all its various forms is the wind that carries and expands the conditions of that atmosphere around the globe. This thinking, alongside my own family’s experiences with Blackness, carcerality, and farmwork has led to my theory of camp carcerality, as an expansive climate operative

within this larger deathly atmosphere. It is no secret that the current conditions of farmwork have their origins in plantation slavery (Goldfarb, 19; Baker, 163; García-Colón, 24), and that they were refined through the late 19th and 20th century prison farm (Chase, 8-12; Oshinsky, 92; Perkinson, 6-8). However, there has always been some reluctance within farmworker studies to fully acknowledge how ethnic Mexican and other farmworkers live in the wake of slavery. For example, labor scholar Cindy Hahamovitch has argued that the plight of guestworkers in the U.S. should not be compared to the conditions of slavery because:

...Calling guestworkers “slaves” elides more than it reveals. Slavery has taken different forms at different times and in different places, but the fact that in 1992 alone Filipino guestworkers sent home \$4.3 billion (U.S.), a figure far larger than their country’s \$3 billion foreign debt, should make it clear that guestworker programs are something else entirely. Slaves don’t send home remittances. (Hahamovitch, 228)

For Hahamovitch, the appropriate analogy for the conditions these laborers face should be that of indentured servitude due to the fact that they earn a wage as guest laborers (Hahamovitch 228). But to say that the fact of a wage negates connections to slavery and incarceration is to deny the relationship between the climate and the atmosphere—for even prisoners in prison can earn a “wage” for labor but that does not negate the prison’s place in the ongoing wake of slavery. I argue that these debates on finding the most suitable analogy for the conditions of contemporary guesswork and farmwork distract from the goal of abolishing these conditions and mire liberatory theories in service of that goal. Instead, I endeavor to name the conditions of farmwork for what they are: part of the total climate of carcerality in which we live. By articulating and recognizing how farmwork is intimately tied with legacies of slavery though the conditions of carcerality, this work contributes to both the scholarly conversation and on-the-ground-action in the ongoing fight for abolition.

To use a reductive analogy, if anti-blackness is the stratosphere, then I argue that camp carcerality is the troposphere, the layer of air just below. These concepts move through each other in that they filter down onto the terrain where they soak the social reality of farmwork and are then reabsorbed into the atmosphere. In other words, anti-blackness and camp carcerality conceptually, energetically, and materially feed off each other. They are each other's own supply. At stake in understanding this layering and process of circulation is not mistaking the *container* (the ship's hold, the cell, the barracks, the deportation center, etc.) as the only indicator of carcerality. Rather, camp carcerality helps us to see how *uncontatined* forms can contain—because of the conditions of the atmosphere. This explains how and why the migrant trail can become a holding place, and how camp carcerality can have many expressions and result in myriad experiences of carceral space. Like the weather, camp carcerality can expand and contract, and its effects can be imperceptible or dramatic. But the climate of carcerality is everywhere, always determining the conditions of our material and social lives.

In my exploration of camp carcerality, I focus on several key arguments. First, I argue that camp carcerality manifests and is experienced *through movement*. This is evidenced not only in its own movement in and through antiblackness (and by extension anti-Mexican and anti-Latinxness in that, to use Sharpe's formulation, they too are caught up in the wake of slavery in the fields), but in the material reality of moving from farm to farm. Carcerality can *move* and it does so through the movement of *bodies*.

Second, in its climatic and corporeal circulation, carcerality incorporates numerous ideologies of race, labor, migration, belonging, and nationality into its goal of creating a labor pool that is at once perpetually itinerant yet captive. I draw particular focus to a principle ideology that I term the prisoner-farmworker conflation, or the core belief that those who perform farmwork should be carceral subjects, and, vice versa, that carceral subjects are always suitable for farmwork.

Following Althusser, I name the prisoner-farmworker conflation as an ideology in that it is materially located and therefore demands examination in what Stewart Hall calls its “practico-social effect” (Hall, *Cultural Studies*, 33). Further, I recognize this conflation as an ideology in that it operates by interpolating subjects into the institutional sites and apparatuses of the agro-carceral order (Althusser, 180-182). To be called a farmworker is a psychological process of both identification and abstraction, one that Ramón Saldívar describes in his analysis of the opening lines of Tomás Rivera’s classic Chicano text on farmwork, *...Y No Se Lo Tragó La Tierra /...And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*. In the novel’s opening lines, a young Chicano child grapples with the personal and cultural memory of farmwork, not knowing if his recollections are dreams or reality:

It always began when he would hear someone calling by his name, but when he turned his head to see who was calling, he would make a complete turn and there he would end up—in the same place. This was why he never could discover who was calling him or why. And then he even forgot the name he had been called. (Rivera, 83)

In Saldívar’s interpretation of the call and the confusion it triggers, the child, through language, attempts to understand “his place in a system of class oppression, of seeing the world as a product of socially interactive labor, of recognizing the need for collective action” (Saldívar, 84). However, I also read this passage as a child migrant farmworker forced to confront the reality of camp carcerality, with its abstraction of the social relations that govern farmwork and the prisoner-farmworker conflation. For part of the prisoner-farmworker conflation is a fundamental confusion of *who* is calling ethnic Mexicans to farmwork and *who* demands that they be carceral subjects—the State? Growers? Labor recruiter/crew bosses? The police? This interpolative process is evident in my mother, Nora Gallion’s, first memory of entering the Caldwell Labor Camp as a child where she was first interpolated as a farmworker. For her, this process initiated a dynamic crisis in which she experienced what Saldívar describes as a “precritical” reckoning with how her life “fit into a pattern

of labor commodification and class and racial oppression” (Saldívar, 79), as well as whether or not the call to farmwork even allowed for her humanity at all. But part of her being hailed into farmwork also involved reckoning with the past carceral regimes that would define her experience in the fields: plantation slavery, the prison farm, and Japanese incarceration during WWII, which will be explored later. In this way, camp carcerality operates on a perverse psychology that continually forces farmworkers to reevaluate their relation to physical and social death, a process akin to what Sharpe describes as “living in the wake” for Black peoples (Sharpe, 15).

Third, I argue that camp carcerality holds farmworkers captive in agriculture related/adjacent employment. This is achieved through the prisoner-farmworker conflation as well as through several social and material conditions, including lack of educational opportunities through constant migration and lack of community care in white farming communities, along with associations of Mexicans with disease and contagion, criminality, and chosen poverty. Following Richard Baker’s observation that the municipal government and growers in Idaho’s Treasure Valley believe that Mexicans *choose* farmwork and that the current social institutions function as they should to ensure profits for agribusiness (Baker, 224), I argue that camp carcerality holds a deterministic logic that states, “once a farmworker, always a farmworker.” Thus, camp carcerality operates in the nexus between material and capital extraction from the earth, the disciplining and management of bodies, social reproduction, and signifying practices to lock current and former farmworkers into the agro-carceral order, even if not in the fields. However, following Gilmore’s warning that “it is important not to misread the structural as also somehow inevitable” (Gilmore, 185), throughout this project I reveal the extent of this deterministic logic to ultimately suggest ways in which ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers are fighting for its abolition.

Finally, I argue that a key property of camp carcerality is that it operates recursively. In other words, camp carcerality creates nested conditions that cannot be interpreted in isolation but

necessitate consideration of their simultaneous place in other facets of camp carcerality—thus requiring many successive analytical interventions. For migrant farmworkers, carcerality has no starting or end point, but is a total climate with conditions that are reproduced on larger scales as the journey of agricultural labor migration continues—a cattle car becomes a cell on the migrant trail that then becomes a barrack in a labor camp that becomes a row in the fields that becomes a factory floor. This facet is the reason that to speak of the carceral conditions of farm labor is to seemingly speak in tautologies—the conditions of farmwork beget carceral spaces and carceral spaces beget the conditions of farmwork. In this way, to speak of one aspect of camp carcerality at a specific scale (the vehicles that migrants use to traverse the migrant trail, for example), is to simultaneously speak of that aspect on all scales (the tractors and threshers used in the fields and even on the vehicles that make up the state’s deportation apparatus). It is also why to speak of domestic migrant farmworkers is also to simultaneously speak of the wake of slavery, Jim and Juan Crow, processes and statuses of undocumented, H-2A guest workers and the deportation apparatus, and the imbrication of capital from technology firms in the agro-carceral system, among others.

In light of this, I, like Sharpe, map the climate of camp carcerality through a series of “reprise[s] and elaboration[s].” (Sharpe, 21). The ship’s hold, the cattle car, the barrack, the barbed wire fence, the lynching field, and the Texas Rangers are among the material and figural reprises that occur throughout this work, providing space/opportunities in their recursion to elaborate on the experience of personal and cultural memory in farmwork, undocumented, hauntings, and of social death that are part and parcel of agricultural labor migration. To best clarify these nested themes and topics, I have organized the chapters that follow both chronologically in terms of my family’s narratives and experiences of farmwork, but also experientially in terms of the process of labor migration—from traveling to migrant labor camps, to the psycho-social affects and effects of being

inside these camps, and, finally, to the state and agribusiness's desire for their indefinite perpetuation.

In chapter one, I analyze *testimonios* that speak to the phenomena of migrant farmworker caravans and ditch camps. I argue that during migration, carcerality manifests in and through movement by building on prison scholar and social geographer Brett Story's argument that spaces like the buses that transport visitors to prisons are carceral spaces in their own right. I argue that migrant farmworker *testimonios* reveal how the migrant trails emanating from South Texas to the nation's many agricultural communities are structured by the cultural memory of anti-Mexican violence and lynching at the hands of, or condoned by, police. I then examine literary representations of the carceral conditions of the migrant trails in Tomás Rivera's classic Chicano novel *...And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*. Finally, I examine how camp carcerality is a precondition for farmwork through an analysis of Mexican *bracero testimonios*.

Chapter two explores the manifestation of camp carcerality in the Caldwell Labor Camp through an analysis of the camp's place in past carceral regimes, principally Japanese incarceration during WWII. I analyze the *testimonios* of my mother and grandmother, Nora Gallion and Herminia Zavala, and their embodied knowledge of the camp as an ancillary site of Japanese incarceration. I argue that in addition to the afterlife of slavery, ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers live in the afterlife of Japanese incarceration, as it has become a key experiential and interpretative lens through which they view their own captivity in the agro-carceral order.

In chapter three, I examine how the climate of camp carcerality currently sits over the Caldwell Labor Camp/Farmway Village, as well as the CHA's future plans for the campsite. In this chapter I focus on Mexican H-2A guestworkers, a relatively new farmworker population for the camp. I detail my own experiences conducting fieldwork at the camp's H-2A worker housing, analyzing the camp itself as a palimpsestic social text that further reveals the continuities of past

carceral regimes and features at the site, including the Southern prison farm “trustee” system and the figure of the labor recruiter/crew boss, and how they’ve been updated to serve neoliberal modes of capitalist extraction. In considering the camp’s future, I examine media produced by the CHA on their recent academic research collaboration with a local college. In doing so, I reveal the CHA’s efforts to control the broader cultural memory of the camp in order to make way for the organization’s vision of future corporate sponsorship to perpetuate camp carcerality.

CHAPTER 1

MIGRANT FARMWORKER *TESTIMONIOS*: CAMP CARCERALITY AND THE MIGRANT TRAIL

Introduction

Hermina Zavala (née Quintanilla), my maternal grandmother, first set eyes on the Caldwell Labor Camp in March of 1957. Hailing from the small border town of San Juan, Texas in the Rio Grande Valley, she had traveled over 2,000 miles along the migrant trail to Southwest Idaho's Treasure Valley with her husband, her in-laws, and her husband's five young siblings to work the 6-month sugar beet planting, thinning, and harvest season—all while four months pregnant with her first child (Hermina Zavala, 5.20.18).

The story of Zavala's first visit to Caldwell is part of her *testimonio* on the nearly 40 years she spent as a Mexican American migrant farmworker and is one of dozens of other *testimonios* from former residents of the Caldwell Labor Camp that I have recorded. Together, these *testimonios* offer a detailed history of ethnic Mexican agricultural labor in Idaho, one that complicates the place of migrant labor camps in the broader cultural history of both agricultural labor migration and carceral systems. In this project, I argue that these *testimonios* reveal the way that the trail itself is a carceral space determined by anti-Mexican police violence and conditions of confinement that manifest both within the campsite and along the routes that facilitate the collective movement of migrant workers. Contrary to popular understandings of confinement that rely on a *lack* of movement, what I am calling "camp carcerality" requires traversing through interconnected spaces while still maintaining carceral conditions. These *testimonios*, and the new understandings of carcerality that they explicate, offer importantly new ways to interpret the Mexican experience on the migrant trail. At 22 years old, Zavala was no stranger to migrant farmwork. Her family had been working in the fields since the 1920s, first as migrant cotton pickers within Texas and then as migrant farmworkers throughout the

U.S., harvesting various crops in Washington, Oregon, Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, and Tennessee. She first accompanied her family at just four years old for the Texas cotton harvest. She recalls that the living conditions at that time were particularly harsh; the farmer who was employing her father and brothers did not even provide a place for the family to live. “They didn't have a house for us. They didn't have even a room or something—to live in. They put us to live under a tree” (Herminia Zavala, 5.20.21, 02:16). Circumstances like this were commonplace in the early to mid-20th century, creating an incentive for people to stay in the formalized labor camps the federal government created during the Depression, rather than live in makeshift conditions known as ditch camps, where migrant farmworkers would sleep or live outside, in their vehicles, or in abandoned structures on the sides of the road on the migrant trail or in farming communities

Despite Zavala’s years of work in the fields across the country, Idaho was a new locale for her and her family. The demand for agricultural work in Idaho had increased since World War II and the U.S. Department of War had tasked farmers with increasing sugar beet production for the war effort. Sugar beets provided the alcohol propellant for large artillery guns that were mounted on ships used in the Pacific Campaign.² This, in conjunction with larger scale irrigation efforts, had turned southwestern Idaho into some of the nation’s most productive cropland. To meet the ever rising labor demand that continued through the 1950s, local farmers and agribusiness alike relied on individual labor recruiters to find migrant farmworkers to work their seasonal crops. In the case of Idaho, these recruiters, also known as crew leaders or bosses, were often from South Texas communities and would recruit locally. They were, and continue to be, an important node in the connection between the borderlands and U.S. agriculture. Zavala’s in-laws were contacted by such a recruiter, who in turn brought in Zavala and her husband (Hermina Zavala, 05.20.2018, 15:49).

² See Gammage and the online exhibit *Uprooted* for more information on the importance of sugar beet production during WWII. <http://www.uprootedexhibit.com/farm-labor-camps/>

Of the various crops grown in Southwestern Idaho, working the beet fields could be particularly grueling.³ Beet season normally lasts from March-October, and at that time includes the tasks of thinning several weeks after planting and weeding before harvest. Beets are planted using a large amount of seed to guarantee germination, and thinning and weeding involve moving down the rows of planted beets, usually in pairs, with small hand-hoes to remove excess and unwanted plants, making sure that the fields consist of rows with only one beet planted every foot. Thinning and weeding beets was, and still is, considered slow “stoop labor,” a term that describes the hunched-over position the work requires. Many farmworkers who routinely worked the beet fields found it preferable to literally crawl along the ground with their hoe rather than stoop. More than a farmworking tool, the short-handled hoe was also a tool for degradation. Growers and crew bosses alike favored the short-handled hoe because it allowed them to monitor farmworkers’ productivity—they could tell at a glance when farmworkers were resting. One *bracero* during the 1940s called the hoe an “instrument of horror . . . designed by the devil.”⁴ Beet thinning was so labor intensive that a German POW who was forced to work Idaho’s beet fields a decade before Zavala arrived wryly remarked, “Hitler said we would march across North America, but I didn’t think we’d do it on our hands and knees” (Ourada, 52).

In addition, given that beet labor was paid by the row or acre, a 12-hour day in the fields often earned farmworkers considerably less than the federal per-hour minimum wage at the time. In between thinning and weeding, Idaho farmworkers found employment in other crops, often picking cherries and apples in the nearby orchards. They also frequently worked the area’s potato harvests in

³ Beet work was also seen as highly racialized work. During a 1941 labor shortage during the Idaho beet harvest, farmers and their families were forced to work the fields themselves along with white school children. This caused a considerable amount of anxiety in Idaho farming communities, with farmers arguing that beet work was not “proper work for white people” and that they would not plant beets if they had to take part in thinning and harvesting them themselves (Gamboa, 25).

⁴ The use of the hoe was so harmful to farmworkers that they staged a national campaign to ban the use of the short-handled hoe in 1975. https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_1352222
<https://objectofhistory.org/objects/extendedtour/shorthandledhoe/?order=4>

October and November at the end of beet season before making the trip back to Texas (Herminia Zavala, 5.20.18, 20:48).

At the end of the long journey to the Northwest, Zavala stepped out of the truck in which she had traveled and surveyed her surroundings. It was the first time she had been to a former Farm Security Administration (FSA) campsite, a New Deal federal agency active through WWII and dissolved in 1946. The Caldwell Labor Camp was built in 1939 by the FSA as one of an eventual 110 similar camps across the country under their Migratory Labor Program originally intended to mitigate the “crisis” of Depression-era white agricultural labor migration (Dittenber 3; Martínez-Matsuda 8). At the onset of WWII, as white migrants were absorbed into the war economy, the camps that didn’t already house mostly nonwhite labor quickly became sites of racialized farmwork, housing ethnic Mexican, Black, and Asian farmworkers, including Mexican “*braceros*” and Jamaican guestworkers (Martínez-Matsuda, 10-11).

The Caldwell Labor Camp had been newly deeded from the federal government to the Caldwell Housing Authority, the private entity that continues to run the camp, making the 1957 planting and harvest the first full agricultural season with the camp officially under private control (Dittenber, 32). At that time, the camp was still composed of its original architecture which consisted of over 200 “dwelling units,” a fraction of which included two-room cottages while the remaining majority consisted of rooms in “barracks,” or congregate living quarters that housed whole families or multiple single men in a single room (Dittenber, 3). Zavala was shocked at the site of the barracks. Prior to this, the 22-year old had been accustomed to the temporary accommodations provided by individual farmers and to the conditions of the “ditch camps,” the make-shift, open air camps migrants made out of necessity as they traveled cross-country on the migrant routes. They were so named after the common experience of having to sleep in the ditches that ran alongside highways. But the lived reality of barrack life proved no less difficult than ditch camp living. The entire family

was given only two rooms in the barracks—one for Zavala and her husband due to her pregnancy, and one standard single room for the other 7 members of the extended Zavala family. So many bodies in close proximity proved incredibly challenging, but the Zavalas' arrangement was not unique, as overcrowding was common in every barrack room. Adding to the suffocating living conditions was the fact that the barracks were built facing each other and only several yards apart, making privacy virtually non-existent (Herminia Zavala, 5.20.18, 22:23).

Equally difficult was the experience of the communal showers and communal, latrine-style bathrooms. These facilities were independent structures located several yards from the clusters of barracks, as there was no plumbing or running water in the living quarters. A pump-operated spigot outside of the shower area was the single source of potable drinking water. To make matters worse, the camp was in a state of continual disrepair. From its initial construction to 1951, when the transfer from federal ownership was first proposed, the camp had received almost no maintenance or general repairs as it housed hundreds of Mexican *braceros* and incarcerated Japanese Americans working as farmworkers during WWI (a point I will return to), and hundreds of domestic Mexican American migrants in the postwar years. While some repairs, including new front doors and exterior painting, were completed between 1953-54, they were a patchwork intended to keep the camp in operation and not to improve quality of life (Dittenber, 31-36).

Unable to work in the fields, Zavala briefly worked at the on-site child daycare looking after the children of those in the fields until her pregnancy forced her to be placed on bed rest in the barracks. During this time she was confined to the camp. She lacked transportation to town, as migrants' trucks were reserved for taking workers into the fields, and she was unable to walk the nearly 5 miles to town in the summer heat. Even in town, discriminatory practices left her with little access to commercial or public space, as many stores and bars in Caldwell and the surrounding towns hung signs that read "NO MEXICANS". Further, local Caldwell police routinely rounded up

Mexican migrants who were found gathering in public spaces or in town after sunset and returned them to the labor camp (Herminia Zavala, 5.21.18, 01:29).

Zavala and her husband left Caldwell at the end of the weeding season in late September, shortly before the birth of her first child, Nora Zavala. While the initial trip to Caldwell was only for one season, Zavala and her family would return two years later and eventually settle permanently in the area, cementing the Caldwell Labor Camp and the surrounding community as an important part of her and her family's life for the next three decades. At the time of her first experience in Caldwell, she couldn't fathom that this place would come to define the life of her unborn child and the lives of her other five children, each of whom would describe their experience of living in the camp and working in the surrounding fields as one of exploitation and racialized confinement. As many in the family individually and collectively attest, it was a prison.⁵

In examining the lived experiences of ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers, I argue that the whole of U.S. agriculture comes to constitute carceral space for migrant farmworkers and that all industrial agricultural labor is *carceral labor*. Following this, I ask how we can apply theories of abolition to U.S. agriculture to permanently do away with the relations that create these carceral conditions. I do so by analyzing how ethnic Mexican migrants like Zavala represent agricultural labor migration and farmwork itself as a carceral experience, and I analyze the coalitional potential for abolition that inheres in their strategies of representation. The consequences of this analysis extend far beyond the fields, urging an abolitionist collectivity spanning migrant farm laborers to those incarcerated across the country—from San Quentin and Sing Sing, to operational prison farms and ICE detention centers.

⁵ In the interviews conducted with Zavala and her immediate family, the description of the campsite as a prison is a common refrain.

In *Golden Gulag*, Ruth Wilson Gilmore analyzes the relationship between systems of carcerality and California's agricultural economy. She describes how changes in agricultural production along with surpluses of land, labor, and agribusiness capital can make farmland and agricultural communities suitable sites for prison expansion. In essence, she describes how the prison and the labor needed to run it are brought *into* the fields, and how further value is extracted out of rural communities by providing employment and wages to largely white correctional officers. But this process, while having serious material effects on farmworkers, imprisoned laborers, and California's overall political economy, is not the only, nor most significant, manifestation of carcerality in agriculture.

This project calls attention to the labor of people who work in carceral spaces and under carceral supervision that may be non-contiguous with the space of the prison, but undoubtedly connected to it through the history, logics, materiality, and lived experience of carceral capitalism—what Jackie Wang describes as the fusing of the “carceral techniques of the state” with “the imperatives of global capitalism” (Wang, 69). In other words, instead of thinking about the way that labor works in the prison, I am thinking about the way the prison works itself *into* labor. This is a means of thinking through the question, and persistent problem, within the field of critical prison studies: What is the relationship between prisons and other carceral spaces in the U.S. and across sites of American imperialism? I propose that part of the answer lies in reframing farmwork, and its transnational dimension, as carceral labor in order to understand commercial agriculture as a site where the U.S. interfaces with its other carceral spaces and systems, including, but not limited to, the prison, detention center, U.S. military prison camps, and the various kinds of other labor camps within the U.S., its colonies, and other nation states economically (often by agricultural export) and militarily (e.g., the Persian Gulf) supported by the US.

Camp Thinking

In *The Merriam Webster Dictionary* the first definition given for the word “camp” is “a place usually away from urban areas where tents or simple buildings...are erected for shelter or for temporary residence (as for laborers, prisoners, or vacationers)” (“camp,” def. 1.a). The next definition mentions an adherence to a particular ideological position: “a group engaged in promoting or defending a theory, doctrine, position, or person” (“camp,” def. 2.a (1)). These two uses of the noun—one about the demarcation and use of physical space and the other about epistemological and ideological positions within the mind—are related. The same page that gives these seemingly disparate uses also tells us exactly where they come together. Below the first entry, a single compound noun is given as an example: migrant labor camp (“camp,” def. 1.a).

The example, intended to give the clearest idea of the most prevalent usage, knits together the distinctive components of the definition: “away” in that a migrant labor camp is always outside of the concept of the “here” of the home or the local. In other words, it is always already a space designated over “there” for the “other” of the migrant who must occupy it. “Simple” not only in terms of a camp’s built environment, but also in terms of their reason for existence: the ideologies of work and the market logic of surplus and shortage. And camps are perceived as “temporary” in that the (theoretically) temporary residents of a camp labor make a problem—be it the necessity of a seasonal harvest or clean up after an environmental disaster—temporary.

In *Against Race*, Paul Gilroy further identifies the imbrication of these definitions in his concept of “camp-thinking”—his description of the entanglement of “race” and “nation” in modern political culture. He describes camp-thinking as the mentality that renders nationalisms as factions with racial ideologies that must be defended, and in doing so reveals how one definition of “camp” can lead directly into the other. For example, the conflation of race and nation led to labor, prison, and concentration camps both in fascist Europe as well as in the U.S. during WWII. In this way, the

example of migrant labor camp also suggests the interrelation of the “laborers” and “prisoners” that sit side by side in the first definition. Gilroy demands that prison camps and labor camps be thought alongside each other in his call for “identifying camps—refugee camps, labor camps, concentrations camps, even death camps—as providing opportunities for moral and political reflection.” (Gilroy, 88).

Taken together, the Webster’s definition and Gilroy’s concept make clear that “camp” is a relation between people and the various powers that shape physical space and determine who can or must occupy it and why. They also show that “camps” are geopolitical sites of reification. Social geographer and abolitionist scholar Brett Story offers a useful definition of reification in the context of prisons: “reification is the mystification of...social relations into ‘things’—things that appear to us as pre-given and self-contained but whose historical formations and social contingencies are thoroughly obscured” (Story, 168). A migrant labor camp like the one in Caldwell is also such a “thing,” as its built environment and the arguments for its necessity obscure the social relations of colonialism and dispossession that Gilroy notes are part of all spaces we designate as camps. Understanding camps as both built environments and relations helps us to better explain why the effects of the built environment can persist long after someone leaves a labor camp and how relations can be reconfigured to turn a range of spaces into “camps.” This capacity is especially salient for migrant labor camps as sites where ideologies of race, class, nation, gender, and citizenship are mediated and mystified in and through the space specifically designated for the labor of people who are variously excluded, disenfranchised, and dispossessed.

In these ways, a migrant labor camp is a camp par excellence and is never far from the prison—categorically, conceptually, or, as many migrant farmworkers attest, experientially. But thinking the prison and labor camp side by side does not mean that the two sites are identical. Indeed, both are formed by particular social relations and institutions as partial spatial fixes to specific social

“problems” (Gilmore, 86). Yet, in the same way that A. Naomi Paik argues that U.S. prison camps, including those for Japanese incarceration during WWII and Guantanamo Bay, are not identical to prisons but are still part of the U.S. prison regime (7), I argue that migrant labor camps are related to prisons as part of the even larger continuum of the carceral regime. Furthermore, both are important sites for carceral capitalism.

Carcerality is a capacious concept (like “empire” or “dispossession”) that, following Ruby C. Tapia, “encompasses logics, ideologies, practices, and structures, that invest in tangible and sometimes intangible ways” in punitive orientations to social problems (Tapia, *Carceral State?*). The principal manifestation of carcerality is the construction of carceral space, what Brett Story defines as “the sites and relations of power that enable and incentivize the systematic capture, control and confinement of human beings through *structures of immobility*” (Story, 4). As such, carcerality comes in many forms and is not limited to the institutionalized sites of mass incarceration that are most commonly acknowledged as carceral space—the jail, prison, and detention center—but as many scholars have pointed out, applies to numerous sites and social fields. For example, as Liat Ben-Moshe argues, such spaces also include the psychiatric hospital and spaces intended for disabled populations and the North American reform schools for indigenous children (Ben-Moshe, 8-11). As abolitionist scholars and activists work to do away with prisons, slavery in all forms, wage exploitation, and capitalist ecological destruction, it becomes clear the extent to which carcerality structures contemporary life.

Gilmore and Story both argue that part of the abolitionist’s task is to deconstruct carceral power by “unfixing” the prison in time and space. They call on us to understand the social relationships and political economy that makes prisons possible (Gilmore, 23), and to understand how carceral power operates outside of the prison’s walls to turn landscapes into broader carceral space (Story, 169). Following these arguments, I offer the concept of “camp carcerality” to describe

the particular set of relations and institutions that govern farmwork and agricultural labor migration and that turn agricultural space, and by extension the totality of the migrant routes that connect migrant communities to farms, into carceral space. Within farmwork and agricultural labor migration, carcerality is made through the relations between federal, state, and municipal institutions, including the criminal justice system, the immigration system, and the deportation apparatus, as well as agribusiness, private farms, the agricultural communities that support and are supported by agricultural labor, and among farmworkers themselves.

I employ “camp” in the term “camp carcerality” not to only emphasize the carcerality of the built environments of the migrant labor camps that came to dominate the experience of agricultural labor migration in the postwar years through the late 20th century, but also to emphasize the term as a relation born out of the “camp-thinking” that alienates and marginalizes farmworkers. Like the penal system, camp carcerality relies on systems of racialization, dispossession, criminalization, and police violence (which includes immigration and border patrol agencies) to construct complex structures of immobility that render *every space* involved with farmwork and agricultural labor migration—from the vehicles used on the migrant route, to the labor camps in which they live, to the fields themselves—as carceral space. In other words, camp carcerality refers to both the social relations, material manifestation, and the ideological infrastructure that together produce an environment, *and* the affects/effects that structure that environment. Within camp carcerality physical confinement emerges through various forms of immobility, including those that simultaneously confine *and* facilitate movement: such as cattle cars used as jail cells. While structures like these may be less recognizable than the explicit use of cages (though these, too, are not uncommon), they are certainly no less insidious.

One of those forms of structured immobility is the way that camp carcerality lives on in the lives of farmworkers after they leave the camp. Agriculture in many ways epitomizes capital’s

general relation to labor. Capital requires ways to shed and gain workers in continual response to the moments of crisis that define capitalist accumulation. Agriculture's need to alternately shed and gain workers is an extreme example of this phenomena, as the crises of surplus and shortage (of labor, land, etc.) are frequent and made visible on the land itself. In this way agriculture presents a series of social problems and its predication on, and vast knowledge of, the use of land makes it even more prone to relying on spatial and geographic fixes to socio-political problems. The industry learned that it is within its best interests to have access to the *same* steady pool of idle(d) labor, and camp carcerality emerged as a form of labor control to ensure that idled workers either stayed within the bounds of agricultural labor or were reserved in other carceral spaces. Furthermore, it determines the kinds of labor migrant farmworkers and those who "settle out" of the migrant trail can perform outside of the fields—relegating them to forms of labor also structured by forms of carcerality and resulting in chronic unemployment and underemployment, a phenomena similar to that experienced by formally incarcerated populations.

Spaces across the U.S. that are governed by camp carcerality share dominant features but also have other manifestations particular to the local geography and social institutions, and the ideological and materials means therein. Just as the prison's physical architecture varies across time and space (San Quinten's gothic architecture bears little resemblance to ICE's modern detention centers), camp carcerality varies in form. The major features, nuances, and subtleties of camp carcerality will be explored through the case study of the Caldwell Labor Camp and other camps like it in Southwestern Idaho later in this project. This camp is significant due to its place in multiple carceral regimes. It functioned as an ancillary site of Japanese American internment during World War II while it simultaneously housed Mexican *braceros* and Mexican American farmworkers, and it continues to operate as a labor camp for ethnic Mexican farmworkers today.

However, it is important to note now that in the case of ethnic Mexican farmworkers and Idaho agriculture, many of the practices and logics of camp carcerality have their origins in practices of Texas/borderland plantation slavery, anti-Mexican violence, and dispossession. The legacy of these practices lived on in the heyday of anti-Mexican violence epitomized by the Texas Rangers in early 20th century, the reconfiguration of the southern border, and the emergent category of the “alien citizen” (Ngai, 8). This legacy also continued through New Deal legislation that created the migratory labor camp system and its labor conditions. As Mark A. Torres notes, New Deal measures, including worker protections through the creation of the National Labor Relations Board, *specifically* excluded migrant farmworkers (31), allowing for further dispossession at a moment when the political rhetoric was championing social welfare. Gilmore connects these exclusions to the use of carceral power to enforce the racial order, stating that these exclusions were made to appease and solidify the power of Southern/Western Democrats who “institutionalized Jim Crow without speaking his name” (Gilmore, 79).

But to understand camp carcerality and the way it structures agricultural labor migration for ethnic Mexicans, we have to start at the beginning: the journey to the fields.

“Caravans of Sorrow”

It was during the Trump administration that many first became familiar with the term “migrant caravans” as a way to describe the mass coordination and mobilization of migrants journeying to the U.S.-Mexico border. Numerous headlines accompanied Trump’s even more numerous tweets that described the phenomenon in the classic terms of Leo Chavez’s *Latino Threat*: “an invasion” and as a way for “criminal aliens” to enter the country for nefarious purposes

(@realDonaldTrump)⁶. Unsurprisingly, these headlines often did not mention the conditions that lead to the formation of these collectivities in the first place: exploitation by coyotes/smugglers and the threats of robbery and physical and sexual violence that are commonplace during labor migration. And while the Left seemingly rebuked Trump’s characterizations, they nonetheless often viewed these mobilizing migrants as a liability, with Bernie Sanders claiming in 2018 that not all migrants in these groups moving to the border had “credible” asylum claims. This discourse perpetuates the anxiety about “undeserving” or “criminal” migrants abusing or manipulating the immigration system, and using their movements to once again bring up the debate on “comprehensive immigration reform” (@CNNPolitics).

Well before the current conjuncture, however, *las caravanas* had been a long-standing phenomenon of the ethnic Mexican migrant streams originating from South Texas and extending to every agricultural region of the country—places like Michigan, Tennessee, Washington, and Idaho. Every spring my family and dozens of their neighbors in San Juan, Texas would gather their belongings in the various vehicles they owned—cars, trucks, and trailers—to travel together to and from the year’s contracted farm labor sites on a circular migration route of nearly 3,000 miles. On these long, cross-country journeys, it was not uncommon for them to join with other seasonal migrants from elsewhere in Texas or from other states who were also traversing these routes.

Ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers traveled with others for reasons very similar to those of migrants in the caravans today—the shared socio-economic pressures, including histories of dispossession that forced the act of migration, the protection offered by larger numbers (most often from local police and others like vigilante groups who enforced the racial order), opportunities for

⁶ Twitter permanently banned the @realDonaldTrump account on Jan. 8, 2021 and no longer allows access to the account’s tweets. The tweets referenced here were accessed before the ban, but active URLs no longer exist. There are now several independent online tweet archives, such as thetrumparchive.com, that allow for term-specific searches through over 50,000 of the accounts tweets.

care and mutual aid, and the fulfillment of a need for community and social interaction. The first two points—protection and mutual aid—were necessitated by the conditions under which this migration took place, conditions defined by the fact that “Mexican” was a racial category that was subject to Jim Crow segregation and racial violence in the Texas borderlands, what historians now refer to as “Juan Crow”. As Monica Muñoz-Martinez explains, the racial hierarchy for ethnic Mexicans after the annexation of Texas was formed and violently maintained by and through powerful agricultural producers. One of the earliest functions of the Texas Rangers formed under Stephen F. Austin in 1835 was guaranteeing the continuance of the Texas slave-based agricultural economy by policing the enslaved and trying to recapture those who attempted to cross the border into Mexico. In doing so they also terrorized ethnic Mexicans and racialized them alongside enslaved Africans, with one Ranger having remarked that Mexicans are “black as niggers...and ten times as treacherous” (Muñoz-Martinez, 11; Perkinson, 5).

As ethnic Mexican landowners were dispossessed and disenfranchised through the early 20th century, and borderland was transformed into cropland, Anglo settler-farmers from other parts of the South formalized Juan Crow measures as a form of labor control and enforced them through extralegal violence. In the early 20th century, anti-Mexican violence, including murder, at the hands of the Texas Rangers and other law enforcement agencies, became common and widespread in the borderlands, with ethnic Mexicans being “intimidated, tortured, killed by hanging, shooting, burning, and beating” (Muñoz-Martinez, 7). Public acknowledgment of this violence has often focused on the actions of “vigilantes” or “mobs,” as state and historical institutions did not acknowledge or keep records on state-sponsored violence. However, Muñoz-Martinez reveals that the estimated number of ethnic Mexican deaths is as high as several thousand between 1910-1920 alone (Muñoz-Martinez, 6-7). Rural and agricultural landscapes were key settings for anti-Mexican violence at the hands of police, with bodies often turning up in fields. Muñoz-Martinez further explains that “the frequency,

and normalcy, of anti-Mexican violence seeped far beyond Texas and encouraged a public passivity toward violent policing that has had long-standing consequences for people living near the border” (Muñoz-Martinez, 7-16).

While migrant caravans have been a long-standing part of seasonal agricultural migration, their existence and the conditions that necessitated them have been little known outside of agricultural communities or those who profit from them. During the 20th century, the term “caravan” was closely associated with another migration “crisis”—the westward migration of white dustbowl migrants or “Okies” during the Great Depression. While the conditions of their migration were widely and famously reported and documented by writers, journalists, and photographers like John Steinbeck and Dorothea Lange, labor activist Luisa Moreno brought to light the conditions experienced by ethnic Mexicans along the migrant trails in a 1940 speech in Washington D.C., in which she argued that these conditions defined the lives of ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers long before they were depicted as affecting white migrants:

Long before the “grapes of wrath” had ripened in California’s vineyards a people lived on highways, under trees or tents, in shacks or railroad sections, picking crops—cotton, fruits, vegetables—cultivating sugar beets...making a barren land fertile for new crops and greater riches...Their story lies unpublicized in university libraries, files of government, welfare and social agencies—a story grimly titled the “Caravans of Sorrow.” (Moreno, 123)

Moreno’s description makes plain that the experience and representation of migrant “caravans” has long been a part of the discourse on labor migration, and she elucidates the racial reality of agricultural labor migration in particular. The white migrant caravan symbolized the fall of white farmers to the racialized status of farmworker, and was thus seen as a pressing social problem to be solved, but the harrowing conditions associated with long-distance agricultural labor migration were

normalized for migrants of color, particularly Latinx migrants from the borderlands. This fact is emphasized by Moreno's reference to administrative "files of government, welfare and social agencies." The lack of archival evidence and the institutional omissions of the ways ethnic Mexicans traversed and worked the land were indicative of the level of exclusion migrant laborers faced. But Moreno also intimates a fact that is well known to many migrant farmworkers: that these absences enforced the racial order through the concept of residency and the corollary experience of *undocumentation*.

Residency is a key concept through which governmentality is enacted, as civil, social, and welfare services are predicated and organized according to municipal, state, and national laws and policies that determine who constitutes a particular community and/or polity. As a proxy for citizenship, municipal or state residency is usually proven through similar and overlapping documents of national belonging: birth certificates, social security cards, passports, marriage certificates, rental agreements, documents proving home or land ownership, etc. However, the conditions of seasonal labor migration made the safekeeping of identifying documents critically important but also incredibly difficult. Documents could be left behind at homes of origin or at labor camps, destroyed in accidents or in precarious living conditions like the ditch camps. And it was up to the discretion of local school officials, bankers, police, and other government officials to honor copies or demand originals. In the absence or unacknowledgment of these documents across the migrant trail, migrant farmworkers, regardless of citizenship, faced a degree of *de jure* undocumentation similar to that currently experienced by many transnational migrants. This subjected racialized migrants to the repressive capacities of the state, while preventing access to its welfare functions.

Because undocumentation exists in the negative (the *not* having is the status itself), it is incredibly difficult to track. However, the testimony of migrant farmworkers reveals the extent to

which their undocumentation shaped the need to return to the migrant trail year after year. The denial of residency and civil services effectively ensured white property rights against the act of “settling out,” or migrants’ permanent settling in the towns where they found the most work. “Settling out” usually occurred in agricultural communities with different harvest and planting schedules that could provide migrants with employment for a larger portion of the year. Permanently relocating from their original communities to the communities that offered frequent employment often caused massive restructuring of the livable space in and around their new communities, as discriminatory practices such as redlining concentrated ethnic Mexicans in specific areas or created entirely new segregated neighborhoods outside of town, often around labor camps. Muñoz-Martinez’s point about the ways that measures of social and labor control common in Texas seeped into other states is again salient here, as states such as Idaho looked to how white supremacy operated in Texas and other states with large ethnic Mexican populations, resulting in the proliferation of exclusionary Juan Crow-style laws and practices transposed to the borderlands. For migrant farmworkers, these measures and the reality of undocumentation were experienced as a broad form of confinement that kept them repeating the long journeys on the migrant trail year after year. In this view, state and federal legislation that attempts to restrict the granting of necessary documents by limiting the scope of what can actually count as proof of citizenship or residency, such as the contemporary example of Texas’s 2007 commercial drivers’ license law that defined “legal presence” in ways that kept many transnational migrants authorized to work from receiving a license. The REAL ID Act of 2005 also exemplifies the practice of state and municipal governments seizing on degrees of undocumentation as a form of social control to limit access to the status of residency for U.S. citizens (Chomsky, 95-96). As Lisa Marie Cacho reminds us, confinement is more than practices of incarceration, as it relies heavily on practices of “restriction and privilege” to constrain various forms of mobility. In this way state

practices shape political landscapes and determine who is both “criminal and disposable” (Cacho, 40.).

Urban areas also did not guarantee that residency could be achieved or maintained, given that the highways that facilitated migrant farmwork were also used as a tool of further urban dispossession for racialized communities—helping turn them into farmworkers. As the example of East Los Angeles and South Phoenix in the mid-20th century clearly show, neighborhoods in the Southwest with majority ethnic Mexican and Latinx populations were often targeted for demolition for highway construction and other “public projects” such as Dodger’s Stadium, the argument being these neighborhoods were sites of blight and could be productively repurposed. That practice proved that even when you are a legal resident of city or municipality, you could be dispossessed, displaced, and made “non-resident” (Villa, 78-90).

Instances of white agricultural migration offer a stark contrast, and Idaho’s history again proves instructive. For example, during the highly publicized “Roseworth Experiment” of 1921 “a caravan of twenty-eight families from Brooklyn, New York journeyed by car to the Roseworth tract of land, twenty-two miles from Buhl, Idaho.” Reports by the Idaho Statesman refer to these migrant families as “caravaners” and “pilgrims,” and their representation focused on the novelty of “city-folk” redefining themselves through agriculture (Ourada, 14-15). During the Great Depression, another caravan made the news in 1935 when thirty cars of farmers from Denhoff, North Dakota drove cross-country to settle near Twin Falls, Idaho. That year a local editorial declared that Idaho “loomed like the biblical garden of Eden” for white farmworkers such as these (Ourada, 26).

The treatment of these incidences in the media reveals the extent to which the act of agricultural labor migration was racialized. The members of the Brooklyn-based caravan above were seen as constituting the local and state polity *before* they even departed. The question of residency didn’t apply. Rather, it was assumed that they were transferring their residency from one community

and state to another. While some Idaho residents expressed dismay at having to share resources like water for irrigation, the white migrants in this caravan were seen as coming to *become* farmers. With seasonal agricultural labor being both racialized and classed labor, certain white migrant farmworkers certainly experienced a degree of exclusion and discrimination in Idaho agriculture while communities struggled with how to fit these workers within the social order, as periodic reports from the 1920s through the Great Depression attest (Ourada, 26). However, their treatment was reversed as changing historical and political circumstances allowed for the recuperation of what Cheryl I. Harris terms their “Whiteness as property” (Harris, 1714) which eventually led to comprehensive incorporation into the community (residency).

However, the agricultural system was set up to preclude this move for ethnic Mexican farmworkers by preventing them from ever *becoming* farmers and/or owning farmland. To cross from being a “Mexican” farmworker to a “farmer” was almost categorically impossible, particularly in Idaho, even well into the late 20th century (Baker, 4-5, 131).

Finally, in naming a life “lived on highways, under trees or tents, in shacks or railroad sections,” Moreno’s speech reveals that the ditch-camps were fundamental to the experience of labor migration for ethnic Mexican farmworkers. These “camps” were the ways migrants survived the nights along the migrant routes, with vehicles circled around the ditches or open fields off of highways while migrants slept on the ground or in makeshift housing that adapted abandoned nearby structures such as barns or chicken coops. These camps were a drastic consequence of migrants’ exclusion from local politics and systemic racism. The violence of Juan Crow along with the governmental exclusion and neglect meant that migrants were excluded from public spaces, and, in practice, many towns along the migrant routes functioned as “sundown towns”—preventing migrants from being within city limits overnight. Crucially, these conditions were often reproduced on the

farms on which they labored when farmers refused to provide housing, or could not due to over-recruitment of seasonal laborers (a common tactic used to suppress wages).

Ghosts in the Fields

In *Rightlessness: Testimony and Redress in U.S. Prison Camps since World War II*, A. Naomi Paik reveals what she calls the “afterlife” of Japanese American incarceration. Through an analysis of “aesthetic works of testimony” from the descendants of those who were incarcerated, she demonstrates how they are haunted by, and hold memories of, the trauma of the camps even though they were never physically incarcerated within them. She argues that this transgenerational trauma is represented in works such as Rea Tajiri’s film *History and Memory: For Akiko and Takeshige* (1991), a film she describes as a “ghost story” (Paik, 58). She further argues that these forms of testimony mediate embodied knowledge in ways that are not bound by the strictures or formality of legal testimony but still constitute a kind of evidence—evidence of haunting as a lived, material reality.

As ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers attest, anti-Mexican violence also has an afterlife, one that haunts them and seeps into the present, structuring the lived reality of camp carcerality on the migrant trail. This reality is also similarly represented through the aesthetic testimonial form of the ghost story. Talk to any ethnic Mexican farmworker who experienced traveling in caravans and ditch-camp living on the migrant trail during the early or mid-20th century, and eventually the conversation turns to ghosts and stories that reference the past lynching of ethnic Mexicans. These stories are a part of farmworker collective memory and their exchange becomes a kind of common knowledge in migrant farmworker communities.

In analyzing representations of the supernatural in ethnic Mexican farmworker *testimonios*, the fear of lynching is revealed to be a transgenerational trauma that is deeply intertwined with the

whole experience of agricultural labor migration. As such, these ghost stories have an ontological “realness” that makes them inseparable from other descriptions of the conditions of migration. In the minds of ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers the supernatural is not an exceptional state, but is a condition of migration shaped by the historical trauma of anti-Mexican violence. As one of the most violent expressions of racist discipline, lynching has helped produce the prison and carceral system we have today. Treating representations of the supernatural within migrant *testimonios* then not as fiction, but as mediations of their historical and material reality reveals these stories to be psychic reckonings with the violence of a carceral system that still structures the conditions of their labor. In migrant farmworker testimony, the passing down of ghost stories about lynching links past unseen and witnessable violence to their contemporary environment—demonstrating that the afterlife of lynching continues to shape migrants’ behaviors, their experience and use of space, and their conceptions of carceral violence around them. Because there is a semi-belief in these tales, they fundamentally shape the experience of carcerality and have real-world effects on how people move through or occupy space. In giving us insight into the unwitnessable they also reveal that the logics of sight and visual evidence are not sufficient to fully understand carcerality within agricultural labor migration. These particular forms of testimony demand an expanded sense of mediation that includes the sonic and the aural in conjunction with the affective.

In her *testimonio*, Herminia Quintanilla Zavala relates the stories of her deceased husband, Guadalupe Zavala, and his family. She recalls that Guadalupe would tell of the supernatural experiences of his grandfather, Don Ismael, who was a migrant during the early 20th century. One story reveals how the migrant trail could be supernaturally dangerous for single men. She tells of a large oak tree on the migrant trail outside of a town in South Texas that inspired fear in individual riders. This particular tree was said to be inhabited by a spirit that would lift men off of their horses and carry them to the top of the tree:

Everybody says that [when] they [migrants] go...it was on a horse, you know, on a caballo...when they pass [under] the tree...somebody picked them up really high. And then they put them down really slow...[back down] on the horse, you know? They came [to town] and they were [always] scared and everything. Don Ismael said, 'That's not true. I'm gonna through there, and nothing is gonna happen to me.' So he went there, and [the tree] pick[ed] him up, really slow up, and then really slow down. And [when] he came down; he came to the house, and they opened the door and he fainted there. Because he thought it was not true, you know? (Herminia Zavala, 6.29.21, 0:09-2:08)

Other variations of this tale involve migrants who came to sleep under a similar tree decades later in the ditch-camps and would awake being held aloft at the top by an unseen force before being slowly lowered to the ground. Alternatively, some migrants told of sleeping at an abandoned house at a crossroad and awaking to find themselves and their belongings being carried outside of the house into the road or field by forces unseen (Hermina Zavala, 6.29.21, 3:33-4:46). Being forcibly removed from the house echoes both the dispossession of ethnic Mexicans after the Mexican American War, and the lynch mobs who would come at night for Mexican males.

Zavala's own brush with the supernatural along the migrant trail ties the physical experience of migration (the need for sleep) with the history of anti-Mexican violence, proving the migrant trail was fraught with physical as well as psychic dangers. In her telling, the history of anti-Mexican violence at the hands of police during the early 20th century and her experience of migrant farmwork are *one narrative*:

Another story is when we...remember that the Texas Rangers, they used to take the men out and kill them--Mexican men?...Well, when my mother was, you know, I don't know if she was married or not. She was not married yet. Her brothers had to go to Reynosa, Mexico because the Rangers—Texas Rangers—was killing all the men, the Mexican men. And they

went to Reynosa and when everything was over...they came back. Grandpa [her husband Guadalupe Zavala] told us when those Rangers were taking the men out, they took Don Ismael out. But they put him in jail. And his wife was a very big lady. And she had a gun, she had a rifle. She said, "Well, I'm gonna sit here outside [the jail]. If you're gonna take my husband out [to lynch him], I'm gonna kill you." So they never took him out, and they sent him home. And my brothers, my mama's brothers came back, but one stayed in Reynosa. That's why we have family in Reynosa.

I don't know where we went to pick cotton [that year]. We passed [through] San Antonio. But before we enter[ed] San Antonio we stopped because my brother said, "I'm very sleepy. I have to stop the truck and get some sleep." So, we all [got] out of the truck and put some blankets on the floor, on the ground, and [went] to sleep. But we heard a noise coming near. It went "HUH, HUH, HUH" [deep panting]. Like that. Coming nearer and nearer and nearer. So, my brother said, 'No, this is too much. Something's coming'...So, we [got] everything in the truck, and we left. But they said that it was because they used to hang Mexican men there in that place. And we never went through that [place] again. (Herminia Zavala, 6.29.21, 10:50-15:48)

Stories such as these communicate the dangers of stopping along the migrant trail, and in doing so, articulate a relationship between migration, mobility, and confinement/carcerality. Migration and confinement are often understood as mutually exclusive or oppositional states in that one is ostensibly defined by movement and the other by its denial or circumscription. But this distinction doesn't hold for ethnic Mexican migrants on the migrant trail—people whose lives are simultaneously defined by perpetual itinerancy, and, as I argue, by forms of carcerality that structure agricultural labor migration.

In prefacing her own memory with her and her husband's family histories with the Texas Rangers, Zavala collapses the experiences of two generations with her own experience on the migrant trail, revealing not only that anti-Mexican violence at the hands of police is a foundational component of the cultural memory of ethnic Mexican agricultural labor migration, but also that the true specter of these stories is the figure of the Texas Ranger, a metonym for all law enforcement.

In each of the stories, the danger from the supernatural encounter is not the supernatural force itself (e.g., a vengeful or malevolent spirit), but rather the possible encounter with the original moment of violence that gave rise to the supernatural, such as a lynching, and the possibility of its repetition through its lingering presence. While the narrative is always presented through the experiences and subjectivity of the migrant farmworker who is narrating it, we as listeners are always conscious of the experience of the unnamed person(s) whose past trauma made the current telling possible. In other words, in ethnic Mexican communities—and especially for those who have been migrants—the fears of both the speaker and listener of these tales are always bound up with the original fear of the unnamed Mexican whose death was at the hands of, or condoned by, police, and whose trauma now supernaturally, and trans-generationally, carries on.

Zavala's suggestion that the tree in Don Ismael's tale is oak illuminates how carcerality functions in the experience and cultural memory of labor migration. In Texas, lynching sites or "hanging trees" have long been considered tourist sites.⁷ Websites documenting and advertising the different hanging trees throughout Texas abound, the majority featuring oaks. Zavala thus signals a particular relation between ethnic Mexican bodies, transportation and movement, and the experience of space. The connection to the act of lynching is furthered when we consider the tree's action: slowly lifting ethnic Mexican men up off their horses and then placing them back down. Unlike the gallows where hanging occurs when the floor is removed, the physical act of hanging a person on a

⁷ For more on lynching and tourism, see Muñoz-Martínez as well as Ken Gonzales-Day's *Lynching in the West*.

tree involved a slower death, and often required pure manpower on the other end of the noose thrown over the tree branches to hoist the victim off of the ground or horse and suspend them in the air. In this story, as ethnic Mexicans traverse space, the tree then rehearses the techniques of lynching, revealing that the landscape itself holds the memory of anti-Mexican violence, a memory that migrants cannot avoid as it structures their very movement through space—both social and geographic.

The central problematic of recognizing or representing carcerality has been that of visibility. To speak of carcerality often invokes images of specific institutions, structures, and spaces—the cell, the prison yard, the back of the squad car, the courtroom. But as Gilmore and Story argue, carcerality is not limited to the materiality of prisons or the logics of the judicial system, but actually describes a larger set of *relations*—relations that ultimately have the power to structure space and therefore make imprisonment possible. Zavala’s own experience on the migrant trail adds another sensory experience—the sonic— that allows us to explore the carceral relations of the migrant trail.

Story argues that prisons and carcerality are made of the relations between “property, work, gender, and race enacted and expressed across various landscapes” (Story, 9). As Zavala’s tale about Don Ismael demonstrates, it is the landscape itself that holds the memory of anti-Mexican police violence. Her own memory of the voice haunting her and her family’s sleep makes clear how these relations structured the ditch camps and made them into carceral space. As the story begins, Zavala’s brother’s need for sleep leads the family to set up a ditch camp on the side of the highway. But several implicit questions linger around this narrative. Why couldn’t the family stop at a hotel or somewhere else to stay? And why couldn’t someone else take over driving? The answers lie in the relationship between property, work, and race, and bring us back to the local residency policies as a way to police migrants. As Verónica Martínez-Matsuda notes in her own descriptions of the mid-century migrant trails, many agricultural communities functioned as sundown towns for ethnic

Mexicans, and driving through posed a serious risk (68-69). Nearly all ethnic Mexican farmworkers in Texas were expected to lodge close to the fields, and their presence within city limits of even agricultural communities near major metropolises was strictly policed (Martinez-Matsuda, 69). Thus, while the need for sleep appears to be the impetus for the sudden stop, the site of sleep was determined by the threat of police discipline and violence within the towns that profited off the labor of migrant farmworkers.

But even when sleeping in the open far from town, migrants could never fully escape the trauma of the continual threat of police violence. The danger that threat posed is amplified by the disembodied voice that rouses the family from sleep. As Zavala makes clear in her preface to the story of the haunting, the voice she experiences is directly connected to past murders by police, and the threat of anti-Mexican violence still lingered in her experience of agricultural labor migration decades later. Relegated to a ditch camp by this history, the experience of the voice reveals the relation between migrant encounters with carcerality and agricultural labor migration. In the experiences of the voice, the space of the ditch camp and the lynching field are collapsed through an act of transduction, a carrying over of a moment of physical pain into psychic pain and generational trauma for migrants. This act demonstrates the connection between sound and space in the construction of carceral space. The field in which they lie becomes a transducer converting the voices of the dead—and what could possibly be the last sound they made—into something that cannot be contained in the original moment of violence and that now reverberates simultaneously across time and the distance of the field. This traveling of sound is also metaphorically connected to agricultural labor migration itself, as migrant farmworkers continually traversed the nation's migrant routes and encountered this field across the 20th century and into today. This simultaneity through repetition, the continual touching of the present by past experiences of carcerality, transports Zavala and her family into the space-time of the lynching, and underscores that the transformative power of this voice is

only intelligible to those still experiencing camp carcerality. That is, it is a sound only understood as a warning and an interdiction—a warning of the continuing danger of anti-Mexican police violence, and an interdiction on leaving what we can call the confines of the migrant trail—to those within a particular kind of captive life.

As the anecdote of the “Roseworth Experiment” demonstrates, caravans and sleeping on the road were not exclusive to ethnic Mexican migrants, but the racialization of ethnic Mexicans through their labor radically altered the spaces of the caravan and the ditch camps to which they were relegated. In other words, the caravan and ditch camp was a particularly racialized experience for Zavala and her family. White migrants like those in the Roseworth Experiment (which was contemporaneous with Don Ismael’s life as a migrant farmworker) experienced the caravan as a communal and transitional space before taking possession of property. These kinds of migrants would have been able to rest in town and would have had a very different relation to the voice in the field, if they would have heard it all. That is to say, perhaps the voice Zavala heard is *only* audible to ethnic Mexicans navigating the fields and the trails as interrelated carceral spaces. If white migrants would have heard it, they would have experienced it as a fundamentally different kind of haunting—one that was particular to that field and divorced from concepts of carcerality. It would be a singular haunting focused on the ghost present and not the relations and their consequences that bring this kind of haunting about. Those relations are indicative of how all space could be transformed into carceral space for ethnic-Mexican migrant farmworkers, including the caravans and ditch camps. Indeed, with no physical evidence of the killings except the space itself, the voice is an acousmatic *memento mori* (a sonic warning of death whose source is unseen) for this particular space, yet one that is only understood in the interstices between race, carcerality, and farmwork. As Julie Beth Napolin explains in her consideration of a contemporary performance of songs recorded from incarcerated black men in a segregated Texas state prison in 1964, the voice has the power to reveal

these kinds of connections, and the way they can structure cultural memory, what she calls “pneumatic memory.” The dual meaning of pneumatic—related to both air and spirit—means that memory of the ways carcerality and labor are intertwined is atmospheric and moves through the air, often in the form of the voice and all its particularities. As she states, “The fundamental situation of these sounds—incarceration and penal labor—remains inaudible and invisible except through these resonant contingencies” (Napolin, “Pneumatic”).

There are contingencies within Zavala’s telling of this narrative that tie the disembodied voice and the experience of carceral space to the very labor of farmwork. Napolin explains that “Contingency is part of any sound. Contingency is the acoustical space of the event—the way a singer swallows, the way a breath is inhaled or exhaled, the click of tongue between words.” In Zavala’s telling, the aural qualities of the disembodied voice are rendered through her own and its contingencies. Her bodily mediation of the voice renders its sounding polysemic and the connection to farm labor overdetermined. The rhythmic, guttural sound that Zavala delivers to her listeners is more than an imitation of the voice she heard, it is the continued resonance of the cultural memory of both anti-Mexican violence and the continued carcerality of farmwork sounding through her own body, inflected with her own bodily experience and memory of labor in the fields. While the connection to farms is evident in that the family experienced the voice in a ditch camp on their way from the cotton fields, the disembodied voice is also experienced as a material consequence of the violence of its original moment. If lynching was a part of a carceral system that helped relegate ethnic Mexicans to field labor, the present material effects of that system continue to resonate in a sound that could also be the sound of Zavala’s experiences of exhaustion or heat stroke from working in the fields.

These tales demonstrate that the migrant trail constitutes a carceral space, insofar as it is policed by municipal measures of security, the criminalization of migrants, socio-legal measures of

exclusion through the property relation, and the history of anti-Mexican and anti-Black violence, including lynching, perpetrated or condoned by police (what Gilmore refers to as “state and state-sanctioned terrorism” (Gilmore, 190)).

As Zavala’s narratives demonstrate, the dangers that necessitated traveling in caravans and the experience of the ditch camps effectively “walled in” ethnic Mexican migrants, confining them to the open road on the migrant trail. While the roads were open for travel, they were not free from carceral forces that acted upon migrants during their migration, forces that defined the perilous conditions and whose direct and symbolic invocation in the narratives above recasts these “ghost stories” as narratives of intergenerational trauma and police violence. Those narratives help define carcerality in the present. Crucially, the *ghost* itself is not quite there in these narratives. They are tales of a diffuse haunting—moving and constant—with the sites of haunting marked by moments where movement and mobility are instruments of power and violence.

For ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers the goal was always to travel to the season’s fields as quickly as possible, as stopping posed physical and psychic dangers. They *had* to keep moving to avoid the specters of anti-Mexican violence and dispossession that shaped the social reality of ethnic Mexicans in the U.S. generally. However, the violence of local communities along the trail was not solely about segregation, as localities fashioned policies that made policing a precondition for farmwork.

Tomás Rivera and Vehicles as Carceral Space

In her study of the buses that transport visitors from New York City to the dozens of prisons that make up the state’s penal system—from Rikers to Attica—abolitionist scholar Brett Story argues that these vehicles function as extensions of the carceral regime by being what she calls “prison[s] in-between.” As liminal spaces that hold visitors (largely poor and working-class women of color) as

they traverse the state's highways, she argues that "riding the bus represents a spatial and temporal experience analogous to 'doing one's time' alongside incarcerated loved ones" (Story, 134).

Story explores the spatial and temporal experience of the prison bus along two axes—the physical conditions experienced on the bus itself and the psychic conditions of riding in relation to the socio-economic effects of having a loved one in prison. Citing interviews with frequent riders, analyzing online rider forums, and by riding the bus herself, Story describes the physical experience as one of prolonged discomfort and distress. Riders must contend with cramped quarters, sleep deprivation, and lack of access to food and restrooms—all of which can exacerbate chronic medical conditions for a population who historically suffers from inadequate healthcare. These arduous and uncomfortable journeys to state penitentiaries are also undertaken in the midst of financial precarity and caring for dependents, among other possible struggles, depleting reserves of money and energy along with manifold psychic and emotional consequences. As Story explains, of the women she interviewed, "All spoke in depth about the complicated negotiations of making ends meet, including living periodically or longer-term with other family members, such as sisters and parents, using food stamps as their primary means of feeding themselves and their children, and contending with enormous levels of financial debt" (Story, 115-116).

Following Ruth Wilson Gilmore's observation that 'prisons wear out places by wearing out people, irrespective of whether they have done time' (Gilmore, 17). Story explains that the physical conditions of the ride in conjunction with the socio-economic troubles associated with having a loved one behind bars, "wears out" riders through what Lauren Berlant calls a state of "ordinary crisis" or the work of maintaining everyday existence "within a context of deteriorating social, economic, and environmental conditions" (quoted in Story, 115).

This description of the way vehicles can function as "prison[s] in-between" and the frameworks of "wearing out" and "ordinary crisis" seem to equally apply to the lives of ethnic

Mexican farmworkers on the migrant trail. Like riding the prison bus, labor migration is a journey undertaken in the name of social reproduction in response to coercive forces that separate the working poor from their communities, fragmenting their lives geographically and socially. It is also a journey that extends over long periods of time and spans great physical distances, often extending across multiple states, with extreme conditions of physical discomfort—a journey that wears out migrants through the ordinary crisis of a life organized around seasonal farmwork. Precarious employment and financial security that is quite literally dependent on the weather, along with the contingencies of wage rates, accidents in the fields, lack of access to healthcare, and racial exclusion and violence and encounters with police, as previously mentioned, mark the life of migrant farmworkers as one susceptible to wearing out through “the stress of feeling acute physical insecurity and impending danger” (Story, 121).

In ethnic Mexican migrant farmworker’s own representations of the migration experience many of the conditions overlap with those of the bus to prison, and, by extension, with prisons and jails themselves. In this regard, literary representations of ethnic Mexican farmworkers such as the vignette “Cuando lleguemos” / “When We Arrive” from Tomás Rivera’s classic novel on Chicana migrant farmworkers ... *Y no se lo tragó la tierra / And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* depicts the carceral lives of “nonimprisoned” farmworkers.

Chicana literary scholar Ramón Saldívar, like myself, is concerned with how the specific socio-historical context of mid-20th labor exploitation in the fields shapes media ecologies and impacts aesthetic forms. His analysis of Rivera’s novel emphasizes two points in this regard: its relation to ethnic Mexican oral culture and the visions of collectivity and political consciousness the novel suggests.

Saldívar notes the novel’s aural qualities in that the “voice” of the ethnic Mexican migrant is both a central leitmotif and a constitutive part of the novel’s form. Partially inspired by Américo

Paredes' work on border corridos, *With a Pistol in His Hand*, the novel is grounded in Texas-Mexican oral traditions of "cultural and political resistance" (Saldívar, 79). Like the ghost stories of the migrant trail, corridos are also aesthetic works of testimony whose circulation, as Idaho community historian Ana Maria Navárez-Schachtell explains, is like "getting the news" for many borderland communities. They function as a form of mass communication that marks socio-historical realities (Navárez-Schachtell, 7.26.21).⁸ As Paredes' work makes clear, the corrido was also a form that both documented and challenged anti-Mexican violence in the borderlands.

The emphasis on the voice is also evident in the novel's experimental form. Written as a series of twelve vignettes bound by a shared framing narrative that contains a multitude of characters and voices in a structure that resists traditional narrative causality and linear progression, polyvocality emerges as a representational strategy for capturing the collective experiences of a Texas community of Mexican-American farmworkers. This polyvocality amounts to what Saldívar characterizes as "a communal oral history" and an experimental work that "retains a distinctly oral quality" (Saldívar, 75). In this way, Rivera invokes the ear and the listening sense in a work that emulates other aesthetic testimonial forms.

Saldívar has also argued that while *Tierra* represents the historically specific material and social conditions of postwar Mexican American migrant life, the novel should be read within the context of the Chicano Movement of the late 1960s/early 1970s (74). While the novel takes place a generation before the Movement, Rivera depicts what Saldívar describes as a "precritical" and "protopolitical" (82-90) communal and class consciousness that came to fruition in the Chicano Movement's broad debate on cultural identity and history and its organized resistance to many forms of labor exploitation. In reading the novel's form in relation to the socio-historical significance of the

⁸ For more on the significance of corridos in ethnic Mexican communities in Idaho and their role as testimony, see Navárez-Schachtell's *Nuestra Nuestror Corridos: Latinos in Idaho, Idaho Latino History through Song and Word, 1863-2013*.

movement, Saldívar writes that Rivera documents a particular historical time in the lives of South Texas farmworkers where “individual experience is gradually replaced by conditional solidarity with others who also suffer an inarticulated victimization” (Saldívar, 88). But recognizing camp carcerality as structuring ethnic Mexican agricultural labor migration gives a name to this “inarticulated victimization” and reveals that if *Tierra* should be read in relation to the cultural politics of the Chicano Movement, it should also be read in relation to the movement’s resistance to mass incarceration and anti-Mexican police violence. Reading the novel through the hermeneutics of sound studies and camp carcerality reveals that Rivera’s representation of the commodification of migrant labor and the dynamics between migrant subjectivity and visions of political collectivity (what Saldívar refers to as the novel’s “utopian dialectics” (84)) shows the formation of a political consciousness and images of collectivity and possible solidarities in the face of carceral power.

“Cuando lleguemos” / “When We Arrive” follows a group of Chicanx migrant farmworkers from South Texas who are traveling to work Minnesota’s beet fields. As the story unfolds, Rivera reveals the terrible conditions of Chicanx seasonal migration, as the vehicle in which the migrants are traveling turns out to be the trailer bed of an empty cattle car, forcing the forty migrants traveling to stand for the duration of their journey. Part way through, their vehicle breaks down, stranding them on the side of the highway outside of an unnamed Midwestern town. Focusing on the interiority of the migrants, the vignette is a polyvocal chorus of their interior monologues as they wait for a solution to the broke-down truck, revealing both how they make sense of the material and socio-economic conditions of migration and the ways that the carceral conditions of the migrant trail affects migrant subjectivity and sociality.

What follows in the early morning silence is a series of voices or thoughts that either speak to the conditions of migration or to the speaker's own perceptions of themselves as migrant workers:

At about four o'clock in the morning the truck broke down. All night they stood hypnotized by the high-pitched whir of the tires turning against the pavement. When the truck stopped they awakened. The silence alone told them something was wrong. All along the way the truck had been overheating and then when they stopped and checked the motor they saw that it had practically burned up. It just wouldn't go anymore. They would have to wait there until daybreak and then ask for a lift to the next town. Inside the trailer the people awakened and then struck up several conversations. Then in the darkness their eyes had gradually begun to close and all became so silent that all that could be heard was the chirping of the crickets. Some were sleeping, others were thinking. (Rivera, 144)

This is a literary representation of the literal reality for domestic farmworkers, one that sociologist Ricard Baker says defines the migration experience for Mexican-American/Chicanx farmworkers traveling to Caldwell, as he states:

Most Mexican American migrant workers come from Texas—from towns such as Eagle Pass, Pharr, and McAllen near the border...Most of them drive straight through from Texas to southwestern Idaho, arriving in May and leaving in October. They may stop for short breaks or to nap, but they do not stay in motels and they seldom eat in restaurants. Their worst fear is having car trouble. (Baker, 165)

Confined to the cramped quarters of the truck, the migrants' experiences also reminds us of Story's description of the bus to prison in that "like most [means of long-distance travel] in the United States that carry primarily the poor and working-class, it is experienced first and foremost as the imposition of physical distress" (Story, 111), but also exceed it. Early in the vignette, an unarmed migrant reflects on the impact traveling in the cattle car has on his own body as well as others:

We've been on the road over twenty-four hours. We should be close to Des Moines. Sure wish I could sit down for just a little while at least. I'd get out and lie down on the side of the

road but there's no telling if there's snakes or some other kind of animal. Just before I fell asleep on my feet it felt like my knees were going to buckle. But I guess your body gets used to it right away 'cause it doesn't seem so hard anymore. But the kids must feel real tired standing like this all the way and with nothing to hold to. Us grownups can at least hold on to this center bar that supports the canvas. (Rivera, 142)

These brief thoughts elucidate several ways in which the vehicles that make up domestic migrant caravans are spaces of exceptional carcerality. First, this brief interior monologue provides the reader with more information on the physical structure of the truck: a canvas-covered trailer bed filled with forty migrants. Lacking any seating *or even room to sit*, the standing migrants must hold on to the *bars* of the frame that secures the canvas top. This description of migrants forced to stand and packed in the back of the trailer not only conjures the image of cattle but also a packed county jail holding cell—except for the addition of children.

Within this scene children endure the same conditions of carcerality as adults. While children are obviously subjected to the carceral regime through juvenile detention and other measures, this subjection is often seen as being the result of choices (Story, 71).⁹ However, the children of ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers have *no choice* but to suffer physical distress along with the adults due to the socio-economic structure of seasonal farmwork. Like many other communities involved with agriculture, ethnic Mexican farmworkers often have larger families for a number of reasons, among them a lack of adequate healthcare and family planning services as well as a farm wage system that pays by the row or acre as opposed to hourly wages. Under this system, survival is determined by the total number of hands in the fields. As a result, children grow up in the carceral spaces of the migrant trail, a topic which will be taken up in detail later in chapters 2 and 4.

⁹ Story and Gilmore argue that the contemporary neoliberal carceral regime is structured on ideas of individual choice and responsibility. For more, see Story's study of youth community policing initiatives in Brooklyn in *Prison Land*.

Secondly, the close bodily proximity and lack of personal space means the effects of a single person's physical agony—man, woman, or child—is felt by those surrounding them, with those feelings cascading through the vehicle. This puts the migrants confined to the truck in a double-bind: to take action to alleviate their pain and discomfort may negatively affect those around them, while the physical symptoms and material effects of their discomforts may also do the same. This fact is further revealed in the thoughts of separate migrants later on in the vignette.

While the truck's breakdown is ultimately a cause for concern, one individual expresses his relief, as they are finally able to relieve themselves after more than a full day confined to the trailer: "Good thing the truck stopped here. My stomach's been hurting a lot for some time but I would've had to wake up a lot of people to get to the window and ask them to stop... Well, I'm getting off, see if I can find a field or a ditch. Must've been that chile I ate, it was so hot but I hated to let it go to waste." (Rivera, 142).

Sometime later, another rider expresses their anger at the forced bodily intimacy/contact and the inability to stop and find a restroom, after an unfortunate incident with a mother amplifies the other riders' distress:

What a stupid woman! How could she be so dumb as to throw that diaper out the front of the truck. It came sliding along the canvas and good thing I had glasses on or I would even have gotten the shit in my eyes! What a stupid woman! How could she do that? She should've known that crap would have been blown towards all of us standing up back here." (Rivera, 143)

In each instance the body's functions are known or on full display. While we aren't given a glimpse into the interiority of the mother who attempted to throw away the diaper (or at least we have no first person reference that acknowledges performing the action) the monologue describing the consequences of her choice is also a description of her in the midst of the double-bind. She is both

subjected to her own pain and discomfort as well as that of her child and is also conscious that her child's own bodily functions contribute to the overall physical distress of the journey. Her attempt to alleviate the situation for herself only exacerbates it for others, and reveals why the migrant suffering from the stomachache would choose to prolong his suffering rather than make his own bodily suffering known. Like the open toilet of a county holding cell, this exposure to bodily functions in a space of confinement again parallels the crowding of bodies and lack of privacy in other carceral spaces.

The interior monologue of the truck's driver further elucidates why any choice within this double-bind is a losing scenario, explicitly naming anti-Mexican and anti-migrant sentiments and the threat of violent police enforcement of Mexican migrant exclusion as dictating *any* choice:

Goddamn truck. It's nothing but trouble. When we get there everybody will just have to look out for themselves. All I'm doing is dropping them off with the growers and I'm getting the hell out... So long as the cops don't come by and start hassling me about moving the truck from here. Boy, that town had to be the worst. We didn't even stop and still the cop caught up with us just to tell us that he didn't want us staying there. I guess he just wanted to show off in front of the town people. But we didn't even stop in their goddamn town. (Rivera, 145)

The reader is left to infer that this Midwestern town functioned as a sundown town barring ethnic Mexicans migrants from staying overnight. The police in this town went so far as to perform this exclusion by *stopping them for not stopping* to make this status unambiguous—their presence for *any* duration, even in passing, was not welcome. To have stopped for the restroom as the man with the stomachache and the mother with the diaper needed would have imperiled the group. The safest option, then, was to leave everyone to their simultaneously personal and collective distress. The migrants in the vignette were then left with the choice to continue driving or to pitch a ditch camp along the highway, the latter choice made for them due to the truck's breakdown. But even

their presence outside of town is still enough to warrant police harassment, as the driver reveals his worry about being further “hassled” by police rather than seeing police involvement as ameliorating the situation. Rivera ends his vignette with the following migrant’s interior monologue:

When we arrive, when we arrive, the real truth is that I’m tired of arriving. Arriving and leaving, it’s the same thing because we no sooner arrive and...the real truth of the matter...I’m tired of arriving. I really should say when we don’t arrive because that’s the real truth. We never arrive (Rivera, 145).

The ellipses in this passage are dual signifiers, communicating both the exhaustion of the ordinary crisis of agricultural labor migration as well as the long-standing difficulty in describing migrant farmwork within terms of carcerality, and therefore abolition. This lack of a vocabulary for how to discuss the full spectrum of carcerality within migrant agricultural labor reframes Saldívar’s description of the “inarticulated victimization” of ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers to be a problem concerning strategies of representation of these carceral conditions as well as one of political consciousness.

Taken together these internal monologues reveal that bodies confined together on the migrant trail results in anger, psychological isolation, and physical distress. In this way, Rivera’s depiction of migrants on the road is one of “doing time” in Story and Gilmore’s formulation and again recalls Berlant’s ordinary crisis and how it encompasses ““the physical wearing out of a population in a way that points to its deterioration as a defining condition of its experience and historical existence”” (quoted in Story, 119-120). Traveling on the migrant trail and both arriving and leaving the labor camp are all experienced, both physically and psychologically as the same thing due to the fact that arriving at the season’s work site is not a reprieve from the “prison in-between” of migration, but rather a transition to another carceral space.

But for Story, the prison bus is also a carceral space because of its direct connection to prisons themselves. As she plainly states, “It [the bus to prison] exists because the prison system exists” (107). Likewise, migrant caravans and the vehicles that facilitate migrant labor are also carceral spaces because of their direct connections to migrant labor camps, the sites present yet unmentioned in the vignette’s title “When We Arrive.”

Braceros and Camp Carcerality

The *Bracero* Program has been described as “arguably the single most significant event to shape migratory labor trends in Idaho” (Dittenber, 15). Historians like Erasmo Gamboa agree in the sense that it led to an overall increase of ethnic Mexicans by solidifying ethnic Mexican farmworkers as the laborer of choice during and after WWII (Gamboa, 48-49). The program is also significant for the way it became a model for other guest worker programs for Latinx laborers, including the Puerto Rican Farm Labor Program (García-Colón, 13, 59, 66-67). But the protections offered by the program's formal agreement between the U.S. and Mexico was a double-edged sword. Provisions within the agreement set guaranteed wages and explicitly forbade formal discrimination, which ultimately allowed an avenue for resistance against the conditions within the camps and allowed the consulate to shut down or suspend the program in Idaho and Texas. But the formal inclusion of these provisions demonstrated that the Mexican government was all too aware of the longstanding carceral conditions for migrant farm laborers in the U.S. In fact, the Mexican consul had been involved in a number of previous investigations into the working conditions and strikes of Mexican farmworkers, particularly in Idaho.

The Mexican consul began investigating carceral conditions as early as 1918. In a letter dated Oct. 1st, the consul in Salt Lake City, Utah informed Idaho Governor Moses Alexander that they had received complaints from “a great number of laborers brought from Mexico by several sugar

companies to work in their beet fields in your state” (Jones & Hodges, 47). The letter lists inhumane housing conditions that “caused the regretful death of several children,” forcing work without pay, and the abandoning of workers after their contracts leaving them and their families to “remain in the fields, without pay, food, or shelter.” Most tellingly in regards to carcerality, the letter stated that when these farmworkers brought these conditions to the attention of the sugar companies or tried to improve their condition by finding work elsewhere, “they were fined and imprisoned, being subjected at the time of arrest to outrageous insults and abuses” (Jones & Hodges, 48).

While these complaints were investigated and the inspector stated that the relationship between the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company and its workers “savor[ed] of paternalism,” (Jones & Hodges, 50) little was done to improve conditions. Similar complaints continued throughout the 1920s, prompting the consul to begin investigating the broader working conditions for all Mexican agricultural laborers in the region.

But the 1930s saw a concerted effort between the state and local growers to violently maintain/enforce camp carcerality through grower vigilantism. In 1933 in Washington’s Yakima Valley growers formed vigilante groups to break striking Mexican apple orchard workers. They formed an armed mob and overwhelmed and captured 61 striking workers. Local authorities built a timber stockade for the 61 imprisoned workers that was lined with barbed wire at the top and included a catwalk for guards. Reports state that these workers were “lashed” by jail officials and then “taken for rides” upon release by vigilantes (Jones & Hodges, 74). This same year also saw vigilante and mob violence turn deadly when local police in California’s San Joaquin Valley armed growers in an attempt to break a Mexican cotton pickers strike. Growers ultimately fired into a crowd, killing two and wounding 10. Of the two killed, one was the president of the Mexican Consul’s *comisión honorífica*, or persons designated to act as honorary local consul officials, who was investigating the strike on behalf of the Mexican government (Jones & Hodges, 74).

Growers and local law authorities in Idaho who had been able to operate and expand camp carcerality with relative impunity saw the provisions in the *Bracero* agreement as a threat to their systems of labor control and lobbied heavily to curtail the provisions in practice within the state. As Gamboa notes, “Although the *bracero* program was national in scope; local, federal, and state officials tailored the federal farm labor system to meet regional labor market demands” (Gamboa, xix). Idaho maintained a relationship to *braceros* in line with its previous treatment of ethnic Mexicans during the early 20th century, continuing practices of carcerality and exploitation that exceeded those in surrounding states. When *braceros* finally made it to Idaho, they found that the provisions of their contracts were often ignored or circumvented, and *braceros* found themselves in living conditions that were similar or worse to the conditions that the Mexican consul had labeled intolerable and inhumane decades before. In terms of labor, with the Caldwell Labor Camp functioning as a labor clearing house, *braceros* would be utilized by multiple farmers in the area, raising many opportunities for increased labor abuse and exploitation. While the official agreement barred Mexican nationals from working outside of agriculture, in practice in the Northwest “*braceros* worked in an array of jobs being handed from one farmer to the next, even going as far as being employed as laborers in private homes” (Sifuentez, 25).¹⁰ *Braceros* were even shuffled between states, leading to revelations about the particularly carceral conditions within Idaho. Mario Sifuentez notes that “On the whole, *braceros* in Oregon tended to receive better wages and housing than their counterparts in Idaho. The *braceros* noticed the difference, particularly when “they worked in Idaho one week and in Oregon the next” (Sifuentez, 26). With *braceros* “at the beck and call of farmers” (Ogden, 137), they performed agricultural labor in the fields and in forestry, along with railroad work, firefighting, and domestic labor in a system that echoed plantation slavery.

¹⁰ Gamboa notes that 20 percent of all *braceros* contracted to work in the U.S. between 1943-1947 (46,954 workers officially) were brought to the Pacific Northwest.

But before these conditions in U.S. migrant labor camps or the now infamous carceral practices at the border that included *braceros* stripped naked and sprayed with the carcinogenic insecticide DDT, *Bracero testimonios* paint a picture of *bracero* recruitment and contracting *within* Mexico as also overdetermined by confinement and the logics of carcerality.¹¹ In his *testimonio* recorded by Mario Sifuentez, Juan Contreras, a former *bracero* who was contracted out of Mexico City, describes his experience as a member of one of the first groups of *braceros* to enter the U.S. At this early stage U.S. labor contractors met prospective *braceros* at Mexico City's Buena Vista station where they would sign contracts for work in specific states and then be ushered onto a train that would take them on to the U.S.-Mexico border. Contreras remembers that the soundtrack to these formalities was "Las Golondrinas"—a common funeral dirge for migrants—played by a mariachi band in the station. In addition to the song, a Catholic priest moved through the crowd blessing migrants and the train that would carry them north. This somber atmosphere led to considerable unease among the migrants which was only exacerbated by the presence of armed guards on the train. As Contreras recalls:

Once you were on the train you had officially immigrated. There were Mexican soldiers guarding us. So that no one would jump off... That is when people came up with the idea that we were going to war [WWII]. That is when a lot of people jumped off the train. They didn't want to go to war. (Sifuentez, 16)

The circumstances Contreras recounts are almost literary in their drama and symbolism, but the close association between labor migration, a complete loss of agency (conscription), confinement, and death in his memory cannot be ignored. Contreras's statement that immigration began on the train marks the railcar as a space distinct from the station or even the tracks within Mexico that carried it. As soon as the migrants had contractually sold their labor to the U.S., the train itself

¹¹ DDT stands for dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane.

became a microcosm of camp carcerality, essentially a compacted labor and prison camp.

Interestingly, the train's railcars, in their geometry and housing of bodies, closely resembled the "barracks" FSA camps like the Caldwell Labor Camp used for housing migrants—the ultimate destination for many of the *braceros*.

But the most obvious evidence of camp carcerality operating on the train was the presence of the armed soldiers. Their presence offered a stark contrast to the experience of migration many of the *braceros* had days or even minutes before their arrival at Buena Vista Station. In its recruitment efforts, the Mexican government offered a free train ride to Mexico City from anywhere in the country for those interested in the program. Contreras himself had traveled from the state of Michoacán to La Ciudad as a "free" (unguarded) train passenger just before his arrival at Buena Vista station. Now, a similar train on the same northbound tracks was experienced as a markedly different space, one that demanded conditions of surveillance and confinement to "guarantee" that they made it onto foreign soil.

The presence of soldiers on the train was discordant with *braceros*' expectations of the conditions of labor migration under their contract and their ideas about the relationship between their labor and citizenship. The soldiers on the train, while sharing the same citizenship as the migrants, were enforcing a power dynamic between the *braceros* and U.S. growers, a dynamic that growers already argued left the *braceros* with too much power according to the stipulations of the international agreement. The official agreement stipulated guaranteed wage standards, protections from discrimination, and "guarantees of transportation, living expenses, and repatriation established in Article 29 of the Mexican Labor Law" (Ourada, 43). These provisions ostensibly frame the event of contracting as an act of legal protection, but the lived experience of the agreement in practice proved that camp carcerality was simultaneously embedded in and superseded the law and these contracts—proving that contracts could neither negate nor preclude conditions of camp carcerality. In

fact, it was the signing of the contract and its guarantees by both the U.S. and Mexico of transportation that manifested camp carcerality, a fact emphasized by the presence of the American labor contractors in conjunction with the Mexican soldiers.

The frisson of anxiety that ran through the migrants on the train was the result of their struggling to make sense of a situation and a space that had unexpectedly been made carceral. The *braceros'* fears that they had been conscripted into an army is not an irrational interpretation of their circumstances given the history of imperial conquest between the U.S. and Mexico and the history of the carceral treatment of migrant agricultural laborers within the U.S. With less than 8 months between the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the signing of the *Bracero* agreement on August 8th, 1942, it's possible that many thought they would be shipped off to war against the Japanese. After all, some viewed the *bracero* agreement as "Mexico's contribution to the war effort" and the *braceros'* physical bodies in the U.S. officially aligned Mexico with the Allied Powers (Dittenber, 12). Faced with conditions of carcerality, the migrants were now unsure of exactly *how* their bodies would be used across the border and what other borders they might have to cross. For those *braceros* who traveled to the Pacific Northwest, the irony is that they would in fact meet the "enemy" in the form of incarcerated Japanese Americans who were labeled as such, and they would end up living and working alongside them under shared conditions of confinement in accordance with camp carcerality.

As Contreras's testimony reveals, *Braceros* who boarded that northbound train had gone, in an instant, from understanding their travel through Mexico as a right guaranteed to them by the state to being estranged from their understanding of rights and citizenship and the very idea of labor as separate from carcerality. This estrangement forced them to flee the train because its carceral conditions vitiated the labor contract but also *introduced* the concept of escape, a theme and action that would be repeated in the labor camps of the Northwest through what was known as

“bootlegging,” or abandoning their contracts and the conditions of the labor camps for work on private farms as essentially undocumented workers (Sifuentes, 25).

The transformation of the train into a carceral space epitomizes a central feature and seeming contradiction of camp carcerality: confinement manifested through mobility, a feature previously discussed in the caravans and ditch camps of Chicano/Mexican American migrant farmworkers. Like Rivera’s cattle car, the imperative and means of migration again become the means of confinement and exclusion. Just as the trucks and other vehicles used by Mexican Americans to traverse the U.S. became sites of confinement to and from migrant labor camps such as Caldwell, the railcar at Mexico City’s central rail station in this account is similarly transformed through the act of contracting. As previously noted, many *braceros* did not have a background in farmwork, especially those from major cities. The act of contracting conferred the status of migrant farmworker, a status that at once competes with and reconfigures the status of citizenship for racialized farmworkers in establishing confinement as a (pre)condition for migrant farmwork. In other words, camp carcerality is enacted the moment a subject becomes or is hailed as a migrant farmworker, an action that can take place far from the fields, which in Contreras’s case took place 2,600 miles from the fields of Oregon and Idaho in which he would labor, and transformed him into carceral subject while he was still on Mexican soil. Thus, once the status is conferred, either legally through guestworker programs, or socially through racialization as a migrant farmworker, confinement becomes a (pre)condition of agricultural labor (a process we will see again with confinement being a precondition of farm labor for incarcerated Japanese Americans and Japanese Latin Americans transported to the U.S during WWII in the next chapter).

Braceros were subject to camp carcerality the moment they signed their contract, regardless if they were yet in the United States. Camp carcerality, then, is a transnational phenomenon fashioned alongside other U.S. interventions and efforts to reorient economies in Latin America.

Camp carcerality is a tool that reoriented space and resources within Mexico according to its logics in order to meet the objectives of U.S. capitalism. In this instance, it operated in Mexico to ensure its commodities—racialized, confined bodies—made it across the border where they could be subjected to camps.

Conclusion

In revealing the carceral conditions of the migrant trail, my goal is to not only highlight the brutality and inhumanity of the conditions ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers experienced and continue to experience, but also to expand our understanding on what constitutes a carceral geography by revealing the astonishing extent to which the relations that govern U.S. agriculture unfix and diffuse the “prison” through the construction of simultaneous micro (the space of individual vehicles) and macro (the municipalities along each and every migrant route) carceral space. In light of this, migrant farmworkers are not only workers in terrible conditions, they are *unfree* and vulnerable to *rightlessness* from the moment they commit to performing farmwork. They experience carcerality through structures of immobility long before they reach the fields and before they perform any work, as the examples of both Chicana/Mexican American and Mexican *bracero* farmworkers makes clear. Recognizing that the migrant trail is governed by police violence and the historical memory of extrajudicial killings, as well as conditions that overlap with the lived experience of jail or prison, grounds the analysis of ethnic Mexican migrant agricultural labor migration within an abolitionist framework. As Gilmore explains, “prison is not a building ‘over there,’ but a set of relationships that undermine rather than stabilize everyday lives everywhere” (Gilmore, 242). This remains true for migrant farmworkers in their experience of carceral space during their labor migration. While there are geographically fixed spaces of carceral enclosure for migrant farmworkers, the enormous scale of the migrant trail reframes Gilmore’s insight to say that

for farmworkers carceral space is not fixed in structures in the fields, but is experienced in the nearly infinite “everywhere” of the migrant trail. In this way, carcerality within agricultural labor migration is revealed to have a recursive property, as its repeated application to different iterations and scales of space (from migrant vehicle, to ditch camp, to labor camp, to the fields), gives camp carcerality the potential for a variety of constructions, all of which are differently predicated on structures of immobility. Relationships between migrants and the state at multiple scales, and the resulting relationships to citizenship, property, and violence, ensure that carcerality is experienced in the beds of the trucks or on train cars in which migrants ride, in the towns, fast food restaurants, and gas stations on which they depend, and in every interaction with police, both past and present. Understanding this recursive property helps us to understand how being subjected to carcerality is actually a precondition for farmwork.

As this chapter demonstrates, the migrant trail and its carceral supervision operates as a kind of spatial fix to crises of agricultural labor and capital accumulation and to the danger that racialized migrant farmworkers pose to white property rights. As Zavala’s *testimonio* on a lifetime of migrant farmwork reveals, the relationships that structure this fix are designed to be renewed perennially or seasonally, are codified in practices of undocumentedation, and reified in the material experience of migration, transforming the carceral spaces of the migrant trail into nodes on the spectrum of camp carcerality and the U.S. carceral regime.

This chapter has also illuminated the importance of the U.S.-Mexico border and the borderlands to the historical development and expansion of camp carcerality. As a facet of the U.S.’s carceral regime, it is a transnational phenomenon that can be enacted anywhere in line with the U.S.’s global practices of confinement and imprisonment. But as the *testimonios* of ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers reveal, camp carcerality’s relationship to the global began in the borderlands with the confinement and policing of ethnic Mexican migrants and spread throughout the U.S.’s

agricultural regions. Recognizing camp carcerality as a tool for labor and border control and its impact on the lives of ethnic Mexican migrants reformulates Gloria Anzaldúa's famous formulation of the border as a single, large wound (Anzaldúa, 1) to the border continually "bleeding" *into* the nation, with the peoples and culture of the borderlands, as well as the carceral logics of "border enforcement" flowing through the migrant trails and pooling in agricultural communities.

The continuing relationship between camp carcerality, rural agricultural regions far from the border, the borderlands, and U.S. policies on migration was recently made evident in the violent capture and deportation of Haitian migrants from South Texas in September 2021. Images of Border Patrol on horseback with whips assaulting Haitian migrants made national headlines. These images certainly resonate with ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers' *testimonios* on police violence and reveals the continuity between the violence of the Texas Rangers on ethnic Mexican migrants and the U.S. Border Patrol's current treatment of Haitian migrants—a population who also has a history of being subjected to degrees of camp carcerality through refugee and asylum camps. The images of violence against Haitian migrants came months after Idaho governor Brad Little announced that he was sending Idaho state police to the Texas borderlands to assist with border security. The move was announced after the governors of Arizona and Texas pleaded for help resolving the ongoing migration "crisis" at the border (Norimine, 6). As a state whose agricultural economy depends on the "border" for both its labor needs and to structure its own cultural/racial order with ethnic Mexicans making up the state's largest minority group, it is not surprising that Idaho would have a vested interest in ensuring that all migrants continue to experience carcerality at the southern border.

CHAPTER 2

THE PRISONER-FARMWORKER CONFLATION: JAPANESE AMERICAN INCARCERATION IN THE CULTURAL MEMORY OF MEXICAN MIGRANT FARMWORKERS

Introduction

This chapter examines the interrelation between ethnic Mexican and Japanese American farmworkers in the Pacific Northwest. I continue my analysis of the case study of the Caldwell Labor Camp in Caldwell, Idaho, focusing on how the camp was used as an ancillary site of Japanese incarceration during WWII through its connection to the Seasonal Leave Program, a reprieve program where incarcerated Japanese Americans could leave the main concentration camps by becoming migrant farmworkers. I argue that Japanese incarceration in Caldwell became a kind of folktale that frames the ethnic Mexican experience in the labor camp. For Mexican farmworkers, the conditions of Japanese American incarceration never ended: they live in the afterlife of internment. I build my argument by beginning with an excerpt from my mother, Nora Diana Gallion's, *testimonio* on her first memories of the Caldwell Labor Camp. I then turn to the case of Teresa Maebori, a Japanese American born in the camp in 1945 while her parents were incarcerated farmworkers there. Taken together their testimonies reveal that racialized migrant farmworker populations do not experience the carceral conditions of their labor as isolated socio-historical events, but in relation to other farmworker populations who labored under past carceral regimes. Moreover, these connections to past carceral regimes are not only intellectually understood but are *felt* in their relation to the materiality of the camp itself.

To examine migrant labor camp's infrastructural elements, I focus on the cultural memory of barbed wire along the Caldwell Labor Camp's perimeter. I argue that barbed wire enclosures in agriculture produce new subjects based on new definitions and ideological structures of belonging that are simultaneously rooted in, yet exceed, the structures of cultural memory. Barbed wire's

material history and its ideological functions are imbued with particular psycho-social resonances that give a social meaning to agricultural spaces, partially through how people perceive the wire *itself* as a social site.

Nora Diana Gallion's Testimonio

When I was about eleven, my dad drove us from Texas to Caldwell, Idaho. But in those years segregation was very prevalent. So, we were not allowed to live within the white city limits of Caldwell, Idaho. We had to drive 10 miles out of the city limit, then take this gravel road that became steeper and steeper and steeper. And, again, I was very traumatized. Because I thought for sure our car was going to roll down that gravel road because it became so steep, and my dad had to really gun the...you know, press on the gas pedal, so that our car would keep going up this gravel road that was very slippery. So, we finally get to the top right? I'm like, "Okay, we're still alive." And at the top of that gravel road was this encampment that was called "El Campo." And it was surrounded by at least four barbed wire fences. It was surrounded by barbed wire. And it looked just like a prison camp.

It was four rings of barbed wire, and it went all around that living community called "El Campo." It had iron doors. You can clearly see this had been a prison camp. We got there, and I was terrified. I was like, "I'm going to have to live in prison." So, you first lived in what was called the barracks, the barracks area. In the barracks area there were these long buildings--one room shanties. In each barrack, everything was in one room, matter how big or small your family was, you'd stay in that one room. And we had communal showers that we had to go take showers in. So everybody went to the communal showers. And, so to me, that was prison camp. There were actual bullet holes in the walls. So, there's no way around it: I knew that at one point that had been a prison camp for *someone*. But now it was the only

place that Mexicans were allowed to live. So, we had to live there. So, you lived in the barracks until you could apply to live on the side of the camp where there were actual houses. And, then, once it was your turn, which took a while, I can't remember, six months? And then the manager of the place would say, "Oh, there's a house opening. I'm going to take you to see it." And they would. You know, Dad would pack us in the car; the man would let us see it. And he would say, "Don't worry, I'm going to paint differently in the inside and the outside. It's going to be real cozy." Ha! And, so, it was not as scary as living in the barracks because it was an actual house. But it was still surrounded by barbed wire. (Nora Gallion, 5.21.18, 05:39-10:48)

There are several refrains within Nora's first memory of the Caldwell Labor Camp: her reminders to her audience of the presence of barbed wire; her use of the term "El Campo;" and her insistence that labor camp was also a *prison camp* in another carceral regime. While barbed wire has been commonly associated with state oppression, confinement in prisons, and transnational migration and asylum (Amnesty International's logo is barbed wire wrapped around a candle), Nora's memory of barbed wire surrounding the Caldwell Labor Camp offers insights into the carceral (sub-infra) social relations between Caldwell and the migrant workers on which they rely.

There But Not There: Barbed Wire and Camp Carcerality

In and of itself, the presence of barbed wire in agricultural spaces is not unusual. In fact, scholars credit barbed wire as single handedly ensuring the mass settlement of the land between the Mississippi River and the Rockies by ending the practice of open cattle grazing and allowing for the development of modern farm practices and farm culture. More than the railroads and the steam engine, barbed wire became the material facilitator of the ideology of manifest destiny (Liu, 8; Razac 14).

Patented in 1874 by Illinois farmer J. F. Glidden, it was first an agricultural tool primarily used to fence off fields from free grazing cattle (Razac, 5; Liu, 37).¹² But as this history shows, agriculture has never been a “neutral” activity; it has always been an integral part of U.S. colonialism and empire, from early settler colonialism to slavery to current border policies like the use of H2A visas for migrant farmworkers. And agricultural tools have been adopted to meet the continually changing needs of state building and capital.

As a technology, barbed wire is incredibly simple, consisting of braided threads of iron whose ends have been beveled to form barbs with anywhere between 7 to 19 barbs per meter (Razac, 5, 40). However, it is this simplicity that has made it ubiquitous across agriculture, military, and prison geographies. Key to its portability across these spheres is the fact that it differs from other physical barriers like walls that demand focus on their materiality. For what makes up a wall but the strongest and most durable materials that make a statement with their density and the contrast between their materiality and its effect on the space around it. In other words, other barriers are designed to define geography. But as Olivier Razac makes clear in his political history of barbed wire, *this* barrier is designed to be hard on the *body*: “Barbed wire is intended for living beings. Wooden fences bar space, but they are not specifically conceived to assault the living being. Boards and posts have a role with respect to space: they separate. On the other hand, barbed wire has an active relationship with bodies: it removes and alienates” (Razac, 84).

Razac notes that barbed wire’s manufacturing process was refined in its early years to minimize physical harm to bodies. Its first iteration was too harsh on domestic animals and inflicted bodily harm that could eventually kill (Liu, 34-35). In the 20th and 21st centuries, this engineering process has been reversed to continually improve its ability to maim, leading to offshoots like razor

¹² While Glidden’s patent became the most successful version of commercially manufactured barbed wire, there is evidence of similar fencing being used in U.S. agriculture as far back as the 1850s.

wire (literally straight razors affixed along steel wire). But throughout its use, barbed wire's relation to bodies has remained the same: it repels because it is designed to *enmesh*, and the fear of entanglement keeps people away from the spaces it demarcates. It became a staple of military defenses during WWI precisely due to this attribute. It was deadly in its ability to entangle those who came in contact with it, and the image of dead soldiers caught in the mesh of barbed wires above the trenches became the enduring symbol of the war. Rather than being an impenetrable obstacle like a wall, its simplicity, lightness, and seeming permeability suggested that it could be easily overrun, but contact with the wire proved more difficult, as it enmeshes bodies by literally getting under their skin. This piercing alienates those who come into contact with the wire by removing them from the geography that the wire defines, that is an interior/exterior dichotomy. To be pierced and caught on the wire is to be neither in the interior nor exterior, but to be caught on the periphery. In this way, it removes by trapping bodies in liminal space.

This feature is an important part of Nora's understanding of what the barbed wire signified during her first experience inside the Caldwell Labor Camp. The camp was already overdetermined as a liminal space in her description of the gravel road leading up to it and the fact that she was hyper aware that the campsite was "far" from the interior space of Caldwell's city limits. The gravel road signified that her destination was not a part of the interior (city limits)/exterior (fields) duality that defines Caldwell's geography. Neither town nor field, the camp functioned as a hybrid of both. In traveling to the camp, the relation between it and the city limits is revealed as one of a spatio-racial order that meant being outside of the "white city limits" already made her a racial "other," but the presence of barbed wire around the labor camp further complicated the relationship between space, labor, and her body. If she was already a racial "other" outside of the camp, what was she inside? The answer lies in barbed wire's other attributes. Part of barbed wire's ability to alienate comes from its origins in animal husbandry and the psychological effect this produces. As Razac explains, "More

precisely, [barbed wire] produces a distinction between those who are allowed to retain their humanity and those who are reduced to mere bodies...The technical polyvalence of barbed wire—its capacity to repel any living thing, whether a cow or a dog—produces a kind of shock when it is used to enclose people, shaking their certitude that they are human. It confirms their fate: like beasts, they are to be worked or slaughtered” (Razac, 85, 89). Nora knew that her family had traveled to the camp to work, but the sight of the wire was her first realization that she was about to be enmeshed in something larger than her family’s time in the beet fields. Nora was accustomed to the sight of barbed wire in agriculture, as Texas was one of the earliest and largest markets for its sale, largely due to the need to corral the infamous Texas Long-Horn steer (Liu, 56) and her family’s labor migration throughout Texas gave her plenty of views of various agricultural fields. But inside the wire at the Caldwell Labor camp was the first time she was confronted with the process of dehumanization that was associated with her family’s labor. Her family had braved the 2,000 mile journey on the migrant trail from South Texas, with its previously mentioned carceral conditions, to again be faced with carcerality manifesting through movement. For barbed wire is also a tool to increase labor productivity by allowing movement within its enclosure. As Razac explains, “Productivity depends on the efficient management of flux, and the ordering of space must ensure the greatest control possible over circulation, at the same time allowing for freedom of movement to the greatest possible extent” (Razac, 106). This is true for Nora Gallion, for whom the barbed wire encircling the camp signified an interdiction on leaving, but remembers having to move between different spaces within the camp (the barracks, the showers, the common areas, etc.).

But perhaps more pressing on Nora’s mind was barbed wire’s ability to conceal space as well as demarcate it. As scholars of the social history of barbed wire have pointed out, enclosing is not only a spatial but a socio-political act that makes social distinctions concrete (Razac 73; Netz 102; Liu 18). In the case of enclosing people and whole populations, the wire exacerbates social

distinctions to such an extent that it can come to signify an interdiction on looking into the enclosure, as if seeing inside would necessitate confinement of the subject viewing. The effect of this interdiction renders the site of enclosure *almost invisible*—while making the bodies of those enclosed within it *more visible*. While those close to the wire can physically *see through it*, at a distance the wire's literal thin materiality renders it invisible to the eye, a key reason it has been so heavily deployed in military geographies—if you can't see it at a distance, you can't properly defend against it. When the bodies that attempt to cross it become enmeshed they are made more visible in their suspension on the wire and poses they must strike while trying to scale it. The wire is materially there and yet a metonym of camp carcerality in that it can remain invisible at a distance while also drawing attention to the visibility of migrants and what is perceived as their negative actions--trying to cross the wire into non-carceral spaces.

For those not enclosed within the perimeter of the wire, its deployment in physical space *must* be rationalized as a necessity. It has to be *there* and not *here* for a reason; otherwise those not enclosed by the wire must grapple with the reality that the wire is not designed for specifically racialized bodies, but *every* body. To fully apprehend the reality within the wire becomes a physical and psychic danger, as to know the interior is to enmesh *yourself* in a system that leaves your body vulnerable to the wire's piercing. Here, the wire functions as a translation machine, translating back to the white farming community of Caldwell that their capital accumulation necessitates infrastructures of physical and psychological pain that transform the relation between laborers and *community* as those who can be pierced by the wire and those who cannot.

For farmworkers, the wire is a mark of the perverse psychology of camp carcerality, as this dichotomy of being invisible to the outside community within the wire, but being hyper visible when making contact alienates them from their present, for the wire's porous nature allows you to see

beyond the wire to continually imagine “what could have been” or “what was” or “what could be” if the migrant agricultural labor camp system did not exist.

This ability to mark social distinctions through the ambiguation of space (where is the wire and where I am in relation to it?) is most clearly seen in the way barbed wire was deployed in the camps that defined WWII, both in Europe and in the U.S. As Razac explains about Nazi concentration camps, “The central element of [a] camp’s architecture was the barbed-wire fence...the camp was not a camp properly so called until it was surrounded by barbed wire” (Razac, 52). His reference to a “camp proper” necessitating the wire for the space to be fully understood as a concentration camp solidifies barbed wire as an integral part of camp aesthetics and camp carcerality, but he goes on to argue that the camps were able to exist across different landscapes (both near cities and in rural, sometimes agricultural space) precisely *because* their construction was modeled after the wire that surrounded and ran through them: light yet durable, easily deployed, maintained, and removed, and at once visibly opaque yet clear in their relation to bodies. He states that, “Even an immense [camp] was constructed in such a way that it could disappear from *sight* and *memory*. It was there, but it was not there” (Razac, 53; emphasis mine).

This quality of “being there, yet not there” was also in full effect at the Caldwell Labor Camp, for in addition to marking the space of the camp and the intention to expel and confine, the camp’s barbed wire was also intended to make the camp invisible to the white Caldwell community. For many within the city limits of Caldwell, the wire was a vexed signifier in that it was recognized as both a part of agricultural life and of carceral spaces. The function of the camp and the experiences of those within it was such a mystery, that some even assumed that it was, in fact, a prison. Former camp resident M. Jeanette Archuleta-Callsen, who grew up in the Caldwell Labor Camp, recalls how her family was asked to clarify the opacity of the camp. “You know, my brother, he had some friends that would ask him, ‘Well, what time do they close the gate at the labor camp?’ And my brother

would say, ‘What gate? We're not, you know, caged-in!’ And so that was their belief that you know, that there were a lot of killings and murders out there” (Archuleta-Callsen, 07.03.21, 12:37).¹³

Archuleta-Callsen and her extended family remember the camp quite differently than Nora Gallion and the Zavalas. The questions about the camp and the perception of it as a place of extreme violence encapsulate each of the wire’s distinct functions: to mark spatial as well as social distinctions; to expel, to confine, and to conceal a space and what happens within. And the wire’s liminal quality was also imparted to the Caldwell Labor Camp and its place in the town of Caldwell and the greater Treasure Valley. It is a space that is assuredly there in that its presence cannot be denied due to the material benefits derived from the migrant laborers who inhabited it, but wasn’t *there* in that it could not be fully apprehended by those outside of its walls. It is this relationship between material, space, and bodies that has made barbed wire a key piece of agricultural and carceral infrastructure, but it was the sudden overlap of these two areas that impressed itself on Nora’s memory. As Ruth Wilson Gilmore reminds us in *Abolition Geography and the Problem of Innocence*, infrastructure is something that is both ideological and material; a concretization of thoughts, feelings, and affiliations.¹⁴ It was the concretization of the relationship between her body and barbed wire’s material and ideological functions that Nora sensed in her first experience in the Caldwell Labor Camp and is why barbed wire figures so prominently in her memory. The wire translated capital’s demands for rural carceral labor by establishing a material relationship between bodies, labor, race, and space that confounded young Nora, and changed her relationship with farmwork itself, as evidenced through her use of the term, “*El Campo*.”

¹³ The cultural memory of the Caldwell Labor Camp’s perimeter is highly contested. Archuleta-Callsen and her sister Elizabeth Lerma refute that barbed wire and gates were ever present at the Caldwell Labor Camp. I give equal weight to both of these divergent memories of the camp site in the following chapter, however, in this section I consider the presence of barbed wire as both historical and symbolic evidence.

¹⁴ My reading of Gilmore’s arguments on infrastructure is in line with Nikhil Pal Singh’s interpretation of Gilmore’s writings on “infrastructure of feelings” that he expressed as a discussant with Gilmore at the Intra-Disciplinary Seminar Lecture, *Abolition Geography*, at The Cooper Union on Oct. 22, 2022. During his comments Singh described Gilmore’s contribution to infrastructure theory as allowing us to see the ways that physical infrastructure is a “literal concretization of thoughts and affect.”

El Campo

It's important to note that within her recollection she may be conflating the Caldwell Labor Camp with another labor camp in Mountain Home, ID, a camp 70 miles from Caldwell that she and her family also lived and labored in during their 30 years in the region. However, her brother, Marcus G. Zavala, remembers other infrastructural features that added to the impression of Caldwell as a carceral space, and he recalls that these features and their impact on the experience of space were not limited to Caldwell, but existed in many other labor camps in the region. He recalls:

We lived in, like, barracks. You know, the barracks? The same board outside is the same board inside [no insulation], right? It's just...there's a prison light in the middle [of the labor camp], you know? They had that type of setup in a lot of places where we would go up to—not only Caldwell. We would go up to Washington and Oregon and work the apples. We would do the cantaloupe, oranges, grapefruits, lemons and limes in Texas. In Idaho it was mostly either potatoes or beets. But it was the same [labor camp conditions] everywhere.”

(Marcaus G. Zavala, 4.18.21, 02:21-05:45)

The literal translation of *el campo* from the Spanish means “field” or “rural.” However, in the case of ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers the term references a kind of social gestalt (a whole that is more than its parts) that is made up of their cumulative and collective experiences during their labor migration. As anthropologist Peter Benson explains in his study of ethnic Mexican tobacco farmworkers in North Carolina, “campo” can refer not only to space but the whole farm labor *system*, with farmworkers using it to describe various attributes of their lives in the fields, including their meager wages, inhospitable living conditions, and their relations with their employers and the greater community around their sites of labor. For the workers in Benson’s study, all of these conditions are individually and collectively “*muy campo*” (Benson, 589-590). Benson writes:

It is as if campo were not just this or that thing, but the social condition of farm labor itself, characterized by interlocking forms of subordination and marginalization. When they find a job in construction, a restaurant, or an office, anything not farm labor, they say it is “outside of the campo” and regard it as a socioeconomic advance, not just because of higher wages but because it extricates them from a situation largely experienced as embarrassing and dispossessing. The difficulty of manual tobacco work, the neglected condition of labor camps, and the meagerness of agricultural wages each is stingingly indicted as campo...Use of the term conveys an experiential aspect of farm labor, the feeling of being "other" and on the "outside" that is produced and naturalized in relations of economic exploitation.”

(Benson, 590; 598)

For Benson, “Campo” refers to the social field that is farmwork and the experience of being “othered” through race and class, but I argue that it is used by migrant farmworkers like Benson’s interlocutors in North Carolina and Nora Gallion and Marcus Zavala to describe the system of camp carcerality that works to define the very social field of farmwork. The interlocking components of the housing conditions, camp infrastructure such as barbed wire along camp perimeters and lighting, and the farm wage system work in lockstep to turn the experience of migrant labor camps into an experience of carceral space. Campo then doesn’t just refer to the feeling of being “othered” but a particular type of “othering” that is a result of camp carcerality that I term the prisoner-farmworker conflation.

Prisoner Farmworkers

In her brief description of her first experience within the Caldwell Labor Camp, Nora Diana Gallion uses the phrase “prison camp” 4 separate times. But a prison camp for whom? While her memories of barbed wire certainly depict the camp as site of confinement, the wire and her refrain

that the site was a prison camp are also a reference to the fact that the Caldwell Labor Camp was a site for Japanese incarceration during WWII—a fact that many Mexican American farmworkers in the region still use as a primary descriptor for the camp today.

In her own *testimonio*, Hermina Zavala recalls that she learned of the camp’s connection to Japanese incarceration through a conversation with the clerk of the labor camp’s “company store,” known colloquially as *la tiendita*. In her testimony she states that knowledge of the institutional history of the Caldwell Labor Camp and its ties to other carceral regimes circulate within the community by word of mouth:

I used to believe they made [the Caldwell Labor Camp] for Mexicans to go to work in the fields. But no, it was made for the Japanese in World War Two. They put all the Japanese families there in the labor camp. I didn't know that until they [told] me that—that it made for them” (Hermina Quintanilla Zavala, 01.19.23, 09:42).

Zavala maps a carceral genealogy in her telling of how she learned of how Japanese Americans came to be in the Caldwell Labor Camp. Her revelation that she “used to believe” but doesn’t any longer that the camp was intended solely for Mexicans speaks not only to her beliefs that the carceral conditions of the camp were purposeful, but that her labor in Caldwell was performed in the shadow of one of the most significant racialized mass incarcerations of the 20th century.

In a private group dedicated to the Caldwell Labor Camp and its current iteration as Farmway Village on a popular social media site, there are multiple threads where former residents discuss the camp’s connection to Japanese incarceration. While the reality is that the Caldwell Labor Camp was originally built by the now defunct Farm Security Administration as part of a nation-wide labor camp system consisting of over 110 permanent and temporary camps to house displaced white workers during the depression and was then used to house Japanese American prisoner farmworkers through the Seasonal Leave Program, tellingly, many group members insist that the camp was built with the

intended purpose of housing incarcerated Japanese Americans, but that it was comparable in size and scope to Minidoka, the largest concentration camp for Japanese Americans in Idaho. Some former camp residents on the thread refer to the camp unequivocally as a concentration camp, internment camp, or a prison and in doing so frame the camp as the western equivalent of the eastern Minidoka in Idaho.

In explaining their personal knowledge of the camp's origins, one commentator wrote: "We lived at the camp 1965-66. We were told that the buildings were first put up to move Japanese from the coast, for their safety I suppose." In the same thread another commentator chose to explain the significance of the term "internment" while describing his beliefs on the camp's connection to Japanese Americans: "Internment is a state of being a prisoner for political or military Reasons so in fact [the Caldwell Labor Camp] was a prison camp for Japanese Americans during world war 2. The Japanese American Soldiers were fighting for a Country that was holding their people as Prisoners."¹⁵

As the above explanations of the camp's origins and purpose demonstrate, the cultural memory of the camp site is still partially rooted in its place in past carceral regime, attempts to reframe these carceral terms are seen as minimizing the camp's overall role in Japanese incarceration. For former Mexican migrant farmworkers, Caldwell was a *primary* site of incarceration rather than an ancillary one—and that narrative frames their understanding of the camp's infrastructure and historical significance.

The historical and experiential overlap between Mexican Americans and Japanese Americans in Caldwell is a stark example of the deep socio-historical interconnection between these two farmworking communities and of the prisoner-farmworker conflation. The prisoner-farmworker

¹⁵ Although, the social media accounts and the pages referenced here are public, I have chosen to keep these commentators anonymous.

conflation is an ideology that demands that farmworkers be subject to broad carceral conditions and occupy carceral spaces, yet denies that farmworkers are within the prison-industrial complex due to the very fact that their labor is dependent on movement that is *represented* as free movement. It also allows for the converse to be true: those subjected to carceral space are automatically viewed as suitable for farmwork. The prison-farmworker conflation is a vestige of chattel slavery that defined the original working conditions in U.S. agriculture. This is evident in the material and social history of the fields, as key farm labor camp infrastructure such as barracks housing have their origins in the conditions of slavery.

In the case of the Pacific Northwest and Idaho agriculture, the prisoner-farmworker applied most explicitly to two distinct populations, Japanese Americans and ethnic Mexican farmworkers. In Mario Jimenez Sifuentez's history of ethnic Mexican agricultural labor in the region, he begins his chapter titled "Los Tejanos: The Texas-Mexican Diaspora in Oregon" with the history of Japanese American farming, as their migration patterns, labor, relation to the state, and experiences of confinement provide crucial context for understanding not only the inter-community relations between these groups, but also the ways in which the techniques of power that create carcerality in the fields were refined through the alternating confinement of these populations in the same geographic and social spaces throughout the early 20th century.

Pacific Northwest historian Johanna Ogden has described the relationship between ethnic Japanese and ethnic Mexican farmworkers in the region as sharing "entwined fates" (Ogden, 131). Mae Ngai has explained how these entwined fates are the result of the "alien citizenship" of both groups and the formal mechanisms that create this status (Ngai, 8). But examining these entwined fates through a carceral lens reveals that in fact, their shared history in large part is due to both of them being conflated as prisoners-farmworkers.

The imbrication of these fates began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the wake of the Chinese Exclusion Act (Ngai, 7; Hernández, 23-26). Between 1885 and the 1924 passage of the Johnson-Reed Act, which established the U.S. Border patrol, 180,000 people immigrated from Japan to the U.S. Idaho became one of the first destinations for this population, as they replaced Chinese labor on the Union Pacific Railway's Oregon Short Line Railway.¹⁶ This follows a similar pattern to Mexican immigration to Idaho, as Mexicans had been recruited to build Idaho's railroads as far back as the 1860s and have been recruited en masse for other industries since WWI (Jones and Hodges, 45). In essence, Mexican and Japanese laborers were tasked with building both the means and methods of agricultural labor migration within the US. First generation Issei who came to the Pacific Northwest then worked in the same industries as ethnic Mexicans—rail work, lumber, agriculture, and canneries. Later, large scale Depression-era irrigation projects such as the Owyhee and Bonneville dams expanded available farmland in Idaho and eastern Oregon by hundreds of thousands of acres (Sifuentz, 37), and some second generation Japanese Americans transitioned to truck farming, or the small acreage cultivation of specialty crops for distant markets (Sifuentz, 38, 144n10). During the 1920s and 1930s ethnic Mexicans worked alongside Japanese American farmworkers for major agribusiness and on the small truck farms owned by Japanese Americans themselves.

Mexican "Repatriation"

The Great Depression and the ensuing racist state response was another key moment in the shared carceral experiences of Japanese American and Mexican American populations. The 1930s ushered in a change in the broader socio-political dynamics between these two groups, as municipalities in the U.S. embarked on "repatriation" campaigns for ethnic Mexicans, which George

¹⁶ <https://www.minidoka.org/hist-immigration>

J. Sánchez argues proved to be pivotal precursors to the incarceration of Japanese Americans during WWII (Sánchez, *Boyle Heights*, 98).

Looking to keep ethnic Mexicans off county and state relief rolls and to preserve jobs for white workers, authorities had to locate, confine, and send large numbers of ethnic Mexicans to Mexico, either through persuasion or by force. These efforts were concentrated in California and Texas, and this process was handled largely at the state and municipal level through local police (Sánchez, 214). With no single policy, different locales used varying degrees of violence and force, and an accurate number of ethnic Mexicans who were removed is difficult to ascertain. Scholarly estimates are between 350,000 and 2 million individuals were affected, 60% of whom were American citizens—the majority children¹⁷. These estimates also state that voluntary relocations to Mexico make up a portion of these numbers, but the use of the term “voluntary” to describe any ethnic Mexican removal during this time requires reconsideration. As Sánchez explains, local officials used extreme, inhumane measures to convince Mexicans to leave the U.S. In Los Angeles county, social workers were mobilized as coercive agents:

Social workers were instructed to give Mexican indigents the option of a county-sponsored train ticket for each member of the family to travel to the interior of Mexico. If they refused, the social workers were told to cut off future relief for these families and *take away all documentation that enabled them to receive food and other forms of sustenance*. (Sánchez, *Boyle Heights*, 74; emphasis my own)

In light of the threat of undocumented status and starvation, the idea of choice or agency in the decision to relocate to Mexico is suspect, and the term “repatriation” is a severe misnomer. Sánchez cites his agreement with Marla Andrea Ramirez, who argues that a more accurate description of Mexican removal is that of banishment, as this term can encompass the many levels of dispossession

¹⁷ <https://history.stanford.edu/news/1930s-repatriation-mexicans-ana-minian>

and loss that Mexicans experienced and properly considers the question of Mexican agency (Sánchez, *Boyle Heights*, 74). Banished from their homes where many had spent decades and raised children, some Mexicans refused to relocate to Mexico and instead took to the migrant trail. As historian Erasmo Gamboa explains, “The Depression caught Mexicans at much the same level of social and material existence as when they had arrived from Mexico. As conditions worsened in the Mexican communities, the people became willing candidates for recruitment to northwestern farms” (Gamboa, 12). While Mexicans were being banished from the Southwest, nativist demands in the Pacific Northwest had to be balanced with the fact that ethnic Mexican farmworkers were still the lynchpin to Idaho agriculture, particularly in the new farmland in the Treasure Valley created after the completion of the Bonneville dam project in 1937.

Farm labor wages dropped precipitously, limiting the appeal of farm work for all but the most desperate of white farmworkers. Further complicating the matter was the fact that the National Labor Relations Act explicitly excluded farmworkers from New Deal labor protections (Torres, 31). Farmworkers were intentionally and explicitly excluded from labor protections in order to maximally exploit racialized workers in order to preserve social mobility for those who work outside of the fields. Thus, repatriation was a carceral exercise in dispossession designed to make an already vulnerable population more vulnerable to labor exploitation, and it shifted Mexican American farmworkers to emerging agricultural zones like Idaho’s Treasure Valley. Mexicans that made it to the Pacific Northwest now found themselves “physically farther away from the center of power...[but] close enough to provide the cheap labor essential to industry and agriculture” for the war effort (Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 226).

But the State at nearly all levels was quick to realize the success of their strategies of confinement, coercion, and policing to lower numbers of ethnic Mexicans in given areas. In fact, the resonances between Mexican repatriation/banishment and Japanese incarceration are hard to ignore.

Roosevelt's Executive Order 9102 ultimately removed 120,000 Japanese Americans from the West Coast, two thirds of whom were U.S. citizens (Ngai, 175). And in another resonance with the Mexican experience in the U.S., federal and state governments appropriated the conditions of the migrant trail for Japanese American incarcerates, as the early concentration camps consisted of horse stables and makeshift housing that was common housing for Mexican and Filipino migrant farmworkers throughout the 20th century — further cementing “camp” conditions as a staple of the prisoner-farmworker conflation.

As the federal government sought longer-term camp solutions for newly incarcerated Japanese Americans, this population was viewed from the beginning as an agricultural labor force. This was particularly true in the Pacific Northwest. In fact, the decision to incarcerate Japanese Americans in Idaho at the Minidoka camp was one based entirely on the desire to exploit a captive labor force. In 1942, the Secretary of Agriculture Claude R. Wickard called for the largest farm crop output in history up to that point (Gamboa, 28). This record demand for agricultural products, particularly sugar beets, caused panic among many Idaho growers who anticipated record labor shortages amidst this demand for record output. Even before the official federal policy of incarceration, Japanese farming expertise was seen as part of the solution, with the federal government experimenting with aiding out-of-state Japanese farmers in their purchase of orchard land within Idaho (Ourada, 38). However, Idaho governor Clark Chase was at first vehemently opposed to Japanese Americans freely residing within Idaho, espousing something similar to the “invasion” theory that Leo Chavez explains is an integral part of the phenomenon of Latino Threat:

The state of California is crawling with Japanese. They contribute nothing to the standard of life—but undermine it. In 100 years they will overrun us to the Rocky Mountains, unless checked. If they came into Idaho, I want them put in concentration camps and kept under guard so that they can be taken back under guard. (Ourada, 38)

While his wish for incarceration came true, he ultimately reversed course and began directly appealing to the federal government for *more* incarcerated Japanese Americans to be brought to Idaho after the Army announced plans for the construction of the Minidoka concentration camp in Hunt, Idaho, in April of 1942 at the behest of growers whose anxiety around labor shortages grew as they competed with other states for migrant labor (Ourada, 39). For example, California's solution to procuring labor to meet Wickard's demand was to discourage ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers from leaving the state, causing severe consternation among sugar beet growers in Idaho who demanded that the governor take action after fields were forced to be plowed under due to a lack of harvesters. In the face of a labor shortage, it was estimated that incarcerated Japanese American labor could meet 50 percent of the Idaho labor needs for the 1942 season (Gamboa, 28).

For Gov. Clark and Idaho agriculture, concentration camps like Minidoka were ultimately envisioned foremost as farm labor depots, and the statuses of prisoner and farmworker were conflated before construction even began. Idaho sought to benefit from those incarcerated outside of its borders as well, with Idaho's Amalgamated Sugar company sending recruiters to California's Tule Lake camp (Gammage, *Inquirer*). Large corporate growers and smaller, private farmers, and even those in government benefited from this captive labor force, with Secretary of Agriculture Wickard himself requesting a contingent of Japanese Americans from Hunt, Idaho, to work his private farm in Indiana (Gamboa, 28).

This prisoner-farmworker conflation applied not only to Japanese Americans and their "enemy combatant" status in the U.S., but also for Japanese *Latin Americans* who were arrested, put in camps in their respective countries, and then transported to the U.S. during the execution of Order 9066. Immediately after the order, the U.S. leaned heavily on twelve countries throughout Latin America and the Caribbean to not only round up and incarcerate 2,300 people of Japanese descent within their borders, but then hand them over to the U.S. The majority came from Mexico and Peru

(Paik, 48). Their home countries in Latin America either precluded the possibility of returning or revoked citizenship, leaving this population as both “stateless people” and “alien enemies” in the U.S. Upon their arrival in the U.S., many were shuffled between the major camps, including those in Idaho (Paik, 48). Eventually, all were made to work the vegetable fields of Seabrook, New Jersey, with many continuing to work the fields in Seabrook as undocumented farmworkers for decades until avenues to rectify their status were made available for *some* (Ngai, 193; Paik, 49).

In a cruel turn of events, the vast majority of Japanese Latin Americans were legally excluded from the federal government’s redress efforts during the 1980s, as it only applied to those who were citizens or legal residents at the time of their incarceration. Despite their incarceration and dispossession at the hands of the U.S., their quintessential “alien” status made their experiences illegible to the U.S. This shows that camp carcerality does not stop with U.S. borders, but constitutes a particular imperialist relationship, where the “US has the disproportionate power to impose or suffuse its own military operations or operational models, and has created a webbing of migrant control and suppression that span the globe” (Chacón, 32). In this instance agriculture and field labor once again served as the interface between U.S. Imperialism, national security, and corporate profits, as camp carcerality became the most malleable, and therefore most effective, system to turn nearly all Japanese populations in the Western hemisphere into farmworkers. In an ironic twist, the U.S. actually brought within its borders those it considered “enemy aliens” rather than expelling them, *because* the fields were considered the “proper” place for incarcerated.

The fact that they were forced to work the fields *alongside* and as an *alternative* to ethnic Mexican labor due to their shared racialization was not lost on both formerly incarcerated Japanese Americans and Japanese Latin Americans. As part of the redress process, the state convened hearings and invited Japanese Americans who were incarcerated during WWII to testify to their experiences. Several testimonies make a point to speak to the fact that their carceral experience cannot be parsed

out or disambiguated from the carceral experiences of Latinx populations in the U.S., emphasizing the shared racialization with Mexican and Chicanx populations in particular. For example, Shirley S. Nakao, third-generation Japanese American and a representative on the National Anti-Racist Organizing Committee, insisted on reading into the official records of redress the continuity between the logics and practices behind the “repatriation” of ethnic Mexicans and the removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans, citing the “annexation of Mexican land” and the *bracero* program as a part of the “broad historical context” that made the construction of concentration camps for Japanese Americans possible (Paik, 42). Nakao’s testimony demonstrates that descendants of incarcerated Japanese Americans are aware of the shared conditions of camp carcerality between themselves and Mexicans and *demand* through their official, legally mediated testimony that internment be remembered in relation to the Mexican experience in the U.S.

Paik argues that testimonies like Nakao’s bring the effects of internment, and by extension these other examples of racial governmentality into the present. This remains true for Japanese Latin Americans, and they acknowledge the resonance between the plight of contemporary undocumented Latin Americans and their own experience of being made stateless and then incarcerated in the U.S. Citing the loss of identification documents of all kinds from their Latin American home countries, former incarcees such as Elsa Kudo echo the experience of forced undocumentedness and the threat of deportation experienced by Mexicans during repatriation, stating “We never knew if and when we would be deported and this continued for a frustrating and insecure period of 10 years” (Paik, 49).

The Japanese American Experience in Caldwell

In order for Japanese Americans to be fully exploited as farmworkers, the formal mechanisms of “leave” and “resettlement” were developed, giving Caldwell, Idaho, a little-known but important place within the history and lived experience of Japanese American incarceration. In

March of 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9102, which established the War Relocation Authority (WRA), the federal agency officially tasked with managing 120,000 incarcerated Japanese Americans. By May, the WRA built and managed (in conjunction with the armed forces) 10 camps that included Gila River, Granada, Heart Mountain, Jerome, Manzanar, Minidoka, Poston, Rohwer, Topaz, and Tule Lake. However, these original 10 camps did not remain the only sites of incarceration. Nearly as soon as these camps were occupied, the WRA answered calls for Japanese labor by state officials like Governor Clark by announcing the Seasonal Leave Program on May 22. Designed to supply immediate agricultural labor for sugar beet production, the program offered farmwork contracts with growers at sites outside of WRA camps to any able-bodied person who answered “Yes-Yes” on the infamous loyalty questionnaire.¹⁸ The conditions of the program stipulated that volunteers would be paid a prevailing wage for their labor and would be provided with housing along with transportation from the larger concentration camp to their new living and work sites. For those with agricultural experience like the many truck farmers who lost their own farms when they were imprisoned, the back-breaking labor of beet work held little appeal, but, significantly, the program was advertised as a chance to escape the carceral conditions of armed guards and barbed wire. However, being away from a *military* prison did not mean that they were not

¹⁸ The loyalty questionnaire’s official appellation was the “Application for Leave Clearance,” and it was given to all incarcerated above the age of 17. The questionnaire consisted of 80 questions, and its completion was compulsory. Two questions, numbers 27 and 28, would have drastic consequences. 27 asked all males if they would be willing to serve in the armed forces, and 28 asked all adults if they would “swear unqualified allegiance” to the U.S. and “forswear allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor.” These questions caused considerable confusion and consternation, as they were perceived as unanswerable. In regards to the former question, many felt they were being coerced into the military to fight for a government that was imprisoning them, and any answer to the latter question was laden with serious implications—to answer “yes” was to imply that they, as U.S. citizens, *had* some allegiance to Japan to forswear; and a “no” implied that that allegiance would continue. Those who answered “no” to each question faced possible prison terms for refusing conscription or possible “repatriation” back to Japan—a country that many had never set foot in (Ngai, 181-183). The consequences of these questions are famously depicted in John Okada’s 1957 novel *No No Boy*.

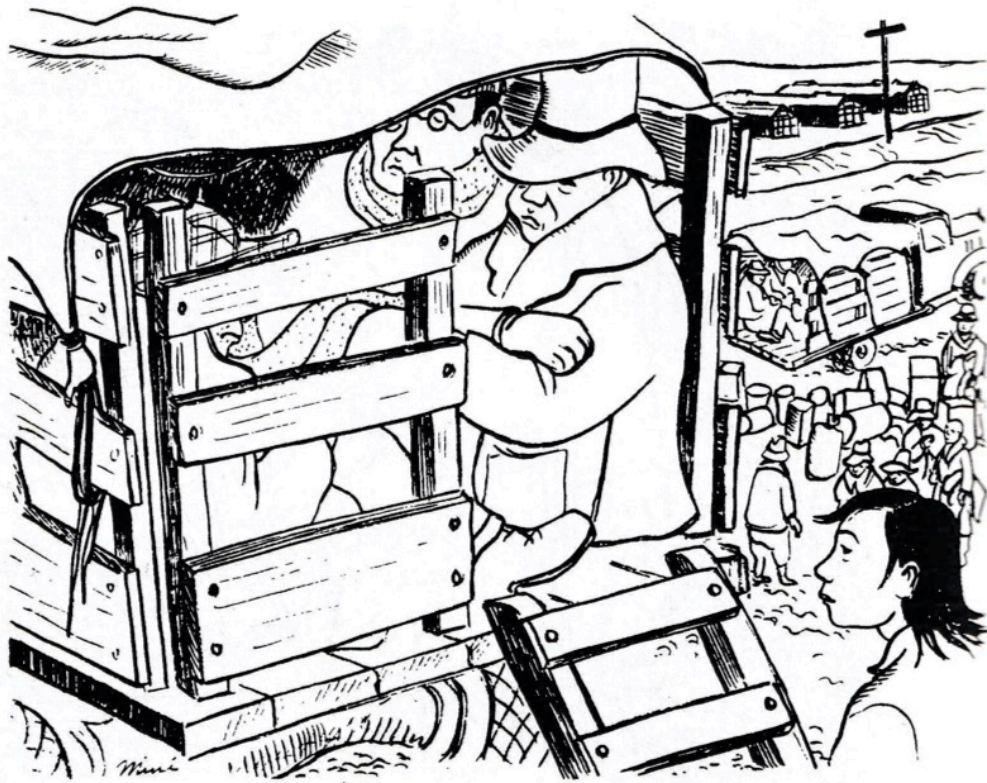
still *imprisoned/confined in carceral spaces*, as the more than 30,000 seasonal laborers between 1942 and 1944 would come to find.¹⁹

The Seasonal Leave Program sent Japanese Americans to beet fields as far from the West coast as South Dakota, but the Program began only 22 miles from the Caldwell Labor Camp in Nyssa, Oregon. The first 15 workers arrived in Nyssa on May 22nd, with thousands more arriving in Idaho through the summer and housed in camps near Caldwell, Rupert, Shelley, and Twin Falls, Idaho (Uprooted). During the 1942 harvest season, a total of 3,714 incarcerates worked in the harvest fields in the state, drawn from camps in California and Idaho (Ourada, 39-40).

The Seasonal Leave Program is a little known and under-studied aspect of Japanese American incarceration in the U.S., but even less attention has been paid to the logics governing the Japanese American farm labor camp experience it produced. Of the few references to the Seasonal Leave Program in popular media, one of the most revealing is Miné Okubo's depiction of the Program in her graphic memoir *Citizen 13660*. First published in 1946 immediately after WWII, *Citizen 13660* chronicled Okubo's experiences as a young artist immediately before the attack on Pearl Harbor and her experiences within the Tanforan camp in San Bruno, California, and Utah's Topaz Relocation Center. It was the first depiction of Japanese incarceration from the perspective of an incarcerated. In the latter half of her memoir is a full page illustration of the first migrants leaving Topaz through the Seasonal Leave Program (Fig. 1). While only a single page, her depiction of their departure is stark. Her black and white illustration focuses on the WRA's promise to provide transportation to the contracted worksites, and in a startling resonance with the carceral experiences of ethnic Mexicans on the migrant trail, we again encounter the cattle car as the preferred mode of transporting racialized migrant farmworkers. Okubo's image depicts those leaving Topaz being

¹⁹ The details of the Seasonal Leave Program's origin and execution are within work contracts and correspondence between farmers and WRA located within the National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C., Record Group 210, War Relocation Authority.

packed into the back of two such vehicles. Okubo has tactfully drawn the top of the covered wagons with open lines, drawing your attention to the huddled figures within the wagon in the top left corner of the image. Okubo herself is depicted in the lower right of the image, presumably speaking with those in the car. The ladder between them leads your eye and connects the subjects inside and outside of the cattle car. The illustration is largely made up of line drawing with the exception of the dark interior of the wagon, Okubo's hair, and the barracks in the top right corner, visually connecting the conditions of the cattle car to the carceral conditions of Topaz. Her use of line work effectively leads your eye around the image and through Okubo's narrative of the Program, revealing the conditions of the journey and suggesting a bleak carceral destination.



TEMPORARY leaves were granted to volunteer seasonal workers. They were the first to be allowed to leave the project area. The first groups left to pick beets and fruit; turkey-plucking and other jobs followed, and many more groups went out.

Fig 1. Illustration of first Seasonal Leave laborers. Okubo, Miné. *Citizen 13660*. University of Washington Press, 2014.

The use of agricultural vehicles instead of military transport is also telling; from this depiction of the moment of departure we can infer that the signing of the contract officially ended the federal government's oversight of incarcerated and the prisoner-farmworker conflation transferred carceral power to growers and state and local police. Viewing the image through Idaho agriculture's demand to the state for Japanese farm labor, Seasonal Leave is revealed to be not a reprieve from carcerality, but a formal mechanism of dispossession designed to turn an entire population into captive, migrant farmworkers. And just like ethnic Mexicans on the migrant trail, Japanese Americans' movement was made carceral. Her illustration of camp residents being packed into the back of a farm truck resonates with Tomás Rivera's depiction of migrants traveling in the back of a cattle car in ...*And the Earth Did Not Devour Them* /...y no se lo trago la tierra, revealing that rather than a reprieve from the carceral conditions of the larger concentration camps, Japanese Americans' incarceration was reconfigured according to the prisoner-farmworker conflation in an effort to obscure the experiential terms/definition of carceral space.

"Journey of 1,000 Miles": Teresa Maebori

Paik's claim that testimony on the Japanese American experience during WWII brings that experience into the present is clear in the case of Teresa Maebori. She is a third generation Japanese American whose maternal and paternal grandparents immigrated to the Pacific Northwest in the very early 20th century (Maebori, 65-66). Maebori's parents, Michiko and William, were married on November 22, 1941—only two weeks before Pearl Harbor. According to Maebori, "the start of their marriage was marred by this horrific event," and their two children, Stan and Teresa, would be born into a state of incarceration (Maebori, 67-68). During the relocation phase of their incarceration, Michiko and William were transported to Tule Lake, the largest of the concentration camps. There they lived in a one room 15 x 20 barrack that housed 4 to 6 families. In 1943 William answered a call

from Idaho's Amalgamated Sugar Company for work in the sugar beet fields through the Seasonal Leave Program. They would be housed at the Caldwell Labor Camp. In William and Michiko's minds, this "was preferable to living in a huge concentration camp with little privacy, watched by guards with watchtowers with guns pointed in, surrounded by barbed-wire fencing, and with no freedom" (Maebori, 69). However, the lived reality of their time in Caldwell and Michiko's reaction to visiting the camp 70 years later reveals resonances with the larger concentration camps.

Maebori has been active in educating the public on the Seasonal Leave Program through interviews, her personal writing, and her promotion of the online exhibit Uprootedexhibit.com. In 2014 Maebori embarked on a road trip with her 90-year-old mother, Michiko, to visit her place of birth, Caldwell, Idaho. What follows is her 2018 testimony on that experience:

Well, when I retired in 2012, I went to work at Nationalities Service Center to teach English as a second language, and I got students from all over the world. They would often look at me thinking, "Okay, *she's* gonna teach us English?" One day, a young woman from the Ukraine came to my classes, and she came a little bit late, she was maybe a day or two late. I had already introduced myself and told them a little bit of my history. And, of course, she didn't know any of that. She kept looking at me and looking at me and was very puzzled. And then finally, she said, "Where are you from?" And I just kind of chuckled. So, I asked one of the students, "Can you tell her where I'm from?" And so they said, "Caldwell, Idaho." I usually did kind of a geography lesson, "Okay, where is Caldwell, Idaho?" And they went up on the map, and they pointed it out. And I thought, "Hmm, I should probably do a little more than just point to it on a map. I'd really never been there, aside from being born there, and having no memory because I was so young. I decided, "You know, it's time to go and find out a little bit more about my birthplace."

At that point it was 2014. And I asked my mother, "Would you like to go on a road trip to Caldwell from Seattle?" She said, "Okay." She was 90 years old at that point. So, I thought it would be really good for both of us to kind of explore, you know, her memories and what maybe life was like at that point in time. But all I knew about Caldwell, Idaho was that my parents got out of the concentration camps and went there. They were in Tule Lake, California in a concentration camp. And they had just had their first child, my brother, Stan, and—I'm making a guess—but I'm pretty sure they realized that raising a child in a concentration camp was not very good. So, there was a recruitment effort done, mainly by the Amalgamated Sugar Company. They went to various concentration camps that were close to areas that harvested sugar beets, and they recruited Japanese Americans. And there were seven [incentive] points, and one of them was make new friends. Get out of barbed wire fencing. Earn a salary. There were other points too. But it was more freedom. So, my parents signed up for it.

So, when we're going to go on this trip to Idaho up to Caldwell, I called up the Chamber of Commerce of Caldwell, and I told them what I was trying to do. And they said, "Oh, well, you should talk to Mike Dittenber," who was the director of Caldwell low-income housing. So, that began my journey and my education of what really happened.

After [my mother] agreed, we drove. She agreed, but I didn't realize until we started the journey that she was a little bit sick. And the interesting thing is that two months after we took this trip, she died. And she was 90 years old. But she agreed to go with me even though she felt ill. I thought, "Oh, no," when she told me she didn't feel well. I thought she [wouldn't] come and part of my motivation was not just to discover about myself, but also to see what she had to say. But she said okay, she'd go. I think she went because she was

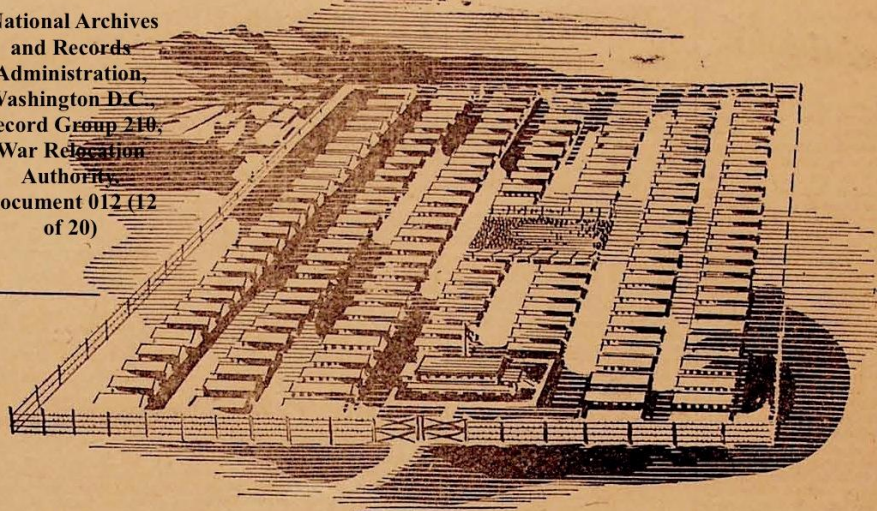
interested herself in seeing what the labor camp looked like now and that I had taken an interest in it and wanted to find out.

I think we stayed two days. I didn't realize how profound the trip to the Caldwell Housing Authority was going to be. And I also wanted to see the city of Caldwell itself. And also if I could find the hospital where I was born. So, I did those things and just kind of got a sense of what Caldwell was like. I didn't know what to expect of the campsite. As we drove up, I was kind of amazed. Mainly because it was green. It was very planned. There were roads that went to different sections of the camp. And when you think of a camp, you don't think of established structures. The other thing is when we came upon the site, I could hear children playing, and they were laughing and sort of having fun. So, I knew that this was a place that had families, and that it must have been a fairly, you know, nice place to live. Mike took us to the one building that still remains from the time my parents were there. And it's a one story, low line [barrack] building. I don't know how long it measured, but it was long enough to house three major offices. In the middle was the post office that was there during that time. I'm not sure it is still now. And at the end was a market, and it's still a market. It was a chance for me to ask my mother, "Do you remember this?" And she said, no, she didn't remember it. And then the other building that he pointed out was the water tower. It stood off in the distance, but to me, it looked like a sentry, something guarding the area. So, even though it was a good thing, it just seemed like, a kind of surveillance. But it was from that time. So there were two places from that time. And, so, that was my impression of the camp when I first went." (Maebori, 3.3.19)²⁰

²⁰ I have edited Maebori's testimony here for length and continuity. Each paragraph comes from a different point in an oral history interview that lasted over 2 hours.

Teresa's testimony reveals that those promoting the Seasonal Leave Program were the very agribusinesses campaigning for Japanese American incarceration in order to profit from their labor. Their "seven points" are immediately suspect (Fig 2.). Official reports on this quasi-conscripted labor reveal that the "freedom" that was promised was still highly circumscribed. In 1942 J.G. Beeson of the United States Employment Services in Idaho reported that, "The Japanese workers are showing up very well...they are doing a good job. The Japanese are not under armed guard but are under surveillance either in farm labor camps or on ranches. Deputy sheriffs are assigned to the camps and the movement of the inmates is restricted, particularly at night. Visitors are allowed only under special circumstances" (Ourada, 41). While the military was no longer (explicitly) involved in their confinement, incarcerated Japanese Americans who became farmworkers were still under direct police surveillance.

National Archives
and Records
Administration,
Washington D.C.
Record Group 210,
War Relocation
Authority,
Document 012 (12
of 20)



YOU DON'T NEED TO WAIT ANY LONGER TO GET OUT

Every evacuee has been looking forward to the day when he could permanently leave the relocation center that has been his temporary residence, but not a real home, these long and tiresome months.

"Some day," he has said, "I'll leave here . . . to return to my former home, or to start over in a new and friendly community. Some day I'll be a part of America again . . . to produce or fight for it."

Well, that day has come to those who will take it. . . Here's how: Get yourself a job on a farm . . . to begin with. Sign up for thinning and blocking beets; that's one of the first jobs of the season.

Pick yourself a friendly community, where a variety of crops are grown. Then work through the spring and summer, taking the crops as they come along . . . returning to sugar beets in the fall.

HERE ARE THE REWARDS:

- 1 Freedom to work for yourself and your family at prevailing high wages (rates of minimum pay for beet workers are guaranteed by Federal order);
- 2 Adequate housing (the Federal government requires every farmer to supply this before his offer of employment can be officially approved);
- 3 A new chance to make friends for yourself and for all other persons of Japanese birth or ancestry;
- 4 A stepping stone to permanent year-round employment in agriculture, or industry;
- 5 Healthful employment . . . for yourself and for other members of your family, if you have one, even down to fourteen-year-old boys and girls;
- 6 An opportunity to produce more food for freedom, thereby helping America win the war and the peace to follow;
- 7 A means of earning money for an education or for profitable investment, now or in the future.



SUGAR BEETS are the best way out for the greatest number of evacuees. When you accept a beet contract, take one with the organization that pioneered the way for evacuee job seekers nearly a year ago; take one with an organization that can give you a wide choice of locations and climates.

Utah-Idaho Sugar Company has factories in five states from the Dakotas to the Pacific Coast. Thousands of growers in hundreds of western communities are looking for evacuee help. We can put you in touch with the right place for you. For complete information see your project employment director or write to this pioneer sugar company.

UTAH-IDAHO SUGAR COMPANY

Home office: Salt Lake City, Utah. Factories in Utah, Idaho, Montana, South Dakota, Washington.

Figure 2. ¹ National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C., Record Group 210, War Relocation Authority, Document 012.

Other former laborers under the Seasonal Leave Program also attest to the Program's carceral conditions, including confinement and restricted movement. James K. Tanaka, who was incarcerated within the Minidoka concentration camp and who a child laborer in the sugar beet fields in the labor camp at Twin Falls Idaho (2 hours away from the Caldwell Labor Camp) during the 1943 and 1944 beet seasons stated that:

In 1992, because of the Japanese American National Museum, I was able to get my family name and family number sent off to the National Archives and I got a little stack of papers and that gave me some insight as to why I was in Twin Falls County, because we couldn't leave it. The government said, "If you don't get permission from us, you're stuck here." And then in my research, I found that the farmers all wanted military guards to be out in the fields with us so we wouldn't sabotage things or run away or whatever and this was a way that the government did not have to have guards out there, by saying you're restricted to this area, period. And naturally if you're found outside it, then they send you back to the relocation center. (James K. Tanaka, *Uprooted Exhibit*, transcript)

In his lived experience, he also draws a continuity between the conditions at Minidoka and Twin Falls:

The farm labor camp south of Twin Falls was basically a U-shaped road and within that framework, there were the barracks, similar to the relocation center's barracks. Sleeping quarters, pot-bellied stove, beds, table and chairs in the rooms. And then the toilets and washbasins were in buildings between the two sets of, two rows of barracks. (James K. Tanaka, *Uprooted Exhibit*)

In addition, other media on Teresa Maebori's life and family refer to the Caldwell Labor Camp as a carceral site. In an article in the Philadelphia *Inquirer* written on Teresa Maebori's family

experiences in the Caldwell Labor Camp published in 2017, the Seasonal Labor Program is explicitly categorized as space of state sanctioned confinement:

William and Michiko Maebori spent a year imprisoned at the Tule Lake concentration camp in California, held behind barbed wire with 19,000 other Japanese Americans, before they were offered a chance to leave. Not to freedom, through the restoration of their rights as American citizens, and not back to their home in Washington state. They were released into a different kind of confinement, a government-controlled seasonal-leave farm labor camp in western Idaho. (Gammage, *Inquirer*)

In this way, Seasonal Leave sites like the Caldwell Labor Camp were geographic solutions to the social problem of a deficit of available carceral labor for the war effort. Teresa Maebori's first impression of the camp as a site of surveillance reveals a resonance between Nora Gallion's childhood impressions of the Caldwell Labor Camp. Teresa Maebori couldn't help but feel the space's past and current carceral dimensions through its very infrastructure, in her case the water tower, just as Nora Gallion felt these dimensions through her impression of the camp's front entrance and her certainty about the presence of barbed-wire. These two individuals experienced a visceral sense of history, with two women of different races who occupied the camp at different times both experiencing the camp through the lens of Japanese American incarceration. They both experienced a kind of haunting, the sensation of being watched and a lingering impression of captivity that is part and parcel of the afterlife of camp carcerality. Her association of "camps" with temporary structures aligns with the previously discussed definition of a camp as immanently temporary, and her surprise that the camp is a permanent fixture of Caldwell is the result of the realization that these spaces *endure*, or in A. Naomi Paik's words, have an *afterlife*. This relates to the common perception that camps are temporary *solutions* to social problems and that they and their physical and social infrastructures *cease to be* when the historical moment that demands them passes, a key reason why

camps can be recognized as carceral at specific moments, but the ways that they can continue to function as carceral spaces can be obscured. However, in this first impression of the Caldwell Labor Camp, Maebori was faced with the continuity between her own life and the camp's afterlife. *She* was a child born into this camp as a result of her family's incarceration, and, now, 70 years later, there were still children among the camp's "established" structures.

Teresa's tale of her journey also reveals a curious circumstance: her mother Michiko's lack of memory regarding the camp. In an article titled "Journey of 1,000 Miles" that Maebori wrote for Germantown Friends School in Philadelphia, where she worked for 36 years, she further details the events of the trip. On her mother's experience, she writes:

Mom could not remember the details of their residency in Caldwell, such as exactly when they came or left. She kept saying she had to take care of two infants; so her memory was impaired. I don't know if the trauma of the war and their incarceration in an internment camp made it difficult to remember that time or whether it was too long ago. It had been seventy years since she had been back to Caldwell (Maebori, 67).

Acknowledging her age and the fact that it had been nearly 70 years since she had left Caldwell, these facts do not fully explain her lack of recollection. U.S. prison camp scholar A. Naomi Paik has described the ways in which memory of traumatic imprisonment can function, particularly how it can manifest as non-memory. In her work on Japanese American incarceration during WWII, she explains the phenomenon as it manifested in several former incarcerated, including a woman who could not remember the events of her incarceration until she was on her deathbed, and even in the only Japanese American commissioner to sit on Reagan's committee on redressing Japanese Incarceration, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC). I quote Paik at length below to demonstrate how non-memory is a key facet of testimonies on Japanese American incarceration:

While the testimonies show that many internees could never forget internment, others experienced the opposite. They could not remember the camps. Even [Redress] Commissioner William Marutani spoke to this paradox. “I remember very vividly leaving Tule Lake in 1942, but try as I might, I don’t remember getting to Tule Lake and Pinedale,” he recalled. “I do know we were put on trains, but I have no recollection of it, and at the time, I was a teenager, not a baby.” What does it mean that he had no memory of arriving at the sites of his rightness condition? While he understood the facts of his experience—he knew he was put on a train—he could not make his memory align with history. He was unable to place himself in his own history. As other testimonies demonstrate, this kind of “mental block” was not atypical, but rather a common psychic strategy of survival among internees. (Paik, 60)

According to Paik, the absence of concrete memories of the larger camps is actually evidence of the trauma of their carceral conditions. While Marutani cannot place himself on the journey to Tule Lake, the largest of the 10 concentration camps, Michiko Maebori exhibits the same survival strategy in relation to the Caldwell Labor Camp and the Seasonal Leave Program, revealing the psychic continuity between the carceral conditions of larger camps like Tule Lake and ancillary sites such as the Caldwell Labor Camp. However, many contest the psychological and experiential continuity between these two sites, including Mike Dittenber.

Prior to running the CHA, Dittenber served in the Marines and was then, as he describes it, an analyst and administrator for the Clinton administration’s Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1992. He then went on to be a quantitative analyst for the Boise Police Department from 1994 to 2000 (Dittenber, 1:17:20-54). When he became director of the CHA in 2008, Dittenber decided to take on another role: that of amateur local historian. He self-published his own history of the Caldwell Labor Camp through the CHA in 2012 titled *Caldwell Labor Camp: A Place to Call Home*. A chapter is dedicated to WWII and the presence of Japanese Americans in the camp, and the

book includes two interviews from Japanese Americans who lived within the Caldwell Labor Camp during the postwar period. These accounts of the Japanese American experience in Caldwell represent the experience of farmwork as that of a stepping stone for social mobility and family growth. Below are the words of Roy Oyama who lived in the Caldwell Labor Camp from 1946 to 1953, and who is featured in Dittenber's history:

We moved [to the labor camp] right after the war to start our lives over again. We had to start somewhere, and the labor camp was the best place to do that. Because my brother Tak and I were U.S. military veterans, we were allowed to move into the houses. I lived in house number #47, my brother Jim lived in house #3, and my parents and brother Tak lived in house #6.

My wife and I got married in 1949 in the old Assembly Hall where the kids went to school. I remember my mom making all the food for the reception in her little house. I don't know how she did it. I lived at the labor camp long enough that all 3 of my sons were born there.

I worked on a farm most of the time. I went back to Chicago one year to get my mechanic certification and returned after I learned my wife was pregnant. I became a bookkeeper for Nampa Tractor and attended the Nampa Business College. They only let me live at the labor camp because I was working in the agriculture industry, just not as a farm laborer. After Business College, I took the civil service examination and was hired by the U.S. Postal Service, where I worked until I retired in 1980. My brother Jim was the Post Master for Caldwell.

The labor camp was a good place to live. The rent was cheap and its location with relation to Caldwell made it very convenient. You had to start someplace, and the labor camp

was as good of place as any. The barracks were hard living, but the rest of the place was pretty good. (Dittenber, 93-94)

The description of major events and leisure activities taking place in the assembly hall relegates the camp's connection to incarceration to the historical past rather than a living memory that is still being experienced and shaped. Oyama's memory of the camp also differs markedly from the memories and associations of Chicana/Mexican American farmworkers like Nora Gallion who perceived their time and labor in the camp as exploitative and coerced rather than providing an opportunity for education and social mobility. But Oyama's description also aligns with García-Colón's, following Erving Goffman, description of labor camps as *total institutions*, or "a place that, like a prison, must be equipped with everything needed for survival, where workers can live for months without ever having to leave" (García-Colón, 135). As social fields that require meeting both the bare physical and psycho-social hierarchy of needs of farmworkers, labor camps also provide space for secondary needs beyond basic survival, such as on-site education and spaces for celebration and marriages, are also part of a labor camp's purview. The assembly hall, where other former residents testify other leisure activities such as dances and multilingual movie screenings (English, Japanese, and Spanish) took place, is not evidence of the camp as non-carceral space; it actually speaks to the camp's architects' desire for a better, "more humane prison."²¹

²¹ In his essay titled "Americans Without a Country," Cary McWilliams, journalist, attorney, and California state housing administrator in 1940, stated that migrant agricultural workers "are 'outlaws' and 'aliens' so far as our welfare programs are concerned," and he also referred to farmworkers as part of the "federal homeless." In his formulation, camps like Caldwell that were built by the Farm Security Administration (FSA) were necessary because Depression-era white migrant farmworkers had to be rescued from the conditions of the migrant trail, but still had to be federally managed in total institutions. McWilliams' comments on the state viewing white migrant agricultural laborers through the lens of criminality and alien citizenship frames the FSA's farm labor program and its construction of the 110 camps to hold them as using a carceral solution to a social problem. McWilliams' views are another example of my argument that farmwork is ideologically configured as *prison* work by revealing that the white working poor can become carceral subjects when they perform farmwork and slip into the prisoner-farmworker conflation. Further in the essay McWilliams recognizes that in order to fully contain the slippage of white laborers into farmwork, they would require sites where they could also maintain social reproduction in order to ultimately recuperate themselves and leave farmwork to those populations *assigned* the carceral conditions of farmwork. The FSA camps then were built as "more humane" carceral sites for workers who *had to be* temporarily conflated with prisoners, but who were ultimately in need of rescue from this condition.

Dittenber argues that Idaho agriculture, in fact, bears direct responsibility for Japanese American incarceration, stating that, “Many sources suggest Governor Clark was the first person to recommend Japanese internment to President Roosevelt; he also offered the Idaho desert as the first internment camp, *setting in motion the internment of more than 100,000 Japanese Americans* during World War II” (Dittenber, 9-10; emphasis mine). However, his history avoids addressing how internment was a carceral solution for agricultural labor needs and the Caldwell Labor Camp’s place in perpetuating carceral labor. In an interview where he explained how he completed research and chose testimonies for his text he states:

There was a couple of ladies who came...And her granddaughter brought her from the Portland-Seattle area. And she looked around and says, "I have no memory of being here." But we know that she was here, because her family said that she was here. We talked with one lady, and I think she lived in Twin Falls, and she was a Japanese American. And she kept telling all these stories and all these stories at us, "And then they would come through, and they would search our rooms for cameras." And, you know, the grandson would go, "Grandma, are you sure that wasn't, you know, memories of the internment camp and not the labor camp?" So, she kind of got the two mixed together. And so we really couldn't use her stuff because she just wasn't clear. (Dittenber, 7/12/21, 1:12:44)

In regards to the first anecdote about the relatives who journeyed to the Caldwell Labor Camp after their incarceration, Dittenber is misremembering his interaction with Teresa and Michiko Maebori, remembering them as grandmother and granddaughter rather than as mother and daughter.

In regards to who *intended* to build more humane prisons, labor historian Verónica Martínez-Matsuda has revealed in her book *Migrant Citizenship: Race, Rights, and Reform in the U.S. Farm Labor Camp Program* that many of the original architects of the FSA’s farm labor program who were tasked with building these more humane prisons were then transferred to the WRA and were responsible for designing the main concentration camps like Minidoka for Japanese incarceration [Martínez-Matsuda, 91-93; 213-220]. The Caldwell Labor Camp then is connected to sites like Minidoka not only by overlap of the incarcerated populations who were housed in each, but by the very hands that designed their physical infrastructure.

But his words do align with Teresa's testimony on her mother's *lack of recollection*. For Dittenber, Michiko Maebori's lack of recollection is evidence of the cultural memory of the labor camp that he is interested in perpetuating, one that frames the Seasonal Leave Program (and farm labor in Caldwell generally) as the silver lining to the unfortunate event of "relocation." In fact, the words of the former Japanese American residents of the camp in his history are highly curated and edited, as the second anecdote illustrates. Those who experienced the Caldwell Labor Camp as a continuation of their incarceration have no place in a history that makes a clear distinction between the Caldwell Labor Camp and the publicly recognized carceral regime of Japanese incarceration. The room search is consistent with the official reports of police presence and surveillance of camps involved with the Seasonal Leave Program as corroborated by the research notes of historian Patricia K. Ourada.

Within Caldwell, the prisoner-farmworker conflation become clearer when we consider Japanese American farm labor in relation to the other populations who were working alongside them: Mexican *Braceros*, Mexican Americans, and German prisoners of war all worked the same fields, and *braceros* and Mexican farmworkers also lived alongside Japanese Americans within the Caldwell Labor Camp (Ourada, 38-53). If Dittenber and the CHA can't acknowledge the continuity between Minidoka and Tule Lake and the Caldwell Labor Camp, they certainly can't acknowledge that the carceral conditions of the camp also extended to the Mexican residents who lived and worked along its Japanese American laborers.

Dittenber again draws together Japanese American and ethnic Mexican farmworkers in the final two paragraphs of his author's note from his historiography:

I am proud of the people of who lived and grew up at in the Camp. They overcame stigma, racism, intolerance and bigotry. Many Spoke frankly with me about the racism they experienced: "NO JAPS" and "NO MEXICANS" signs displayed prominently in business windows [...] Without exception, those who spoke of these tragic and painful exhibitions of

bigotry did not want them mentioned in the book. They have moved on. They have overcome. My prayers is that we ALL have grown in our understanding, as much as the victims of these acts. (Dittenber, iii; emphasis in the original)

While farmwork is undoubtedly *racialized* labor in that definitions and notions of race are continually employed and reconfigured to justify the hyper-exploitation of particular populations—but this manipulation of race is also a part of camp carcerality in that it keeps these populations in the carceral conditions of labor camps and fields over white bodies. This reality is carefully sidestepped by employing a post-racial ideology that states that a collective “we,” inclusive of those who both perpetrated and were the victims of racial violence, can and *have* moved past the historical moment of that violence, along with the memories, associations, feelings that they carry. But the testimony of Japanese Americans and their descendants and that of the Mexican migrant farmworkers who have been the subject of this chapter make clear, the carceral conditions of farm labor camps and the prisoner-farmworker conflation renders the past as ever present. Rather than having “moved on,” camp carcerality enacts a form of violent recursion where past carceral regimes live on for current and future farmworkers.

Conclusion

The history of barbed wire and its presence along the Caldwell Labor Camp reveals another entanglement between agricultural and carceral practices. Barbed wire shows the periphery of agricultural space by capturing migrant farmworkers in the spatial and psycho-socially liminal. These workers feel that they do not belong within the camp’s enclosure, but they also feel that they do not belong to the surrounding agricultural community, nor do they belong in the fields. This extreme alienation is encapsulated in their use of the term *el campo*—a polysemic term across multiple languages that describes the geographic, qualitative, and psyche-social dimensions of their labor

migration, but always in relation to the facets of camp carcerality. The presence of barbed wire in the Zavala family's memories of their farm labor camp experience across Idaho reveals that camp infrastructure functions as translation devices, translating the demands and needs of capital back to not only to farmworkers but also to the agricultural communities who depend on migrant agricultural labor for their social reproduction.

The memory of barbed wire also reveals that the ethnic Mexican experience of farm labor in Idaho is framed by the history of Japanese incarceration and their carceral farm labor. Analyzing specific components of camp infrastructure reveals that Mexican farmworkers experience their labor and social reproduction as inextricably linked to the past carceral regimes that built and/or operated out of such camps. In fact, the Japanese American prisoner-farmworker conflation became a kind of folktale through which Mexican migrants understand and communicate to future generations their labor and social reproduction's place within particular nodes of an ever-changing network of carceral relations. If A. Naomi Paik argues that the descendants of Japanese Americans incarcerated during WWII live in the afterlife of internment, then the testimony of ethnic Mexican farmworkers in Idaho reveals the way they *also* live in this afterlife.

CHAPTER 3

FROM LABOR CAMP TO LABOR *CAMPUS*: CURRENT CARCERAL CONDITIONS AND THE FUTURE OF THE CALDWELL LABOR CAMP/FARMWAY VILLAGE

Introduction

This chapter details the current carceral conditions at Farmway Village, and the Caldwell Housing Authority's (CHA) vision for the camp's future. Within this chapter, I continue to combine social geography with literary methodologies to read the labor camp itself and its operation and policies as a text for cultural analysis. This methodological approach has a long history within Latinx and Mexican American/Chicanx studies. For example, Chicanx literary scholar Mary Pat Brady introduced this kind of analysis in her book *Extinct Lands, Temporal Geographies: Chicana Literature and the Urgency of Space*, in which the Chicana experience of social space being transformed into carceral space is also a key feature of her interrogation of the multiple ways space and social relations constitute each other (Brady, 1-12). Following her analysis of a train station's transformation into a modern police station as an example of capitalist abstraction of space, I analyze the space of the Caldwell Labor Camp/Farmway Village to contest "the terms of capitalist spatial formation, including the attempts to regulate the meanings and uses of spaces, especially the use of space to naturalize violent racial, gender, sexual, and class ideologies" (Brady, 6).

My analysis of the current carceral conditions within Farmway Village focuses on the labor camp's turn to transnational Mexican migrant farmworkers brought to Caldwell on H-2A guest worker visas. While domestic Mexican American/Chicanx migrants and the local ethnic Mexican community still comprise a large portion of the camp's current occupants, the presence of H-2A workers signals a new, highly lucrative business model for the CHA. This new model, combined with recent changes in the Idaho housing market, have prompted the CHA to embark on a large-scale reorganization of the camp's operations and geography that includes beginning a research

collaboration with a local college and seeking the camp's incorporation into the official city limits of Caldwell.

Through an analysis of the camp's current cultural and social geography and operations along with the "everyday" media (Youtube videos, online articles, and investigative journalism) produced on the camp and by the CHA, we come to understand how the weather of camp carcerality sits over Caldwell today.

Farmway Village and H-2A Workers

In July 2021, I was invited to tour Farmway Village's current living quarters for H-2A guest workers—the transnational Mexican migrant farmworkers that the camp now relies upon. These workers are now the main source of income for the CHA, as it signs housing contracts with local *growers* to provide housing for the workers they bring to their fields on H-2A visas. Out of the 248 housing units available at the camp, 112 of those units are routinely filled with H-2A workers, meaning the majority of the CHA's income comes from approximately half of its total residents (Dittenber, 3.9.21, 47:46).

Historically, as a nonprofit, low-income housing authority, the CHA has relied on rents from leases with individual farmworkers (or their crew boss) and government subsidies and loans for income and to maintain its operations (Dittenber, 7.12.21; 36:07). The shift towards housing Mexican guest workers marks a crucial turn with significant consequences for the CHA, as it has proved incredibly lucrative, changed the overall demographics of the camp's residents, and prompted the CHA to sever its ties with the federal government, as well as to seek incorporation into the City of Caldwell (Dittenber, 3.9.21, 47:46-51:22). CHA Director Michael U. Dittenber describes what prompted this shift as follows:

Well, what I can tell you about the housing authority in the current modern era, is that we've kind of grown up a little. And we've also turned full circle and [came] back to where we started. [...] Sometime around 2016 Jamie Mertz from Simmons Fruit Ranch calls, and he says, 'I need some places for some farm laborers to stay.' And I went, 'Okay,' and he goes, 'They are part of the H-2A program.' And we went, 'Okay, well, we don't know anything about H-2A. But yeah, we'll enter into an agreement with you and will lease you some rooms [...] Well, then the next year, a couple more farmers ask, and then the next year, a few more. So, we're in our fifth or sixth year of providing housing to H-2A workers who are coming absolutely from Mexico. I mean, they leave Mexico one day and they're on a bus for 20 hours, and they show up here, absolutely in awe and confused, not knowing what's going to happen. And, we get about 400 of those HTA workers a year that come here. In the early years of us doing the H-2A program, the federal government, the administration at the time, was so against H-2A workers—but it's a matter of necessity. So, anyway, we got into an argument with the government about the type of people that we should be housing [domestic vs transnational migrant farmworkers]. And we ended up in December of 2019, [paying] off the government loans that we had with the government; we paid them all off, and we financially separated. We don't want to have anything more to do with government oversight. And that worked out well, for us. In the one year period since financial separation we were able to bank about \$260,000 in net deposits. (Dittenber, 3.9.21, 47:46-51:22)

According to Dittenber, this symbiotic relationship between the CHA and growers guarantees profits for each, as the CHA and growers do not have to maintain housing facilities that meet local regulatory standards, and the CHA can charge growers rental fees high enough to support the camp between growing seasons (Dittenber, 7.12.21, 42:55-50:44). However, I argue that for farmworkers and the Mexican American/Chicanx employees of the CHA, this new relationship between the camp,

growers, and farmworkers functions as an extension and reconfiguration of the 20th century field labor crew boss system and the Southern prison farm/plantation trusty system within the camp, systems which have served as some of the main tools of camp carcerality since Reconstruction (García-Colon, 148-149, 157; Goldfarb 19-28; Salinas, 114; Torres, 79-88).

Crew Bosses

The crew boss (also referred to as a crew leader or labor recruiter or agent) has historically been the lynchpin to the domestic migrant farm labor system. In the case of Mexican American and Chicano farmworkers, crew bosses have typically been from Mexican communities who have historically performed migrant farmwork, with the majority operating out of California and Texas. These individuals function as the intermediaries between growers (often located in other states) and the farmworkers they manage/recruit for seasonal field labor (García-Colon, 148-149; Goldfarb, 24; Salinas, 115, Torres, 78-81). In fact, almost every aspect of agricultural labor migration is managed by these labor middlemen, from contacting growers needing labor, to gathering farmworkers from their localities, to arranging and negotiating wages, and providing transportation, housing, and even providing (or policing) living necessities such as food. But such power and influence over the very conditions of life and labor in the fields means that crew bosses have ample opportunity to exploit the farmworkers under their charge for their own gain (García-Colón, 157; Goldfarb, 19-28; Salinas, 114; Torres, 78-81).

The level of accountability the crew boss should shoulder for the safety and living and working conditions of the farmworkers they interact with has been a vexed question since the early 20th century. Mexican migrant farmworkers who came to Idaho during the early 20th century until WWII were recruited along the South Texas-Mexico border by mostly white labor recruiters hired by newly developed Idaho agribusiness, but Mexican crew leaders were quickly established in practice

in the fields. When living and working conditions proved inhumane, the Mexican Consulate office in Salt Lake City, Utah was the main advocate for transnational Mexican farmworkers in Idaho, but their efforts were often thwarted due to confusion in the courts over who (crew leaders in the fields, recruiters, or growers) was actually responsible for their living conditions and wages (Jones & Hodges, 67-68).

During the postwar years, the state at various levels (both agriculturally dependent states and the federal government) tried to regulate crew bosses' activities, as well as profit from them. In *Managed Migrations: Growers, Farmworkers, and Border Enforcement in the Twentieth Century*, Mexican-American historian Cristina Salinas details the Texas state's attempt to regulate ethnic Mexican agricultural labor migration through 1940s legislation aimed at crew bosses. She argues that the state used the figure of the crew boss to deflect blame and responsibility for the inhumane living and working conditions of agricultural labor migration (115), and to increase their disciplinary control over Mexican Americans by controlling their movements:

By focusing on the labor contractor, in the contexts of the domestic migration of Mexican American farmworkers and the international migration of Mexican agricultural workers, U.S. and Mexican government officials attempted to establish greater state control over workers' mobility. (Salinas, 116)

In analyzing her own grandfather's experience as a crew boss in the 1940s, Salinas also argues that many ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers operating in the state made a distinction between the roles of a crew boss/leader and a labor recruiter/agent based on perceived differences between the type of income each made, as well as the shared experiences between crew leaders and the workers they managed. Salinas summarizes this distinction as follows:

Labor agents primarily made their money in connecting laborers to employers, charging workers or employers or both, a fee for providing the procurement services. Labor agents

often provided transportation to the place of employment, charging workers from that as well. By contrast, agricultural crew leaders traveled with workers to their destinations, often shared their accommodations, served as intermediaries between employers and workers, and supervised some aspects of the agricultural work. Though they did not fulfill the same role in the agricultural economy, labor agents and crew leaders resembled each other in that they both facilitated the movement of low-waged workers. (Salinas, 115)

While this argument takes care to incorporate Mexican-American farmworkers' own experiences and theorizations in understanding divisions of labor in the fields, these distinctions were often blurred by individual state and farming community practices and infrastructure, as well as the labor history of individual crew bosses. Due to these contingencies, other farmworker studies scholars maintain that the crew boss system is a continuing vestige of U.S. farmwork's origin in plantation slavery. In his exposé on the organized abandonment of migrant farmworkers by the state titled *Migrant Farmworkers: A Caste of Despair*, legal scholar and labor attorney Ronald L. Goldfarb states that, "The crew leader's role as a factor in the agricultural labor marketplace reveals a graphic picture of the enslavement of migrant farmworkers" (Goldfarb, 19). Goldfarb argues that the crew boss system and its estrangement of farmworkers from growers and the state facilitates farmworker exclusion from minimum working age and wage laws, unemployment and workmen's compensation, and the labor protections. Similarly, in *The Human Cost of Food: Farmworkers' Lives, Labor, and Advocacy*, documentary studies scholar and cultural anthropologist Charles D. Thompson Jr. sees the power crew bosses wield, and the alienation between farmworkers and growers they engender, as preserving key practices from slavery: "Overseers of slave days have been replaced by labor contractors on these agribusiness operations, but the relations between workers and crew bosses retain traces of those heavy-handed arrangements of old" (Thompson, Jr., 14).

In *Dust for Blood: Long Island Migrant Labor Camps*, independent labor historian and labor attorney Mark A. Torres gives a graphic glimpse into how crew bosses wielded their power to create and exacerbate carceral conditions in the Long Island potato farming and commercial duck industries. Torres reveals how crew bosses functioned as modern slavers during the early to mid-20th century, with farmworkers of all ages and races being abducted by labor recruiters from farming communities in the South, as well as from other farms on Long Island, to work on the farms of their preferred growers (Torres, 79-98). These farmworkers were then tied to their unscrupulous abductor through the crew bosses' complete control of the wage and payment system, often leaving farmworkers in debt to these individuals at the end of the harvest season (Torres, 79-98). For these reasons, Torres equates the crew boss system with human trafficking (80).

Crew bosses' language skills are a key part of their power. Becoming a crew boss is often only possible for individuals who are bilingual, owing to the history of limited primary education or lack of bilingual education in Mexican communities (Gamboa, 14; McWilliams, 232-234). In the words of Erasmo Gamboa, "[Crew bosses] functioned as powerful intermediaries between laborer and employer because most understood English and Spanish and were able to mediate the conditions and terms of employment" (Gamboa, 14).

Key to Gamboa's description is the word "mediation." While the expectation was and is that crew bosses would transparently communicate the living and working conditions on the migrant trail, the reality, both past and current, is that their position of power allowed them to represent wage negotiations with the grower and the living and working conditions in the fields as something very different from its lived reality, making these figures a key aspect of the carceral farmwork system.

As a figure of discipline and control, I argue that the crew boss is a central feature of camp carcerality through the entrapment of farmworkers in agriculture related and land use employment. Crew bosses facilitate this entrapment through their exploitation of farmworkers, and the role

becomes aspirational in the power it wields. Even if migrant farmworkers manage to increase their financial and social standing enough to leave work in the fields, ideologies about race and labor, including the prisoner-farmworker conflation along with associations of Mexicans with dirt and contagion, criminality, and chosen poverty, relegate them to other jobs in food processing or manual labor in land use and conservation (Baker, 264 ; Mize & Swords, 47-61). Charles D. Thompson has termed the perpetual itinerancy of migrant agricultural labor as the “farmworker treadmill”:

Though farmworkers have farm knowledge and real skills that are invaluable on farms, skills learned from generations of ancestors in Mexico and elsewhere, these skills do not help them advance in the field of agriculture. Thus, farmwork as it is organized today is a treadmill of labor that benefits agribusiness and entraps workers in cycles of travel and poverty.

(Thompson, 9)

In the case of Caldwell, avenues to escape the “treadmill” include the canneries and food processing plants of J. R. Simplot Company, Birdseye, and Carnation—three of the country’s largest producers of frozen and shelf-stable foods²² all with processing plants in Caldwell or the surrounding area. Others find work maintaining agriculture’s many machines, working as mechanics or technicians for local agribusiness’s many combines, tractors, and threshers, etc.; while still others have been forced to become local firefighters²³ (Baker, 162; Sifuentez, 37, 82-84). While these jobs

²² Simplot is an international, multibillion dollar private agribusiness company founded in Idaho in 1929, but came to prominence during WWII with its potato dehydration process that was crucial for military field rations. The company became an even larger food producer in the late 1960s when its food scientists created the frozen french fries, and became the largest potato supplier to McDonald’s (O’Keefe, *Successful Farming*). One of the main processing plants is located less than 5 miles from Farmway Village.

²³ This form of entrapment within agriculture industries has been particularly well documented in the Pacific Northwest since the area’s first Mexican guest workers arrived at the beginning of the 20th century, when farmworkers were forced to work on improving agricultural infrastructure and land management, building railroads, irrigation canals, and fighting forest fires due to over-recruitment of farmworkers for southern Idaho’s pea fields (Jones & Hodges, 56; Sifuentez, 82-84). Regional labor historian Mario Sifuentez has detailed how one consequence of the entrapment of farmworkers in landuse industries has long been taking ethnic Mexican farmworkers out of the fields to combat the area’s annual forest fires. Many of the region’s first *braceros* were forced to become the region’s full time firefighting crew, tackling wildfires in the fields and conducting controlled burns to make way for more cropland throughout Eastern Oregon and Western Idaho (Sifuentez, 32, 82-84). In Brett Story’s film, *The Prison in Twelve Landscapes*, firefighting is revealed to be a pervasive historical and current carceral practice.

may take farmworkers out of the fields (often temporarily), they can be just as physically demanding or rife with wage theft, and they often lead right back to the fields—leaving the role of the crew boss as the only means to secure better wages and living conditions in the long run.

This process of becoming captive in agricultural related labor and its trajectory to being a crew boss is also evidenced in the Zavala family's working history—as Herminia Zavala worked in all three of the above-mentioned processing plants during the 1970s and '80s (Herminia Zavala, 1.19.23), and her late husband, Guadalupe (father to Nora and Marcus G. Zavala), became a local Treasure Valley crew boss, which, ultimately, led to him to becoming a Deputy Sheriff of Wilder, Idaho.

Guadalupe began working in the fields as a child in the 1940s under his father, Marcos Zavala, who worked as a crew boss for the majority of his life. After marrying in 1955, Guadalupe and Herminia spent the early years of their marriage continuing to work as migrant farmworkers across the nation as part of Marcos's crew (Herminia Zavala, 7.1.2019, 06:430). After the family settled in Caldwell, Idaho, in the 1960s, Guadalupe eventually became a local crew boss himself, recruiting and overseeing crews of other South Texas farmworkers and then transnational migrant farmworkers from Mexico in the 1980s in the wake of. Dissatisfied with life as a farmworker and crew boss, Guadalupe aspired to a life outside of the fields. After trying other professions, including becoming a barber and local radio host throughout the 1970s (Herminia Zavala, 5.21.2018, 05:50), Guadalupe was once again corralled back into the fields, where he began to exploit his fellow farmworkers through wage theft, and, eventually, immigration fraud. Guadalupe's exploitation and disciplinary control over farmworkers eventually caught the attention of local authorities, and he was offered a position policing his own community in 1980. As Herminia Zavala recalls:

I want to say that when we were in Wilder, they wanted a Mexican police[man] to go to the camp. And, they gave school[ing] to my husband. He went to Oregon for schooling to be a

policeman. And he finished, and he was the [Deputy] Sheriff at night there in Wilder, Idaho. Because he was a Mexican, he [could] go to the labor camp and arrest people. (Herminia Zavala, 5.21.2018, 06:54-07:43)

As a Deputy Sheriff, Guadalupe was able to increase his exploitation of migrant farmworkers, using his authority as a policeman to promise transnational farmworkers from Mexico help with their immigration process—for a price. His son, Marcus G. Zavala, recalls that his father’s time as a Deputy Sheriff was a way of getting off of the treadmill of farmwork, but at the expense of others still laboring in the fields:

My dad ended up becoming Deputy Sheriff of Wilder, Idaho. And we bought a house there. Then we were kind of a little bit higher on the chain. We weren't quite white, but we were definitely above the Mexicans from Mexico. And he was a crook. I mean, he would take these Mexicans' money and say that he was going to get their [residency and immigration] papers and then he wouldn't. [...] And, you know, they're after him because he took their money, and he's not getting them their papers. He was like, “You want your papers? I'll deport your ass. I'm the Deputy Sheriff!” (Marcus Zavala, 4.18.21, 23:25-25:10)

For the Zavala family, the trajectory from the migrant trail to settling out in Idaho and becoming a crew boss led directly to the carceral exploitation of their fellow ethnic Mexican migrant farmworkers through an alignment with the most militant functionary of camp carcerality—the police. Their labor history and entrapment in camp carcerality was a key reason why law enforcement in the Treasure Valley recognized the disciplinary function of the figure of the crew boss and recruited one to serve as a “sub-boss” within their ranks.

The Building Tender/Trusty System

Some scholars argue that the crew leader system began as a particular facet of Mexican-American agricultural labor migration, but expanded to become a national standard in the postwar years as they filled the void in farm labor left by the federal government's waning international guest worker programs (Benson, 592). However, following Robert Chase's argument that "the practice of employing prisoners in a 'sub-boss' system dates back to the Reconstruction era" and developed into the building tender/trusty system on Southern prison farms (Chase, 38), I argue that the crew boss system is an offshoot of the building tender/trusty system, a facet of southern prison farms and plantations where certain prisoners were given power over others, including power over cell assignment and housing conditions, leisure activities, food and commodities, and working conditions in the fields (Oshinky, 140-141; Chase 38, 103-104)

Within the Texas prison farm/plantation system, building tender/trusty status afforded more freedom and granted tasks and responsibilities in overseeing fellow prisoners that took them out of the fields. The trusty system was hierarchical with certain trusties promoted to the position of "building tenders" who were responsible for disciplining prisoners in the dormitories and on the prison farm. Building tenders held an enormous amount of power in the Texas prison system, as they could move more freely, controlled the prison economy, and "use[d] their influence and power to change the living arrangements of other prisoners" (Chase, 103). The latter power was particularly important as their influence over prisoner living arrangements undercut prisoner solidarity in contesting abusive conditions. This system was one of the longest-standing aspects of the Texas carcerality, continuing from the early nineteenth-century through the mid-1980s (Chase, 38).

Crew bosses are still a mainstay of migrant agricultural labor, but through the case study of Caldwell and Farmway Village, I argue that the figures of the crew boss and the building tender/trusty continue to operate in the lives of Mexican farmworkers today, albeit in other, abstracted forms. For H-2A workers residing at Farmway Village, these figures come together in the

employees of the CHA, as the maintenance staff of the H-2A worker living facilities embody the race, language, and possible (relative) culture of the H-2A workers, but their position(ality) relative to these workers has been imbued with power through the historical legacy of the crew boss and trusty system and their position within Farmway Village's camp carcerality. Like crew bosses, these employees are still members of the working poor who are subject to aspects of camp carcerality (including the farmworker treadmill and the prisoner-farmworker conflation) through their collective racialization. But just as with Texas prison farm/plantation building tenders/trusties, these racialized, carceral subjects are empowered to surveil and discipline farmworkers, particularly in regards to housing conditions.

My time visiting Farmway Village offers a view of how these past carceral regimes still impact socio-spatial relations for ethnic Mexican farmworkers. At the end of a series of interviews with CHA staff at the CHA's main office on July 21, 2021, Dittenber introduced me to a Mexican American CHA employee responsible for maintaining the section of camp reserved for Mexican H-2A farmworkers. This individual was tasked with taking me on a tour of the various housing facilities. Before the tour began, I insisted that I was only interested in viewing *unoccupied* living quarters, and I proceeded to follow the employee to a pickup truck. I was driven to the most remote side of the labor camp where I encountered rows of long, single story cinder block buildings that were reserved for single, male H-2A visa workers. These buildings harkened back to the wooden barracks of the camp's past in both dimension and design (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Left: The last original barrack from the camp's original architecture. Right: Current barracks reserved for H-2A workers. Photos by author.

It was also evident that H-2A workers were effectively sequestered from the rest of the camp's other farmworker or low-income housing residents given the distance they would have to walk to the front gate and other residences. When the CHA employee approached one of these contemporary barracks and unlocked the door, I was surprised to find that I had been led to a building currently occupied by farmworkers who were out working the day in the fields. From the doorway, I could see that the barrack consisted of two parallel rooms, each 10 by 30 feet. The first consisted of a small kitchen and common room along with a single-toilet bathroom. The back room was used as sleeping quarters and included four to five bunk beds. In total the room held 8-10 men.

I was encouraged to photograph the space and even these migrants' personal belongings (which I refused) to document exactly "how good these guys have it" in the words of the CHA employee. Sensing my anger and unease at violating these workers' privacy, the employee I was with was quick to remind me that the CHA regularly entered and inspected H-2A living quarters without their knowledge, as this was one of the conditions of their housing contract—a contract signed between the CHA and growers and not the migrants themselves. Questions about why these clauses were indeed needed in the contract were met with silence.

Later, my attempts to interview farmworkers who were residing in these accommodations were unsuccessful as they unanimously refused to speak with me on tape, especially on the camp grounds and within the vicinity of the barracks themselves. Tellingly, several code-switched to

English when speaking with me on camp grounds even if I engaged them in Spanish, suggesting that the use of Spanish in our interaction was suspect to the powers that be at the camp. When I met these men in the fields, they expressed anxiety over what they described as near constant surveillance and feared reprisals from CHA employees and Dittenber for speaking with me, namely the “disappearance” of personal effects from their living space or being moved between different housing units—a punishment that is both physical and psychological for these farmworkers. Physically relocating after 12-14 hour days in the fields is further exhausting, but being forced to change dwellings not only brings up the opportunity for things to “disappear,” but is psychologically taxing as these workers are never able to psychologically or emotionally rest without personal space. In this instance, we again see how movement defines the carceral living and working conditions for migrant farmworkers, as physical movement between living quarters is punitive in the context of the labor camp not only due to the effects of their labor/exhaustion, but also because it resonates with the punitive practice of moving prisoners’ between different cells in prisons *and* with the cultural memory of banishment, expulsion, and forced movement for Mexican communities in the U.S. I also read this practice by the CHA as resonating with *testimonios* on anti-Mexican police violence, such as the stories told by Herminia Quintanilla. Her account of her father-in-law’s encounters with the Texas Rangers and their demand that Mexican men remove themselves from their homes for their own lynching, along with her other tales of farmworkers being supernaturally carried from shelters and placed outdoors on the migrant trail, form a crucial historical and psycho-social backdrop for the housing practices Mexican H-2A workers describe.

The conditions exhibited by the CHA and the policing of personal space echo multiple descriptions of both migrant labor camp and prison farm/plantation housing conditions throughout the 20th century. Mark A. Torres describes how similar-style sleeping conditions to Caldwell on Long

Island potato farms during the 1940s led to the exact concerns that Mexican migrant workers living at Farmway Village describe:

The bullpen-style sleeping quarters at the camps allowed no personal space for workers to relax peacefully in bed or maintain any type of privacy. Since there was no furniture, the workers were unable to secure any meager belongings they might have had. Those with personal items of value became frequent targets of thieves or bullies at the camp who often stole such property or took it by force. Without adequate and private living space, the migrant workers were denied the sanctity of [being] human beings. (Torres, 95)

These living conditions also resonate with what Robert Chase explains were the organizing principles of housing for prewar Texas prison farms. Each individual barracks or dormitory was referred to as a “tank”:

Each of these tanks...resembled the “the hold of ship”...that meant that each man was provided only 16 to 25 square feet of floor space, including toilet, washing, recreational and passage space. Rows of double-deck bunks were jammed together, allowing prisoners to cross from one to the other without touching the floor.” (Chase, 36-37)

The invocation of the metonym of the “hold of a ship” in describing early 20th century prison conditions is telling given the fact that the prison farm was a direct descendant of the sugar and cotton-growing plantations of the 19th century (Chase, 35). Chase both make the continuity between Texas plantation slavery, Reconstruction-era Jim and Juan Crow practices, early and 20th mid-century Texas prison models, and contemporary farm labor conditions clear in his description of how Mexican bodies have been a focal point in each of these carceral regimes. Christina Sharpe also makes clear the legacy of the ship’s hold in constructing both the prison and the migrant labor camp, stating:

The semiotics of the slave ship continue: from the forced movements of the enslaved to the *forced movements of the migrant* and the refugee, to the regulation of Black people in North American streets and neighborhoods, to those ongoing crossings of and drownings in the Mediterranean Sea, to the brutal colonial reimagings of the slave ship and the ark; to the reappearances of the slave ship in everyday life in the form of the prison, *the camp*, and the school. (Sharpe, 21; emphasis mine)

In Chase's analysis of the landmark *Ruiz v. Estelle* case and its attendant prisoner rights movement, Chase traces Mexican American/Chicanx prisoners' intimate understanding of this continuity through their own words and the media they produced in their movement to end the Texas prison plantation system. Mexicans who contested the conditions in Texas prisons invoked slavery not as an appropriative metaphor but with a full understanding of the development of carceral logics from slavery to the 1970s, explaining in the media that they produced how modern carceral practices have been refined on Mexican bodies since 1848, and that their bodies were the backbone of the Texas prison farm and plantation systems (Chase, 298-303). With the decline of the institutional prison farm and plantation, these past models for managing prisoner dwellings/living conditions live on in labor camp dormitory living for contemporary farmworkers. In my experience of Farmway Village, this carceral continuity is evident on the camp grounds, as the past carceral regimes of plantation slavery, the Texas prison system, and Japanese incarceration are brought together, reconfigured, and experienced in the present.

The CHA interprets their power granted within their contracts with growers as a carceral social contract *with migrants* whereby they willingly forfeit privacy and agency over their mobility and personal space as part of their decision to perform agricultural labor. The CHA's admittance that they regularly "inspect" H-2A workers' dwellings brings up another aspect of labor camp living that is part and parcel of camp carcerality: undocumentedness. The carceral history of farm labor, both in

Caldwell and in general, begs the question: How do transnational Mexican farmworkers within Farmway Village protect their privacy and secure their documents and wages? These ongoing practices recall Dittenber's anecdote regarding former Japanese American residents of the camp during WWII who insisted that they were subject to privacy invasions and inspections of their dwellings by camp officials and the police for contraband cameras. The CHA denies these past carceral conditions through Dittenber's intentional omission of this experience in his version of the camp's history; the irony being that the CHA now readily admits that it performs this very kind of surveillance and invasion under Dittenber's authority as camp Director.

The race of the employee responsible for maintaining H-2A housing is also significant in that it resonates with the prewar prison farm/plantation building tender/trusty system.²⁴ While the employee is not a current farmworker himself, the history of Chicana/Mexican American settlement in Idaho's Treasure Valley was exclusively predicated on farm labor (Jones & Hodges, 41-77; Gamboa, 1-21; Baker, 57-92), and within it "Mexican" is a racialized social and labor position regardless of citizenship. While the employee's U.S. citizenship may have played a factor in securing his labor outside of the fields, he still cannot escape the consequences of his racialization and the association with migrant agricultural labor, chosen poverty, and criminality. In fact, in an echo of Gamboa's description of the factors that led farmworkers to become crew bosses, the CHA employee's race is what allows him to police H-2A workers, as his fluency in Spanish, while ostensibly allowing for better communication with the camp's residents (Dittenber does not speak fluent Spanish), functions in practice as a tool to police Mexican nationals. Caught in the larger history of camp carcerality, Mexican Americans have gone from being its main carceral subjects to

²⁴ The building tender/trusty system was a tool used to inflict multiple forms of violence, mainly on the bodies of BIPOC prisoners, including the thousands of Mexican American/Chicana prisoners in the Texas prison system. In his history of the landmark *Ruiz v. Estelle* court case and the prisoners' rights movements, which effectively ended Texas's prison plantation system, Robert Chase argues that this system was used by the state at multiple levels to institute prison rape and sexual enslavement as "a state orchestrated design that privileged white prisoners with the power to use sexual violence to dehumanize and terrorize prisoners of color" (Chase, 22).

being functionaries of the system, helping to police Mexican nationals who share their racialization. In this process camp carcerality simultaneously integrates the capitalist “bootstrap” ideology of labor and social mobility along with the Latino Threat narrative for new Mexican migrants to create a narrative of socio-economic progress for Mexican Americans that puts them “above” the fields. Beginning on the “bottom” socio-economic position of farmwork, their decades of labor have “earned” them positions in other agricultural jobs outside of the fields and their “value” (both social and economic) has been elevated in relation to H-2A workers. Though the trusty system was ostensibly abolished by the 1980s, its core tenants remain, as the Prisoner-Farmworker Conflation demands that these workers need to be watched, and the history and practices of carceral agricultural labor demand that they be watched by their own. In order to guarantee better living conditions than the camp’s farmworkers, the CHA’s Mexican-American employees are tasked with surveilling them.

In his study of the Farm Labor Program, a federal program modeled after the *bracero* program to bring Puerto Rican migrant farmworkers to the mainland U.S. after WWII, Ismael García-Colón states that, “Farmers, crew leaders, local officials, and the police force formed the power structure that attempted to reinforce inequality and segregation to ensure the availability of a disciplined labor force” (García-Colón, 181). Practices like the CHA’s system of signing housing contracts directly with growers continue this power structure today, as it further abstracts employer-employee relations while also increasing the carceral control of H-2A migrant workers in the labor camp itself. In this contemporary iteration of the system, growers are insulated from worker complaints of abuse, along with what little state regulatory power exists, by deferring to the CHA as the body legally responsible for maintaining housing conditions. In turn, the CHA is protected from the consequences of housing abuses by invoking “camp thinking,” to frame migrant living conditions as “exactly as they should be” in accordance with ideological colonialism, thus obscuring a system that is engineered to both create and justify the need for carceral conditions within migrant labor

camps. In addition, the H-2A visa system adds an extra layer of precarity, as the threat of termination, and therefore deportation, can come from any actor within the farm labor system, whether it be a crew boss, a CHA employee, a field overseer, or the growers themselves—word can always be “passed up the chain” to authorities who can terminate the labor contract. Within this system, migrant farmworkers living within the camp have little to no formal recourse in combating the carceral conditions they experience.

The Future of El Campo

While the above passages have given insight into the current operation of Farmway Village, the future of the camp is being actively decided. The CHA’s current business model, based on year-round housing contracts between the CHA and growers, has proved incredibly lucrative. In a July 2021 public board meeting, the CHA released its 2021 Director’s Financial Report, which stated that Farmway Village had over \$1 million in surplus *cash*.

These incredible profits were made while the Idaho housing market was in a state of crisis, as rents and property values have soared in recent years to an all-time high. According to the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA), Idaho led the nation in housing appreciation in 2021 with property values soaring 37.1 percent in a single quarter.²⁵ Rental market prices matched pace, creating a housing crisis for nearly half of all Idahoans. The National Low-Income Housing Coalition reported during that year that a worker earning minimum wage (\$7.25 an hour) had to work 83 hours a week to afford a one-bedroom rental home at the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development’s monthly Fair Market Rent of \$781.²⁶ In addition, reports by the James A. & Louise McClure Center for Public Policy Research at the University of Idaho stated that more than half of

²⁵ https://www.fhfa.gov/AboutUs/Reports/ReportDocuments/2021Q2_HPI.pdf

²⁶ <https://nlihc.org/oor/state/id>

working adults in Idaho could not afford basic necessities—all while the COVID 19 pandemic raged on.²⁷

In the face of such extreme housing insecurity, the CHA began to re-evaluate its place in the affordable housing market and its current operations. In doing so, the CHA conceived of a plan to increase its housing offerings, operations, and revenue through a multi-stage plan that it unveiled during a series of Board of Directors meetings throughout 2021. The plan includes renovating and utilizing property the CHA owns within the city limits of Caldwell for further rent revenue; increasing the total square feet of Farmway Village by developing adjacent land for a mobile home rental lot; lobbying for the labor camp to be annexed into Caldwell’s city limits, commissioning an academic study of the camp by the College of Idaho, located within Caldwell; and, ultimately, courting corporate sponsorship of the campsite to ensure future revenue. The latter two points of the plan have the greatest consequences in regards to the proliferation of camp carcerality, as they are co-constitutive according to the CHA. In an interview conducted in March 2021, Dittenber explained how the decision to commission a dual quantitative and qualitative analysis of the labor camp came from his own experience as a data analyst for the Clinton administration and the Boise Police Dept., but also out of the interest in the cultural memory of the Caldwell Labor Camp/Farmway Village that came from the 2012 reunion and the publication of his history of the camp:

[During the housing crisis] there came a time when the question then became, ‘What does Farmway Village, the labor camp, the Caldwell Labor Camp—What does that mean to people?’ And that’s a question that I’m going to be dealing with the College of Idaho [...] I want to see if I can embed, *unbeknownst to the tenants*, two or three students out here. And

²⁷ <https://www.uidaho.edu/-/media/UIDaho-Responsive/Files/president/direct-reports/mcclure-center/Idaho-at-a-Glance/idaho-at-a-glance-housing-insecurity-2020.pdf?la=en&hash=4B4FD7DBB1FA0D8C7313A8E6945CC6C18DCFBB26>

just have them kind of put some sort of qualitative analysis together. What does it mean to people to have a type of project like this to live at?” (Dittenber, 3.09.21; emphasis my own)

One could assume that Dittenber answered the question of the “meaning” of the labor camp in the research and publication of his 2012 historiography titled *Caldwell Labor Camp: A Place to Call Home*, which contains excerpts from 27 oral history interviews he conducted with former residents. However, “people” here refers to *current* residents of the labor camp, rather than past. In the decade since the book’s publication, the camp has undergone numerous changes, the principal being the transition from the affordable housing revenue model that relied on camp occupancy and government subsidies to the grower cooperation model for H2A workers, as previously discussed (Dittenber, 7.12.21, 36:03-42:06). This has changed the camp’s demographics in favor of H2A workers from Mexico, in turn changing many Mexican-American/Chicanx residents’ relation to the camp in that the size of their particular community has diminished, while demand for housing in Farmway Village has gone up. Dittenber’s description of the impetus for the study of the camp reveals that the CHA is aware of the impact that these socio-economic and material changes have on the site’s evolving cultural memory, of which the CHA has tried to control through its own mediation of camp culture and history. These changes now require a new assessment of the camp’s population, and, critically, a new set of *testimonies* about the camp after the 2012 publication of Dittenber’s historiography.

This research collaboration between the CHA and the College of Idaho (COI) became a reality in the fall of 2021 in the form of a three-year partnership with the Department of Anthropology & Sociology, with an option for future renewal. In terms of undergraduate student involvement, four students (all BIPOC women) were chosen to be part of the inaugural cohort to live at the labor camp for an academic year. These students were given access to vehicles for

transportation to and from the camp and their research needs along with a \$700 monthly stipend²⁸ (Dittenber, 7.12.21, 15:23). Each student stayed enrolled in regular classes while they lived in the camp and crafted their own qualitative research project in line with the inaugural theme of “housing security” and in coordination with COI faculty. The final outcomes of these research projects were presented at the 4th College’s Student Research Conference in May 2023.

A recent article posted on the COI website highlighting its collaboration with the CHA gives more insight into how the two organizations are mediating the project. The article focuses on graduating senior Chelsea Neto, a student whose research “focused on housing security in the area and its impact on workplace productivity,” and who also organized community events for the children who live at Farmway Village. Commenting on what he feels are the unique benefits of the collaboration, Professor Sean Blackwell, the project’s main academic director, stated, “Opportunities like this just don’t exist elsewhere. I have never heard of anything like it for students: live for free and get paid to design their own research projects. As long as it is about affordable housing and it adheres to an annual theme, they (CHA) are happy.”²⁹ For Neto, a native Angolan, her time at Farmway Village was largely a cultural experience—breaking the campus “bubble” by establishing connections in the surrounding community. However, in the article’s description of the personal benefits for Neto there is the superimposition of another element onto the larger narrative of scholarly research and community engagement—that of family. The article quotes Neto several times relating her time with camp residents as time spent with family, stating, “I haven’t gone home in three years now and being here seemed like I was home. These kids reminded me a lot of the kids at home. My family members as well as other kids.” Later, she writes that “They [the residents] treated

²⁸ https://www.collegeofidaho.edu/news/farmway-family-immersive-research-transforms-researcher?fbclid=IwAR1qNhkzj92d9DG8OPEzSHZ8IKt1L06xK400Oi9uJj5rhO_NyrKiw33wYXo

²⁹ *ibid.*

me like family. They made sure to take care of me. They were wonderful neighbors.”³⁰ The use and framing of Neto’s quote resonates with many of the curated oral history excerpts in Dittenber’s historiography that express sentiments like those of Brenda Espinosa Howard, who was a camp resident from 1969 to 1979:

I remember the labor camp being like one big family where everyone helped each other out. We watched out for each other and in the process made great friends. If we were out of something, we could always count on our neighbors to have what we needed. People would just give things to us. We were taught by our parents that family was important, and the labor camp helped us believe that. (Dittenber, 126)

Dittenber’s own parting words at the end of his historiography cap the “family” refrain:

This strong commitment forged loyalties amongst the residents and everyone considered themselves as one little part of the larger *labor camp family*. Within the labor camp family, there was encouragement for those determined to make a better life for themselves; compassion and sorrow for those who lost loved ones; generosity for those with temporal needs; excitements for the victorious; marvel at every new-born; and celebrations for those who grew old and those who were married. (Dittenber, 147; emphasis my own)

While CHA and COI seem to focus on communicating the effects associated with family (belonging, being valued, feeling protected, etc.) in their mediation of the interpersonal and the broader “town and country” relations that constitute camp life, in fact, this emphasis on family reveals that the camp is operating in relation to the farmworkers they house and these new student researchers according to Total Quality Management. This term, taken from organizational management theory, describes the shifts in corporate culture to seemingly less hierarchical structures

³⁰ *ibid.*

and titles that began in the late 1980s (Casey, 155-156). This shift has become even more apparent since the proliferation of large, public data and technology firms. Key to these new organizational cultures and management styles are practices such as relying on the operating metaphors of “team” and “family” to promote the company not as profit generators but as “caring, familial communities” (Casey, 156). The ubiquity of this “team-family” culture today is evidenced in the lower-tier employee recruitment advertisements from companies like Facebook and Amazon. For example, television and online recruitment ads for Amazon’s fulfillment centers (warehouses) contain testimony from current employees on the way the team-family structure improves their lives, often as members of stigmatized or “othered” populations, including racial, gender, and sexual minorities. In an ad from March 8, 2021, a transgender employee describes how being a part of the Amazon team-family allowed her to receive gender affirming care, stating, “I had so many people say ‘Don’t [work at Amazon]. It’s long hours; you’re on your feet all day.’ No, it’s not like that. Amazon is *here for us*.”³¹

However, as employment relations scholar Catherine Casey makes clear in her article “‘Come, Join Our Family’: Discipline and Integration in Corporate Organizational Culture,” the deployment of these community metaphors have psycho-social effects that serve as “processes of regulation, discipline, and control of employee subject selves” (Casey, 157). Casey describes how employees at multinational corporations must psychologically adapt to the new “family” work environment that operates less on formal disciplining measures in favor of often unspoken, internalized rules around authority and social behavior that are purposefully associated with “rules originally laid down in childhood socialization, and to which family-style cultures encourage regression” (Casey, 173). Casey argues, following Habermas, that in adapting to these norms and attitudes, employees undergo a process of *colonization*. Casey writes:

³¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKsXj5G_TmA

Colonization describes the processes in which dominant organizational values and behaviors displace or transpose former practices, including affective experiences such as anger, cynicism, or resistance that were tolerated in traditional industrial workplaces, while simultaneously establishing a dependency relation with the organization. Colonization is the preeminent accomplishment of the apparatus of the new culture which obstructs and delimits psychic development and maturation, and neutralizes awareness of the disciplinary operation. Consequently, resistance, while always possible, is truncated and circumscribed by private survival. (Casey, 174)

Here we encounter a resonance with sociologist Richard Baker's theory of "ideological colonialism" that he developed in his study of Caldwell in the early 1990s. For Baker, one of the key beliefs that make up the colonial ideologies around Mexican Americans in Caldwell is that current social institutions, including agribusiness and the migrant labor camp system, *function as they should for everyone's* individual and collective benefit (Baker, 19). While the CHA is technically a nonprofit, and therefore (theoretically) should not be structured according to corporate models, it is generating profits as seen in the July 2021 financial report. And this profit is contingent upon the carceral control of the farmworkers that the camp houses and the ideological acceptance and proliferation of camp carcerality in the surrounding community.

For the CHA, the "labor camp family" consists of CHA staff, including the Director, current and former residents (H-2A workers and the Mexican-American working poor), the growers who employ these residents, the Caldwell City Council, and now academic institutions and their student researchers. These new additions to the CHA's "family" effectively incorporates these students into this process of colonization through their promotion of the camp's "team-family" culture. y conducting research whose teleological goal is to confirm that the camp will continue to *function as it should* for everyone's benefit, students and faculty at COI come to form part of this totalizing

‘everyone.’ But this turn to corporate culture also means that H-2A workers now live and work under two disciplinary regimes: a hierarchical regime that is the legacy of the Texas prison plantation and Southern Parchman farm systems; and now the informal, hidden regime of psychological control where their possible “anger, cynicism, and resistance” is displaced or circumscribed through their (limited) inclusion into the neoliberal “labor camp family.” While the CHA and Blackwell’s comments paint the research collaboration as being both student- and community-focused, providing social, cultural, and academic opportunities for all, the mediation of the camp and its new research project minimize the point that these opportunities come at the *expense* of Mexican migrant farmworkers and other members of the Mexican working poor. These individuals have been transformed into research *subjects*, as their agency over their interactions with these students is immanently limited.

While there are measures within the academy such as Institutional Review Board (IRB) research standards that limit the scope of the CHA’s intent for the academic collaboration, especially in regards to the students being embedded within the camp without the resident’s knowledge, the question must be asked: how are these students’ interactions (both real and imagined by the CHA) with migrant farmworkers and other Mexican members of the working poor not a form of carceral surveillance legitimated through a positivist apprehension of the camp’s residents? How is this project in practice not aligned with the way CHA employees currently surveil the camp’s H-2A workers? With the camp already under institutional surveillance and residents’ personal belongings left permanently insecure, the qualitative analysis of camp residents’ experiences as commissioned by the CHA appropriates migrant farmworkers’ own voices, testimony, memories and experiences to further integrate their bodies, labor, and their *consciousness* into the carceral conditions of the system. This system profits from Mexican farm labor on both sides of the border since the first Mexican guest worker programs of the early 19th century, what agricultural labor historian Mireya

Loza has termed “transnational agro-capitalism.”³²By incorporating non-citizen H-2A workers from Mexico into its institutional and broader cultural narrative, the CHA expands its cultural memory project to the border and beyond by grafting it onto neoliberal modes of agricultural capital extraction. In the media produced on the study by the CHA and the College of Idaho, they make efforts to echo the post-racial community narrative of *The Caldwell Labor Camp: A Place to Call Home*.

The desire for these students to operate “unbeknownst to the tenants” further reinforces the CHA’s position, and Dittenber’s in particular, as arbiter of the camp’s oral and cultural memory and introduces a teleological aspect to migrant farmworker testimony as they demand that migrant farmworkers not only speak, but *continually speak* to the social and monetary value of their field labor to the surrounding community, and now to global capital. Thus, speaking about the camp has become a part of their *required* labor.

From Labor Camp to Labor Campus

The true utility of the research collaboration with the CHA has little to do with academic inquiry, alleviating housing insecurity, or improving town and camp relations. Further information from Dittenber proves that the positivist apprehension of the labor camp is in actuality in service of securing corporate sponsorship for Farmway Village:

How do we engage in our *business-community* in the future? How do we get to the point where we take from the sports arenas: we take from Taco Bell Arena, Safeco Field, AT&T Field, Coors Light stadium—how do we take from what we've learned from that? And how can we go to someplace like J.R. Simplot Company and say, "Would you invest in Simplot

³² Loza described this term at a conference presentation titled “Let Them Bring Their Families’: The Experiences of the First Mexican Guest Workers, 1917-1922” at the 2023 Labor and Working-Class History Association Annual Conference at Rutgers University-New Brunswick on May 20th, 2023.

Commons—a housing project with your name on it? Will Taco Bell have the Taco Bell Apartments? You know what I mean? How do we learn from that? How do we now all of a sudden say, we're going to give Taco Bell or J.R. Simplot or Amazon or somebody naming rights; they're gonna put their logo on the top of our apartment complex—Amazon Apartments—in exchange for us giving priority for their workers. What a great thing to do! You know, and the community. And so why is namesake-ing something only reserved for sports arenas or athletic venues? This is the kind of thinking that I want [from the student researchers].

So, if I can just find a young energetic student who can, for lack of better words, *drink the Kool-Aid* and say, 'Yeah, you know what? I see what Mr. Dittenber's saying. I see what he's saying. I'm gonna research this. I'm gonna go talk with the Microsofts; I'm gonna go talk with the Jack Simplots; I'm gonna go talk with Amazon, the Frescas. I'm gonna go talk with Coca Cola and Coors Light' ...And you know what, maybe year one, maybe they're turned away because it just didn't seem like a good idea. But what if in year two something resonates with these places? That they go, "Yeah, you know what, last year when we talked about it, it wasn't possible. But this year, we kind of see that there might be a way that we can do that. So, [...] how do we make money? Well, how we make money as we collect rents, and we use that [money] as we think about our role in the future of housing. Every company has research and development. How are we going to collect that next little bit of money to keep us open? Well, wouldn't you be thinking the same way? (Dittenber, 7.12.21, 45:54-49:11; emphasis mine)

Here, the reliance on Mexican H-2A guest workers for profit, the turn to corporate organizational culture, and the demand for the capture of farmworker voices through qualitative research are revealed to be stages in a progression that ultimately allow for the CHA to be absorbed

into a larger conglomerate. In essence, the CHA sees the future of the camp, and farmwork in general, as determined by the results of shopping control over ethnic Mexican farmworkers to greater and greater pools of capital, allowing for *more extraction* in terms of greater capture of the perennial pool of *captive* agricultural labor.

There are a number of things to note in the above vision for the camp's future. First, the change in language from "labor camp family" to "business community" is telling. By preceding 'community' with the concept of 'business,' or the particular process of capital extraction from land use here, the CHA signals itself as determining the particular modes of connection and belonging available for those who reside in its labor camp. It also signals that the CHA understands community as a series of relations between entities (government, corporations, nonprofits, etc.) rather than interpersonal relations that result in kinship ties.

Second, in the context of the carceral dimensions of the camp's current operation and the farmworker experience within it, the phrase "drink the Kool-Aid" is multivalent in that it refers to a process wherein this fictive "student" comes to internalize neoliberal capitalist ideologies that strive to realize Dittenber and the CHA's corporate vision for the camp. Perhaps inadvertently, Dittenber's use of language also refers to Casey and Baker's theories on colonization and internalizing the ideologies around race, labor, space, and policing that are central to camp carcerality. In other words, to "drink the Kool-Aid" is to undergo a process of psychic adjustment that requires not only a belief in the necessity of the weather of carcerality in agriculture, but also a belief in *forecasting* it.

Interestingly, Dittenber doesn't believe that *he* should be the agent to secure corporate development of the labor camp; rather, he views this to be the responsibility of his *student workers*. I refer to these students as *workers* because in Dittenber's explanation these students are not only tasked with a research assignment for higher education credits, they must also act as liaisons between the CHA and the international conglomerates who extract capital from land use on the largest scale.

The irony is, however, that the dream for corporate and billionaire-class investment in Idaho agriculture is already a reality. Dittenber's mention of technology companies such as Amazon and Microsoft is ironic given that Bill Gates—former Microsoft CEO and the world's 6th richest man (at the time of writing)—was named the largest private owner of farmland in the U.S. in 2020 by *The Land Report*, a publication focused on private land ownership that publishes an annual list of the top landowners³³. The 2021 article “Farmer Bill,” reported that Gates's massive agricultural land holdings amount to over 240,000 acres valued at more than \$690 million(O'Keefe, *Land Report*).³⁴ As indigenous American Studies scholar Nick Estes notes, Gates's land holdings are “nearly the size of Hong Kong and twice the acreage of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe,” of which Estes is a member (Estes, *Guardian*).

In his 11th annual Ask Me Anything (AMA) Forum on Reddit, Gates was questioned on the reasons behind his farmland acquisition, as one user asked, “Why are you buying up so much farmland, do you think this is a problem with billionaire wealth and how much you can disproportionately acquire?” Gates demurred by claiming that this use of his capital wasn't even his full choice, but was made by the managers of his investment portfolio: “I own less than 1/4000 of the farmland in the US. I have invested in these farms to make them more productive and create more jobs. There isn't some grand scheme involved—in fact all these decisions are made by a professional investment team.”³⁵

This investment team has determined that it is *not* in Gates's best interest to have his name identified with the widely reported inhumane working conditions of contemporary farmwork (Goldfarb, Thompson & Wiggins, Holmes) that are a crucial part of camp carcerality, as all of

³³ This is according to Forbes' billionaire list accessed on June 9th, 2023.

<https://www.forbes.com/billionaires/>

³⁴ <https://landreport.com/2021/01/farmer-bill/>

Accessed June 9th, 2023.

³⁵ https://www.reddit.com/r/IAmA/comments/109eze3/comment/j3xuw10/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=web2x&context=3

Accessed June 9th, 2023.

Gates's land assets are owned by an elaborate web of dozens of shell companies designed to obscure the connection between the land and Gates himself (O'Keefe, *Land Report*; Glaser, *NBC News*). Yet, the crops Gates's farms produce are for public consumption. For example, in Washington and Idaho, Gates grows potatoes exclusively for McDonald's (Glaser, *NBC News*).

This extensive farmland portfolio connects Gates personally to the carceral regimes of slavery and camp carcerality. For example, part of Gate's landholdings include 70,000 acres in Louisiana, including the Angelina Plantation, a sprawling 24,000 acre farm formerly owned by WorldCom CEO and billionaire, Bernard Ebbers, which was a large sugar plantation during the 19th century. Now, as the largest farmland owner and one of largest growers in the country, Gates's farms help to set the standard of camp carcerality not only in his native Pacific Northwest but the entire country.

Conclusion

This critical discussion of Dittenber's thoughts as Director of the CHA on the future of the Caldwell Labor Camp/Farmway Village is not meant to vilify him personally, but rather to show that his positionality and aspirations for the campsite are *indicative* of how camp carcerality has historically operated and how those perpetuating the migrant labor camp system in the 21st century are adapting camp carcerality to current methods of capital extraction. The analysis of the CHA's chosen systems of farmworker discipline and their mediation through the "everyday" media produced on the camp (Youtube videos, online articles, and journalism) reveals that, much like C.L.R. James's argument about 1930s Mississippi sharecroppers, today's migrant farmworkers are not the most atavistic workers, but *the most modern* workers in the current form of neoliberal capitalist extraction from land and food commodities.³⁶

³⁶ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/james-clr/works/1941/09/sharecroppers.html>

In Marxist terms, camp carcerality is adapting to new processes of subsumption wherein the age-old processes of capital extraction from manual labor in the field is more fully incorporated into the service economy through explicit alignment with tech capital. In other words, the CHA views camp carcerality and the indefinite perpetuation of the migrant labor camp system as expanding the conditions of possibility for capitalism. For camp carcerality aims to trap farmworkers in agriculture and adjacent jobs that still incorporate carceral logics and conditions, then Dittenber's model of using corporate sponsorship to supplant grower rent as the main source of income for the camp connects farm work and its carceral conditions to other sites of working poor exploitation like Amazon's warehouses—currently the most visible worker exploitation by the tech industry (in the U.S.) and a critical contemporary issue in worker's rights movements.

At the core of the CHA's aspirations to transform the labor *camp* to a labor *campus* (in reference to both the CHA's connection to academia and the term used by several prominent technology companies to refer to their headquarters) lies a particular argument about farmwork and modernity. The question of modernity has been central to the 20th and 21st century development of the prison-industrial complex, particularly in the rise of the Texas prison plantation system, but also in the contemporaneous rise of the U.S. migrant labor camp system. In his reading of the history of the creation of the FSA labor camps and their eventual sale to farmer and housing associations, García-Colón states that, "by fostering the use of camps and linking them to [farmers'] associations, the federal government sought to modernize the supply of farmworkers" (136). As prison scholar Robert Chase notes:

The prison thus operated as a fully functioning twentieth-century plantation, but the trope that the prison administration embraced was not slavery but instead their carefully constructed narrative of low-cost government and effective agribusiness that allowed them to stake a claim on [modernity]. (Chase, 101)

In seeking corporate culture and sponsorship, the CHA desires a progression similar to the Texas prison system for Farmway Village. In other words, the organization wants to transform the Farmway Village—with its use of camp carcerality to secure its place in local, regional, and state economies—into the labor “campus” model much like the progression of the Texas “farm” to the modern plantation as national model for agricultural production and labor control. Key to both transitions will be controlling the media produced on the camp itself. As Robert Perkinson notes:

Texas’s journey from backwater to beacon was propelled by a carefully crafted image of Texas corrections. On paper [Texas Department of Criminal Justice, or TDC] was among the cleanest, safest, and cheapest penal systems in the nation—qualities that became increasingly desired amid the turmoil of the 1960s. What outsiders read in the newspaper or saw at the rodeo, however, was not a full account of what went on inside. To a certain extent this disconnect was true of every prison; walls not only keep prisoners in, they keep the public out. But the Texas control model achieved an exceptional mastery of information. Through surveillance, censorship, staff cohesion, and relentless self-promotion, TDC’s top managers were able to present only what they wanted to the world. Texas’s prisons were quiet, disciplined, and economical, administrators proclaimed at every turn. What they seldom, if ever, acknowledged was that Texas’s prison peace was purchased just as it always had been, with force and fear. (Perkinson, 237)

The use of academic tools such as quantitative analysis in assessing the value of Mexican labor (and by extension, the value of their lives) to achieve this transition in Caldwell reconfigures the value of farmworkers’ labor as not strictly tied to the value of their labor time or the amount of capital their labor brings to the region and town; rather, the value of their labor becomes tied to the worth of their corporate sponsor and the capital that it can provide to the CHA. This adds another layer of abstraction over who or what is responsible for the working conditions of migrant

farmworkers (growers, CHA, state or municipal government, or camp corporate sponsor?), thereby further alienating farmworkers from their labor.

As Gilmore explains in *Golden Gulag*, four surpluses—finance capital, land, labor, and state capacity—enabled the expansion of the California prison system throughout the 20th century. These four factors also drive the expansion of migrant agricultural labor camps in the Treasure Valley, and are epitomized in Caldwell by the \$1 million dollar surplus held by the CHA; available land for the expansion of the campsite, the use of H-2A guest workers as consistent surplus labor, and state capacity to ensure the operation of the CHA through a Caldwell City Council member permanently sitting on the CHA’s Board of Directors.

The CHA’s plans to fuse atavistic modes of farm labor discipline with contemporary neoliberal modes of labor control is an intentional practice designed to bring the camp into “modernity” through a retooling of modes of subsumption (or the transformation of older social relations and modes of labor to forms that meet the needs of capital), in hopes of making the camp attractive to corporate sponsors.³⁷ Part of this process has involved the camp promoting itself as aligned with corporate organizational culture, describing the camp as a “labor camp family” in the media produced on the Caldwell Labor Camp/Farmway Village. However, the “family” refrain is used to distort the distinct power relations that constitute camp carcerality in Caldwell and to legitimate the CHA’s position as the stewards of the camp’s cultural memory. Moreover, at the level of language, the phrase is a perverse reconfiguration of the interpersonal relations that allow for migrant farmworkers to survive their living and working conditions, including the affects of belonging, being valued by others, and the protection of mutual aid that make migrant caravans and ditch camp living a key part of the ethnic Mexican farmworker experience.

³⁷ <https://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/s/u.htm#subsumption>

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@realDonaldTrump, “Border Patrol Agents are not allowed to properly do their job at the Border because of ridiculous liberal (Democrat) laws like Catch & Release. Getting more dangerous. “Caravans” coming. Republicans must go to Nuclear Option to pass tough laws NOW. NO MORE DACA DEAL!” *Twitter*, 1 Apr. 2018, 6:56 a.m.

@realDonaldTrump, “We cannot allow all of these people to invade our Country. When somebody comes in, we must immediately, with no Judges or Court Cases, bring them back from where they came. Our system is a mockery to good immigration policy and Law and Order. Most children come without parents...” *Twitter*, 24 June, 2018, 11:02 a.m.

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