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# *The Dream of America / El Sueño de América*

## Separation & Sacrifice in the Lives of North Country Latino Immigrants

**FEATURING THE PHOTOGRAPHY AND TEXT OF  
GUEST CURATOR, LISA CATALFAMO-FLORES**

[Editor's Note: This exhibition can be viewed February 27 to August 31, 2016, at the Crandall Public Library Folklife Center Gallery, Glens Falls, NY. Visit the website [www.crandalllibrary.org/DreamofAmerica.php](http://www.crandalllibrary.org/DreamofAmerica.php) for more information and hours.]

### About the Exhibit

"The Dream of America" takes us from the milking parlors of surrounding coun-

ties to the cinder-block homes of Coyula, Guadalajara, Mexico, and back again. This straightforward perspective asks that we consider—without bias or stereotype—the work being done, and the lives and sacrifices of the workers. Hard work and separation are underlying themes of these immigrants' lives.

After two years of photographing workers on local farms, I traveled to Coyula to share these photographs with family

members. Welcomed with tears and open arms, these visits are powerful testaments to the weight and toll the long separations have on loved ones, both here and abroad. Most dramatic is a prevailing sadness over the disconnection from the daily lives and experiences between workers and their separated family members. In sharing stories with loved ones, a fuller picture of the worker comes into focus. Individual talents, abilities, and desires become evident,





leading us to a more complete and human point of view.

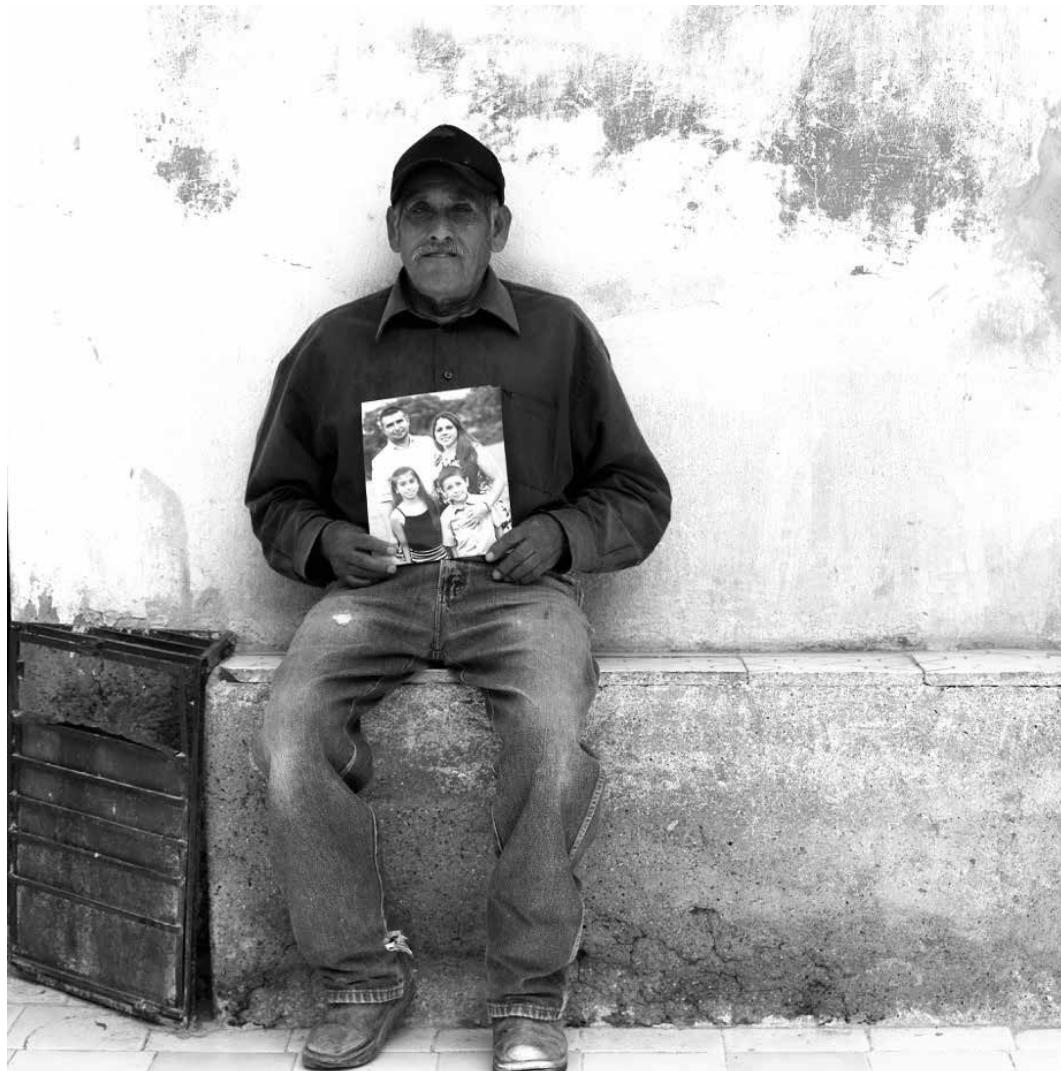
The symbols of art and culture represented throughout the exhibit are tangible examples, and an integral part of life in Coyula. The intersection of family, faith, celebration, artistic expression, and food are central themes that inform and enrich lives on both sides of the border.

### Sobre la Exposición

Presentando la fotografía y texto de la curadora invitada, Lisa Catalfamo-Flores.

“El Sueño de América” nos lleva de las salas de ordeño de los condados cercanos hasta las casas hechas de bloque de Coyula, Guadalajara, México, y la vuelta. Este punto de vista directa nos pide que consideremos sin el prejuicio y el estereotipo el trabajo hecho y las vidas y sacrificios de los trabajadores. El trabajo duro y la separación es el tema central de las vidas de estos inmigrantes.

Después de fotografiar a los trabajadores por dos años, yo viajé a Coyula para compartir estas fotos con los miembros de las



*narrative continued on p. 14*

# Chuy

- ▷ Arrived in 2004 when he was 17 years old
- ▷ Assistant herdsman on local dairy farm
- ▷ Financially supports his wife and daughter locally, and his parents and younger brothers in Mexico

*"I miss the hugs..."*

— Chuy (tears in his eyes)

*"This is the first picture I've seen of him in six years. His youngest brother was one-year old when he left for the US. I'm longing to see and hug my son"*

— Chuy's mom

- ▷ Llegó en 2004 cuando tenía 17 años
- ▷ Asistente encargado de lechería
- ▷ Mantiene a su esposa, hija, padres, y hermanos menores en México

*"Extraño los abrazos"*

— Chuy (con lágrimas en los ojos)

*"Esta foto es la primera que he visto de él en 6 años. Su hermano menor tenía un año cuando salió"*

— La madre de Chuy



# Vidal

- ▷ Arrived in 2013
- ▷ Milker at a local dairy farm
- ▷ Financially supports his wife, 2 sons, parents, grandmother, and extended family in Mexico

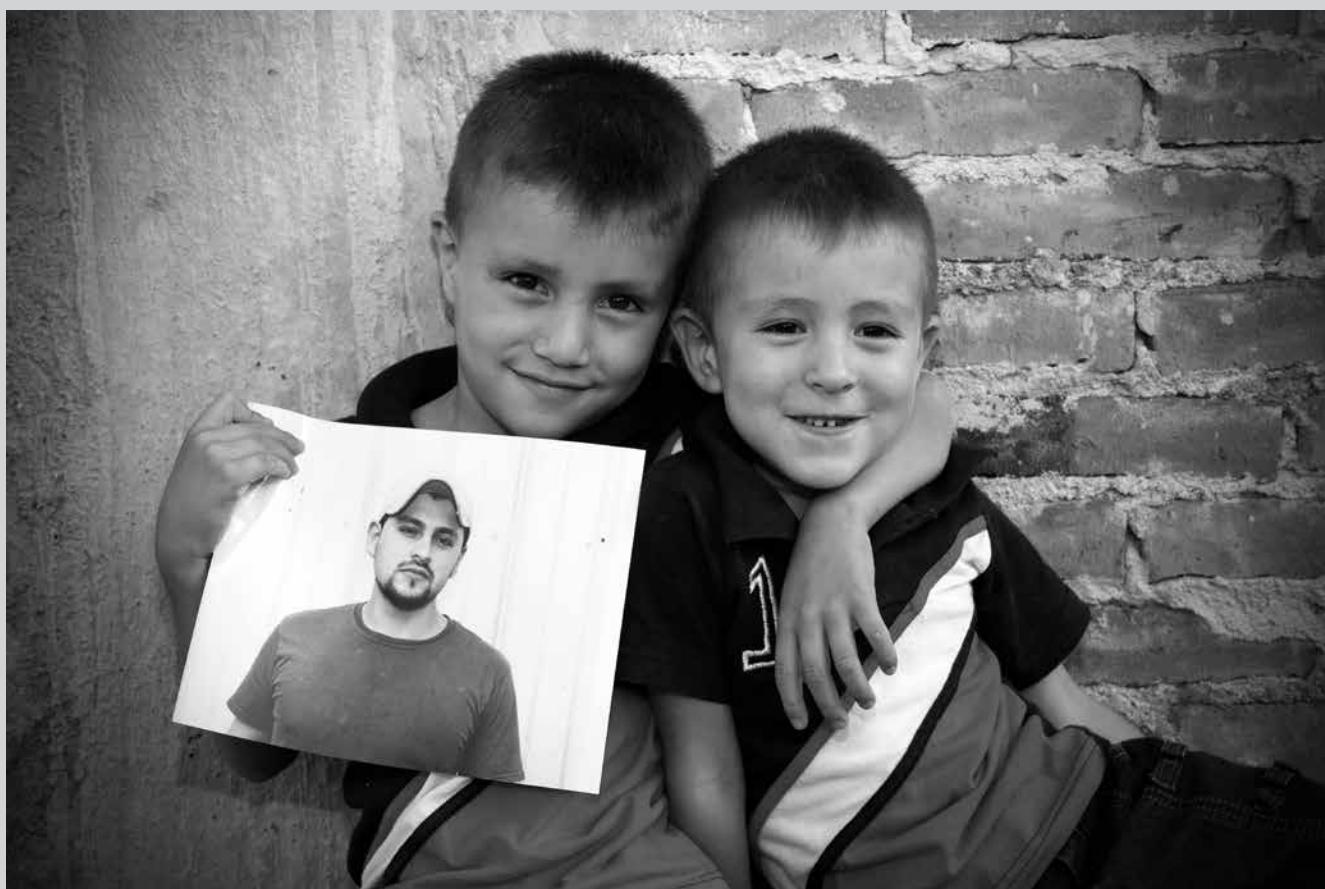
*"I miss my boys, and being taken care of by my wife and my mother"*  
— Vidal

*"It's very difficult raising two energetic boys on my own"*  
— Vidal's wife.

- ▷ Llegó en 2013
- ▷ Ordeñador en una lechería local
- ▷ Mantiene a su esposa, 2 hijos, padres, abuelos, y parientes en México

*"Extraño a mis hijos y el cuidado de mi esposa y mi madre"*  
— Vidal

*"Es muy difícil criando a mis dos hijos energéticos sola"*  
— la esposa de Vidal



familias. Dada la bienvenida con lágrimas y con los brazos abiertos, estas visitas son testimonios poderosos al peso y daño de separaciones largas y sus consecuencias a los queridos aquí y en el extranjero. Lo más dramático es la tristeza predominante sobre la desconexión de las vidas y experiencias entre los trabajadores y sus familias en el extranjero. Mientras compartía cuentos con los queridos, una imagen más clara se enfocó. Se aclaran talentos individuales, las habilidades y deseos, y nos llevan a un punto de vista más completo y humano.

Los símbolos de arte y cultura representados a través de la exhibición son ejemplos tangibles, y son una parte fundamental de la vida en Coyula. La intersección de la familia, la fe, la celebración, y la comida son temas centrales que informan y enriquecen las vidas en los dos lados de la frontera.



**In poor communities across Latin America**, young people desperate for work take a leap of faith and decide to make their way to the United States. The tale of Hispanic immigrants is a narrative that plays out in rural communities across the country, where common themes of separation, sacrifice, and struggle, punctuate a familiar storyline and weave a picture of today's economic migrant.

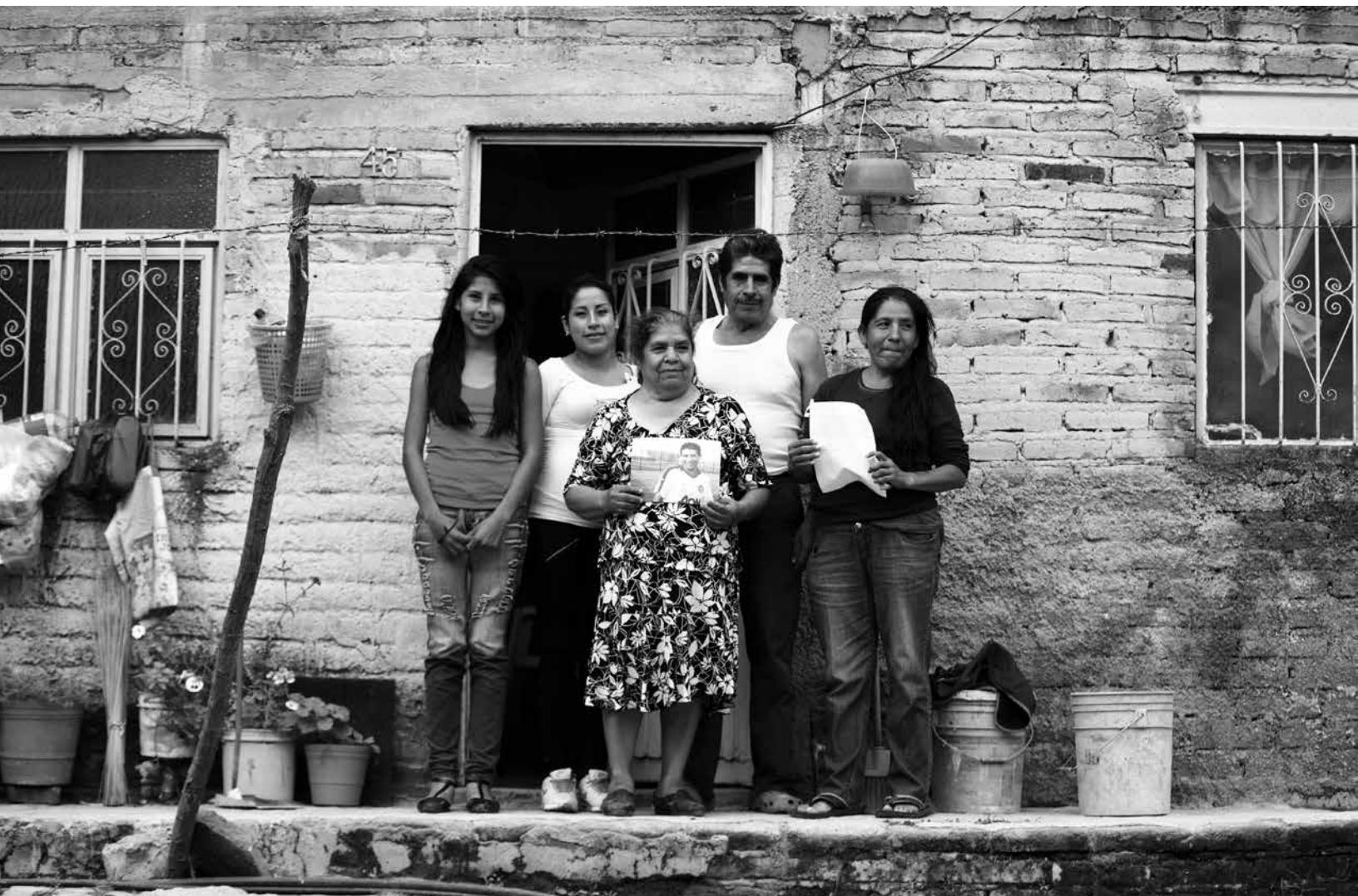
For first-time migrants the vision of America is a dream. Each worker's American Dream is driven by the desire of providing for their families and achieving their own economic security in a new homeland. The hope of opportunity and economic gain is met with the reality of perilous journeys, grueling work, long hours, overwhelming isolation, and long separations from loved ones. Still, they come.

Against the backdrop of political debate and anti-immigrant rhetoric, this timely

exhibit shines a light on workers, the work they do, the vibrant culture and people they left behind, the toll of their absence on family back home, and their impact on local communities.

**En las comunidades pobres que cruzan Latinoamérica** los jóvenes desesperados por encontrar trabajo deciden salir con la fe ciega y venir a los Estados Unidos. El cuento de los migrantes latinos es una narración que existe en las comunidades rurales por este país donde los temas de la separación, el sacrificio y la lucha puntualizan la trama y tejen una imagen del migrante económico actual.

Para los migrantes de primera vez, la visión de América es un sueño. El Sueño Americano de cada trabajador se empuja por el deseo de mantener a sus familias y ganar su propia seguridad económica en una patria nueva. La esperanza de la oportunidad y el alza económica choca con la



realidad de travesías peligrosas, trabajo agotador, jornadas largas, aislamiento arrollador y separaciones largas de los queridos. Todavía vienen llegando.

Contra el fondo del debate político y la retórica anti-inmigrante, esta exhibición destaca a los trabajadores, el trabajo que hacen, la cultura vibrante y la gente que han dejado, el daño de la ausencia de su familia y su impacto en las comunidades locales. ▶

Photographer Lisa Catafamo-Flores, lives on small farm in Kingsbury, NY, with her husband Omar, 20 milking goats, 250 chickens, and 4 dogs. A school social worker for the past 18 years, she is also an advocate and volunteer with the local Hispanic community. Over the past two years, she has been photographing and interviewing Hispanic workers locally, and their families in Coyula, Mexico, for the project, "The Dream of America." When Lisa is not at home on her farm, she enjoys combining her love of travel with her love of photojournalism. Photo by Omar Flores.



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