

# Informed Response to Refugee Trauma

August 11, 2022



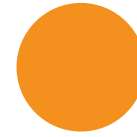
# Agenda



Welcome



Setting the Stage



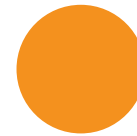
Stages of Immigration  
Trauma



Case Example



Liberation-based Entry Points



Resources and Next Steps

# Speaker



**Monica Noriega, PsyD**  
Assistant Professor,  
Child Trauma Research Program  
University of California, San Francisco

# Setting the stage

1. Refugee families and young children are an asset to their communities as they bring a variety of valuable lived experiences, knowledge, cultural/linguistic diversity, strength, and resilience.
2. Systemic racism, anti-Blackness, colorism, and anti-Muslim sentiment are the basis for the myths and misconceptions that permeate public perception of refugees and continue to influence policy and national sentiment.



3. Strategies and the system components supporting refugee families must be in place and coordinated to respond to their diverse needs and meet the needs of each and every child.



# Setting the stage

4. To be effective and culturally responsive, strategies for working with refugee families and young children must be informed by and created in partnership with them (including key decision making). Use of beneficiary voice and responsive feedback loops are key to this process.

5. Strategies and system components for refugee families and young children must support retaining home language and culture for these children to thrive.

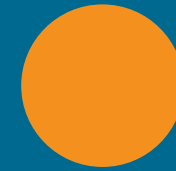


# Defining the terms

**Refugees** are people outside their country of origin because of feared persecution, conflict, violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order, and who, as a result, require 'international protection'.

**Asylum-seeker** are people whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed. Every year, around one million people seek asylum.

**Internally Displaced People (IDPs)** People are displaced inside their own countries due to armed conflicts, generalized violence or human rights violations continue to constitute most of the forcibly displaced population globally. Known as internally displaced people, or IDPs, they account for some 60% of all people displaced.



# ***Ghosts in the Borderlands:***

*Speaking the unspeakable about  
immigration trauma at the  
US/Mexico Border*

# Ghosts in the Borderlands: Speaking the unspeakable about immigration trauma at the US/Mexico Border

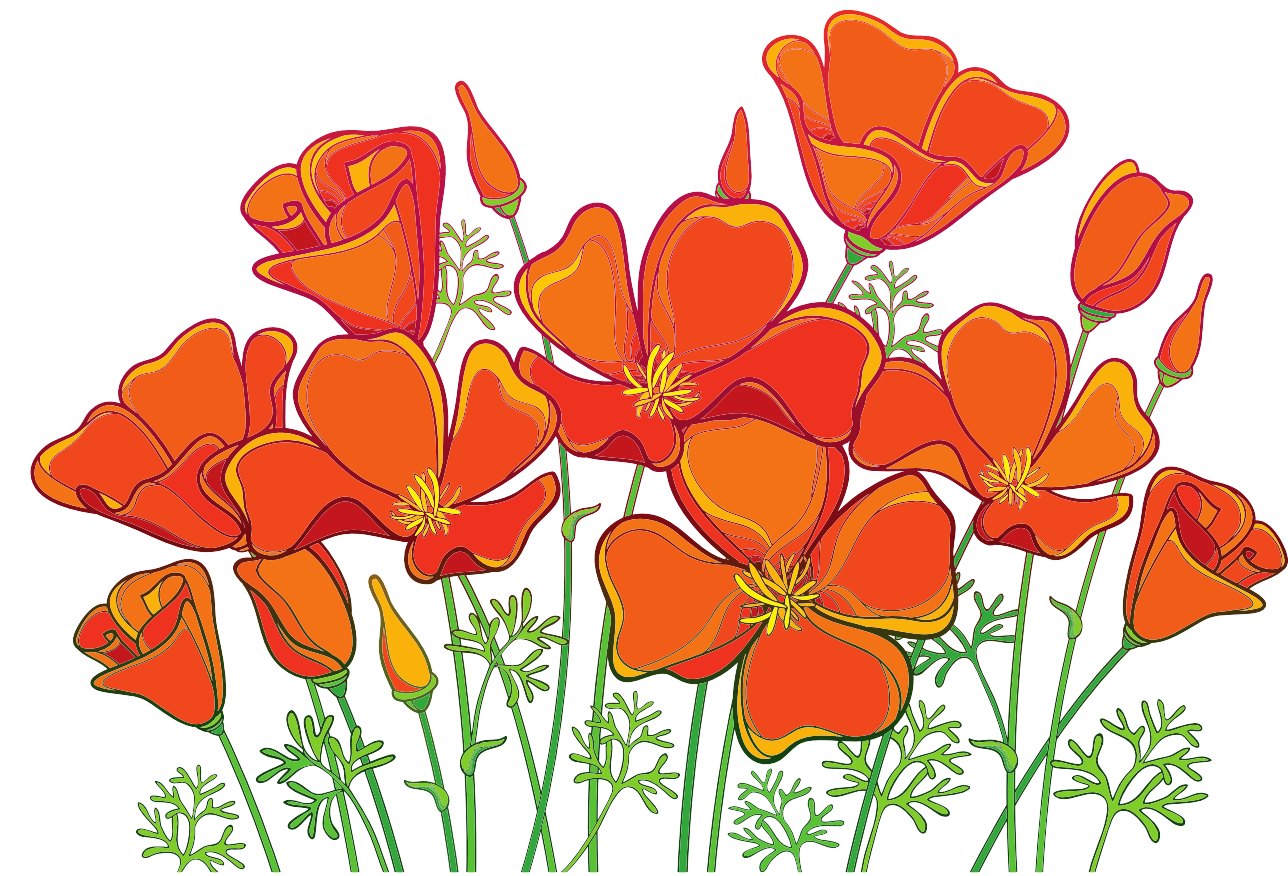
Monica Alejandra Noriega, PsyD



# Disclosures and acknowledgements

“There is nothing new under the sun but there are new suns.” - Octavia Butler

The political views expressed in this presentation are my own and do not reflect the official position or policy of the BUILD Initiative or the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) Child Trauma Research Program.





# Agenda

\*content warning

- 1 Setting the stage: What's happening at the US/Mexico border with asylum seekers?
- 2 Stages of immigration trauma
- 3 Case example
- 4 Liberation-based entry points
- 5 Resources

"Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them."

- Gloria Anzaldúa



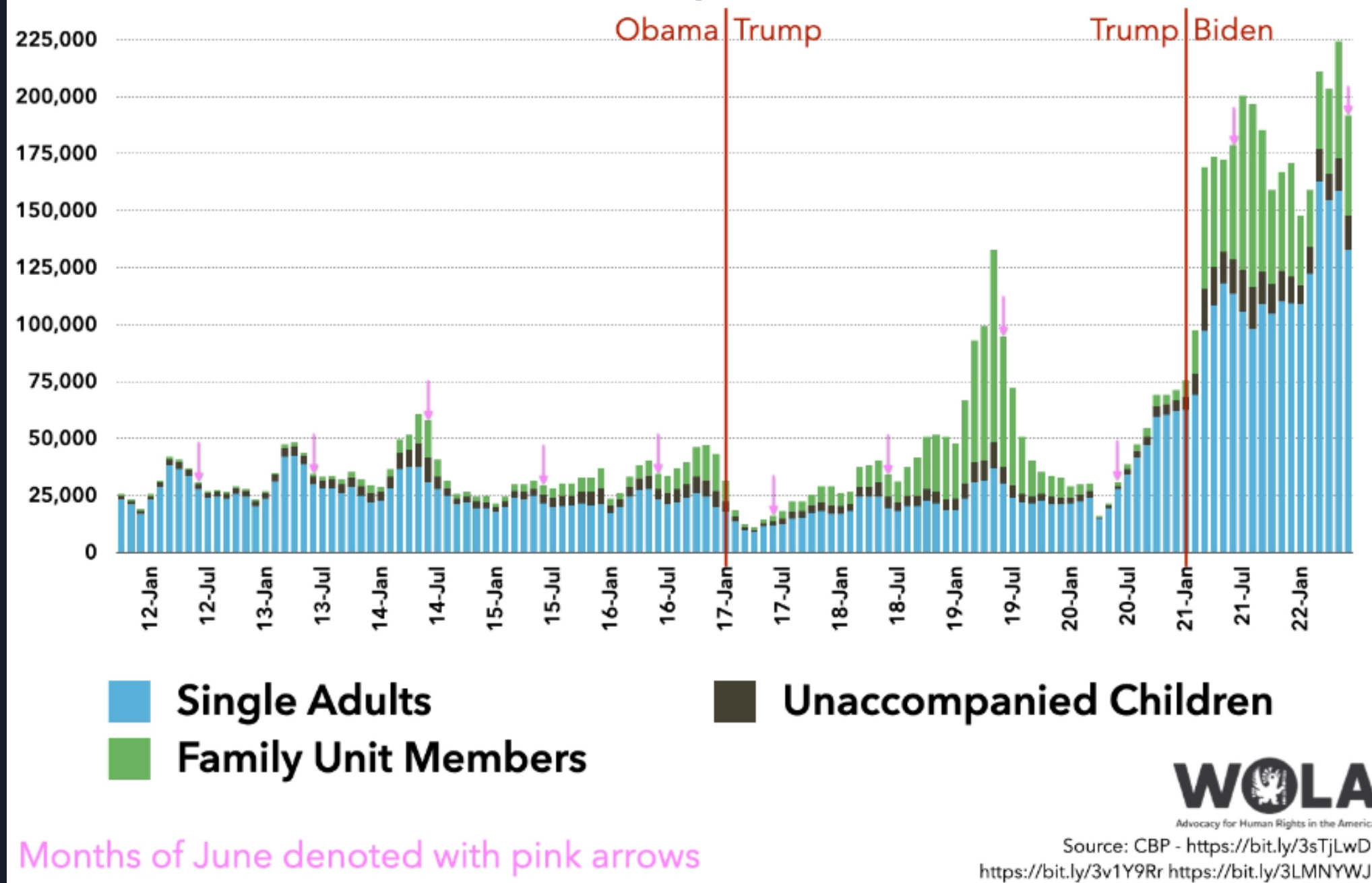
# A brief history of criminalization of immigration from the Latin America in the United States



Art instillation by JR (2017)



## Border Patrol Migrant Apprehensions and Encounters at the U.S.-Mexico Border, October 2011-June 2022



## 207,416 "encounters" with CBP in June

The 207,416 "encounters" with CBP were with 153,379 actual individual *people*. 26 percent of CBP's reported encounters were with people who had already been encountered at least once before in the past 12 months.

## 44% of those encounters ended in expulsion.

44% of encounters with CBP ended with rapid expulsion, even if they were seeking asylum or other protection. The Trump and Biden administrations have used Title 42, the controversial pandemic authority allowing these expulsions, 1,817,278 times since COVID-19 first forced border closures.

# The violence of Title 42 and the "Migrant Protection Protocols" (MPP) aka "Remain in Mexico"

- Data obtained by the Cato Institute shows that CBP personnel have used the Title 42 pandemic provision to expel thousands of families with toddlers and babies into Mexico in the post-midnight hours, despite safety risks.
- As of May 31, CBP had used its Title 42 'health' authority to expel 30,806 children ages 3 and under—with about **41 percent of these expulsions occurring at midnight or later.**"



<https://www.cato.org/blog/cbp-expelling-thousands-infants-toddlers-mexico-after-midnight>

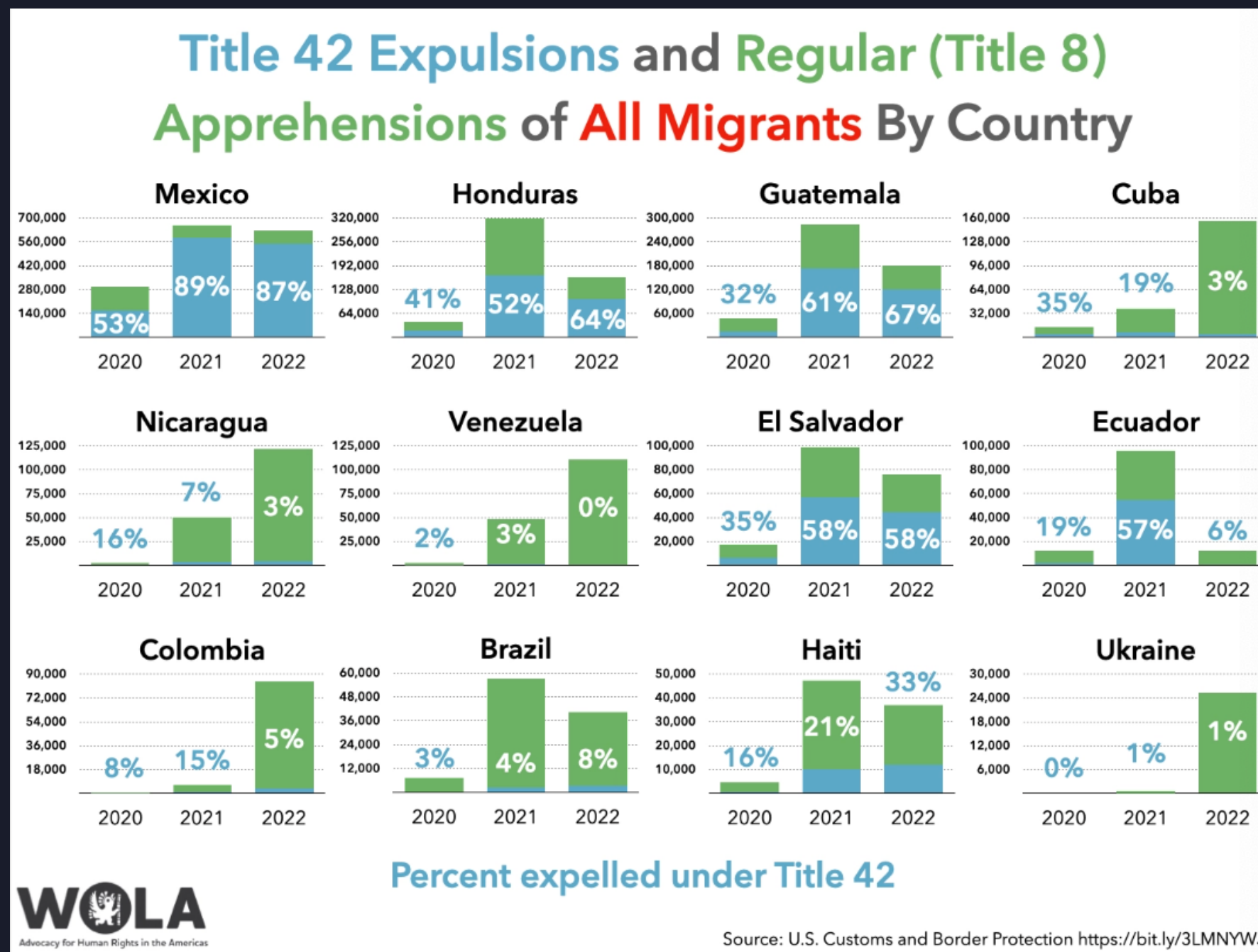


What is the message that these immigration policies send to asylum seekers?

1%

of Ukrainian asylum seekers were expelled under Title 42.

33% of all Haitian asylum seekers were expelled under Title 42.

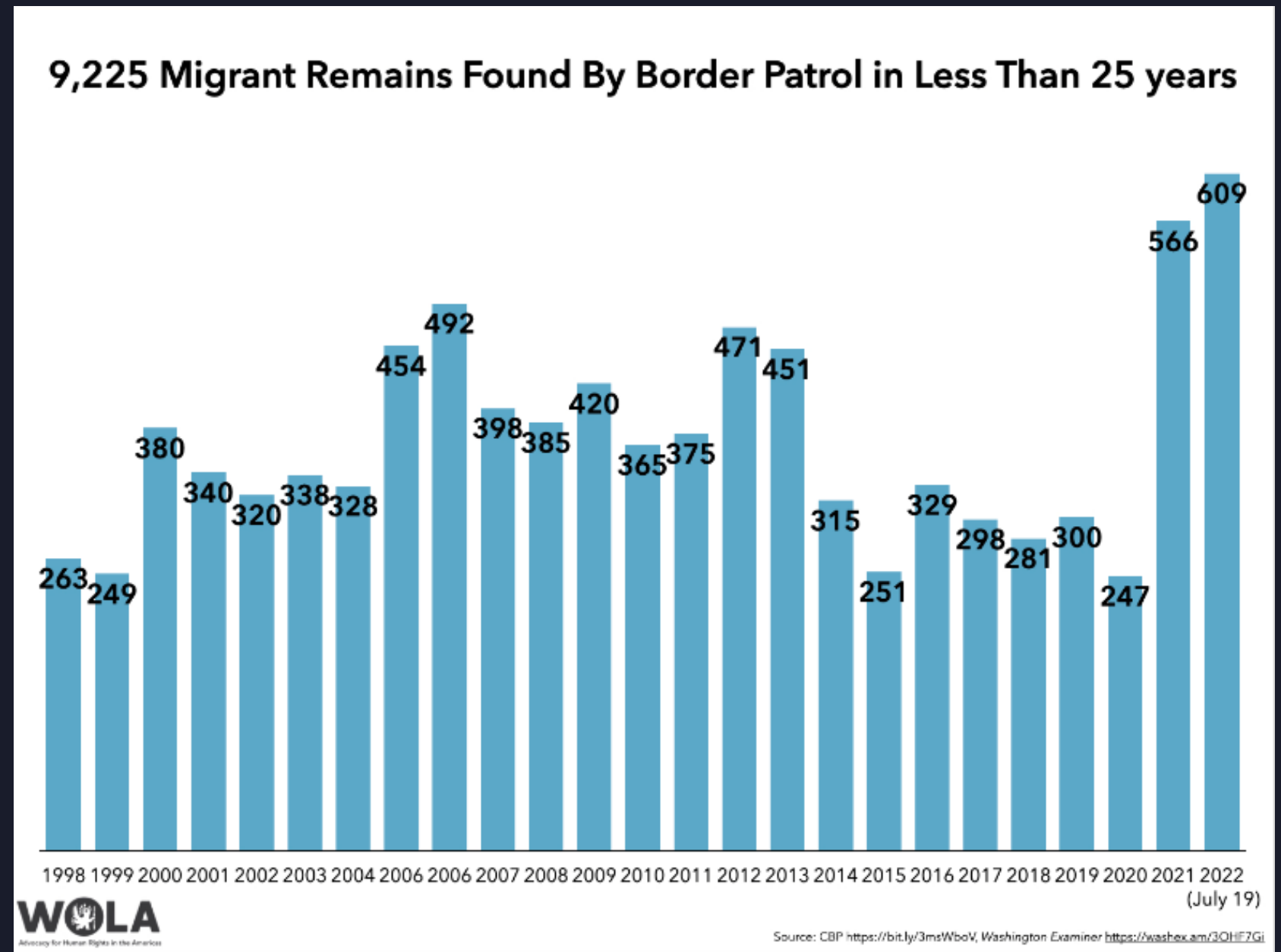




Border deaths increase as enforcement policies harden  
in an effort to deter migrants.

# 2022 is already the worst year on record for deaths of migrants on the US side of the US/Mexico border.

- CBP has found 605 remains of migrants thus far in 2022.
- This is roughly double the amount of deaths CBP recorded EACH YEAR from 2014 to 2020.
- CBP recorded 151 “CBP-related” deaths during the 2021 fiscal year.



U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP); Isacson, A. WOLA Weekly U.S.-Mexico Border Update: Migrant deaths, buses from Texas, smugglers and social media.. <https://www.wola.org/2022/07/weekly-u-s-mexico-border-update-migrant-deaths-buses-from-texas-smugglers-and-social-media/>

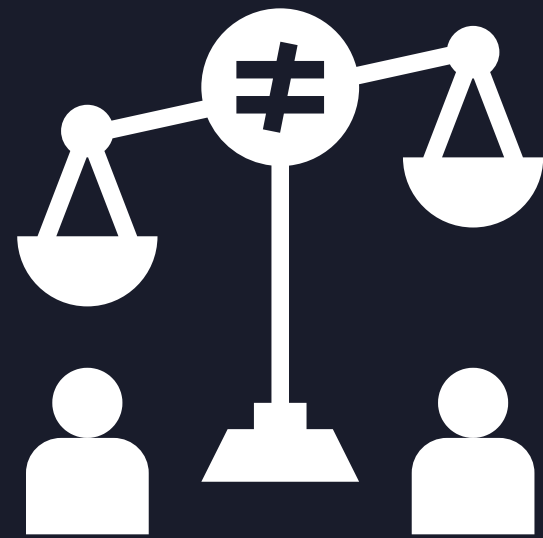


# Parent-child separations

The Biden administration's Family Reunification Task Force has now brought together 400 families who were separated under the Trump administration's "zero tolerance" policy. **Parents of 168 separated kids still have not been located.**



# Pre-migration push factors



Poverty and  
inequality



Environmental  
racism and  
climate catastrophe



State terror,  
community violence,  
and violence against  
women



Widespread  
imperialism and  
corruption





"The roots of immigration detention are like tentacles that reach into the Southern soil of U.S. slavery, where "the heritage of slave labor, the control of free blacks, or the recapture of fugitive slaves" provided a societal blueprint and legal precedent for immigration detention and deportation."

DAVID MANUEL HERNÁNDEZ, "CARCERAL SHADOWS: ENTANGLED TECHNOLOGIES OF MIGRANT DETENTION"

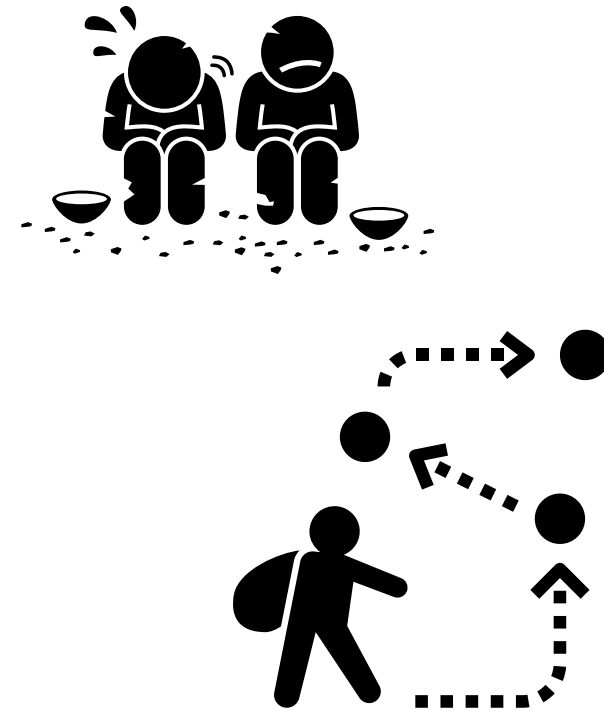
# The stages of immigration trauma

## Pre-migration



Pre-separation experiences  
(e.g. security of attachment;  
violence exposure,  
developmental stage)

## In-transit



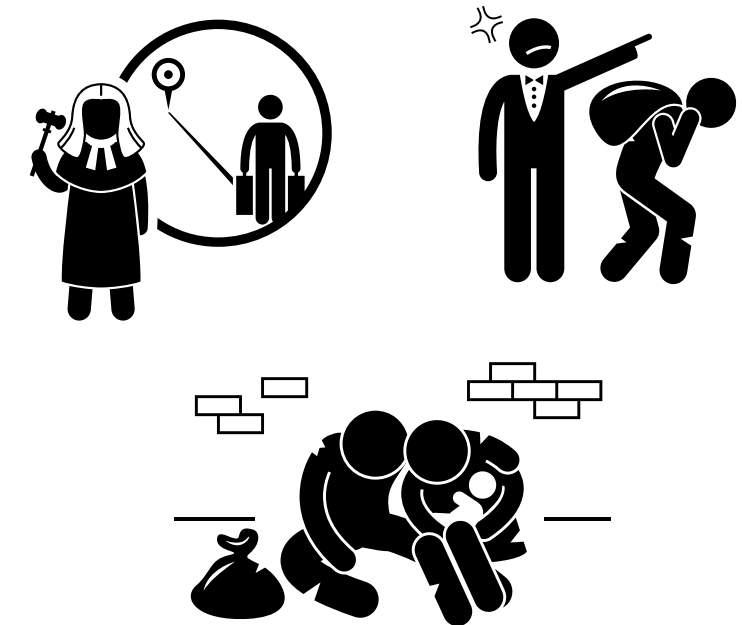
Circumstances of  
separation

## Asylum-seeking / temporary resettlement



## Post-migration / Ongoing traumatization

Compensation -> Decompensation -> Transgenerational Conflict



Post separation  
placement / reunification

# Normative developmental anxieties during infancy and early childhood



---

Fear of separation  
8-24 months

---



---

Fear of losing love  
18-36 months

---



---

Fear of body damage  
12-36 months

---



---

Fear of being bad  
36 months-5 years

---

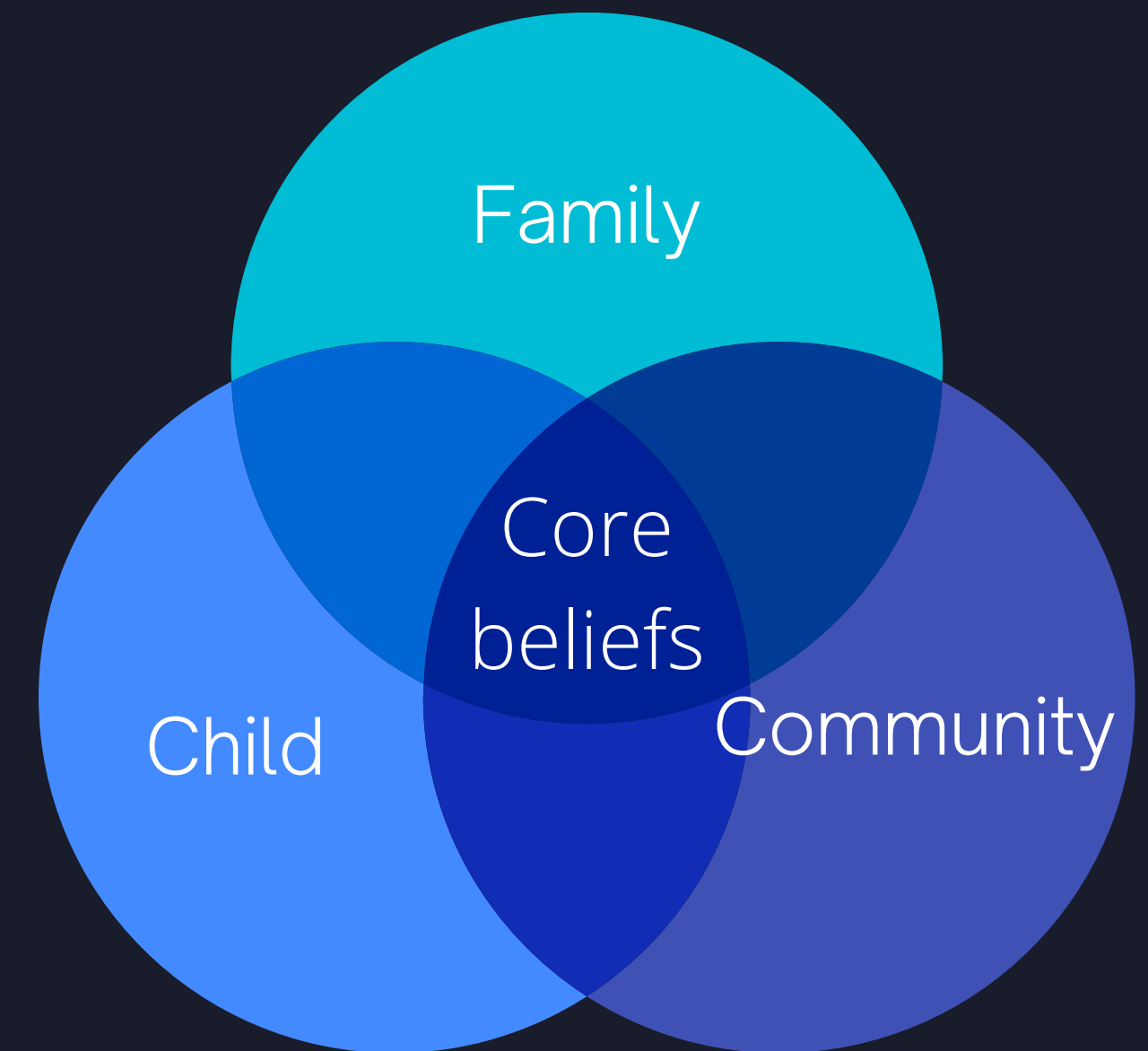
“

Losing a loving and protective parent  
is the biggest single tragedy that can  
happen to a child.

Lieberman & Bucio, 2018

# Impact of immigration-related family separation

- Forced separations shatter the developmental expectation of protection from the attachment figure (and the community).
- Caregiver and child may serve as traumatic reminders for one another.
- Increased risk for internalizing symptoms, disruptive behavior problems, social isolation, difficulty reading and responding to emotions, and attachment disorders.





# Mitigating factors



- Controllability and desirability of the separation
- Quality of the relationship prior to the separation
- Age and developmental level of the child (sensitive periods)
- Ability to prepare for and anticipate the separation
- Length and chronicity of the separation
- Ability to maintain phone contact or visitations

# Reclaiming the narrative

When children are not given a narrative to understand their experience, they make up their own explanations to make sense of the violence they experienced.

NATIONAL

## U.S. Border Agents Found A Toddler And A Baby Abandoned Along The Rio Grande

September 16, 2021 · 1:47 PM ET

BILL CHAPPELL

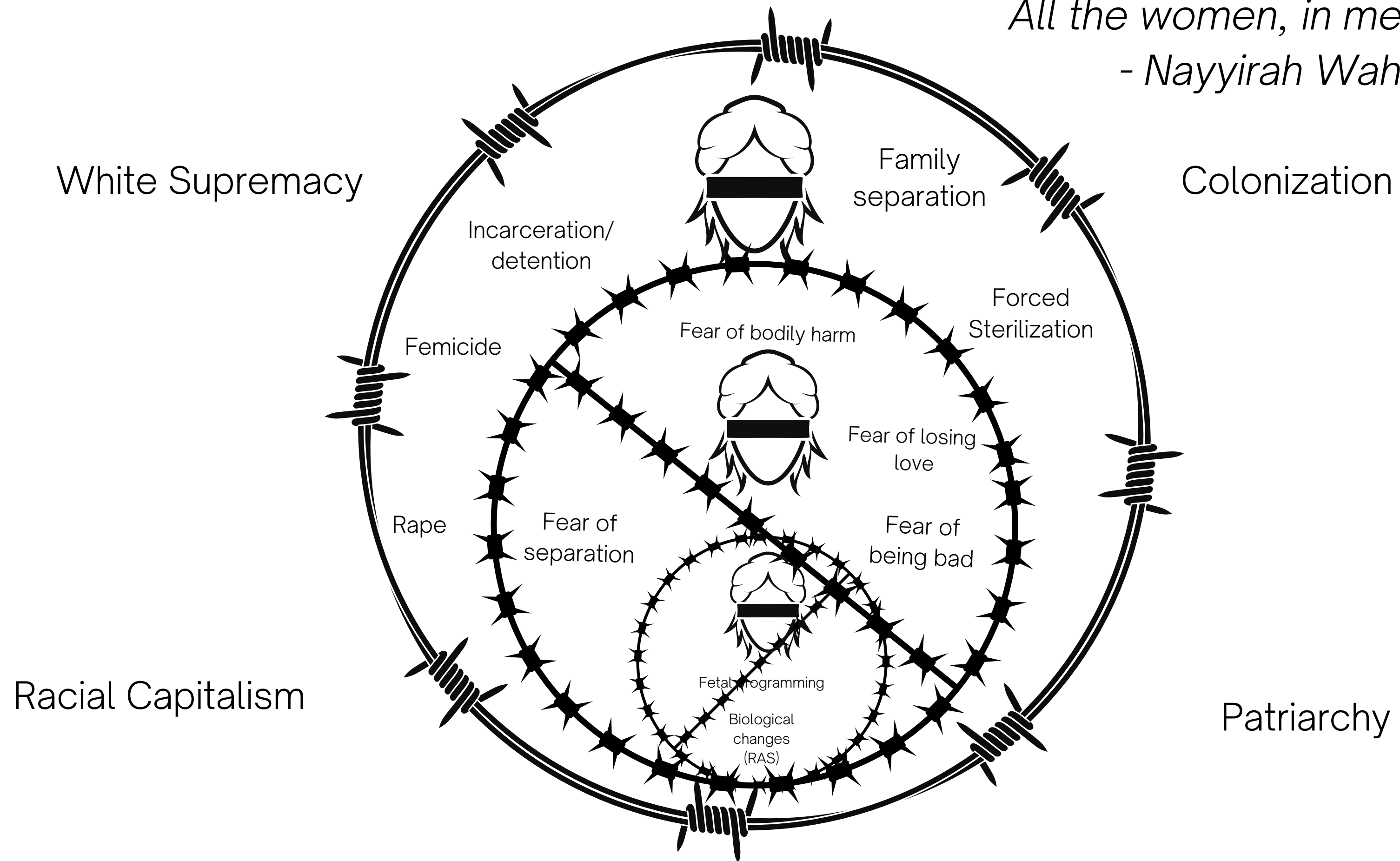


A little girl and her baby brother were taken into custody by U.S. Border Patrol agents this week after they were discovered abandoned along the U.S.-Mexico border.

*U.S. Border Patrol*

Article from NPR

*All the women, in me, are tired*  
- Nayyirah Waheed



Noriega (2021)

Content warning

"Let this moment radicalize you, rather than lead you to despair."

- Mariame Kaba






Escucha el llanto de los niños inmigrantes separados de sus padres en la frontera de Texas



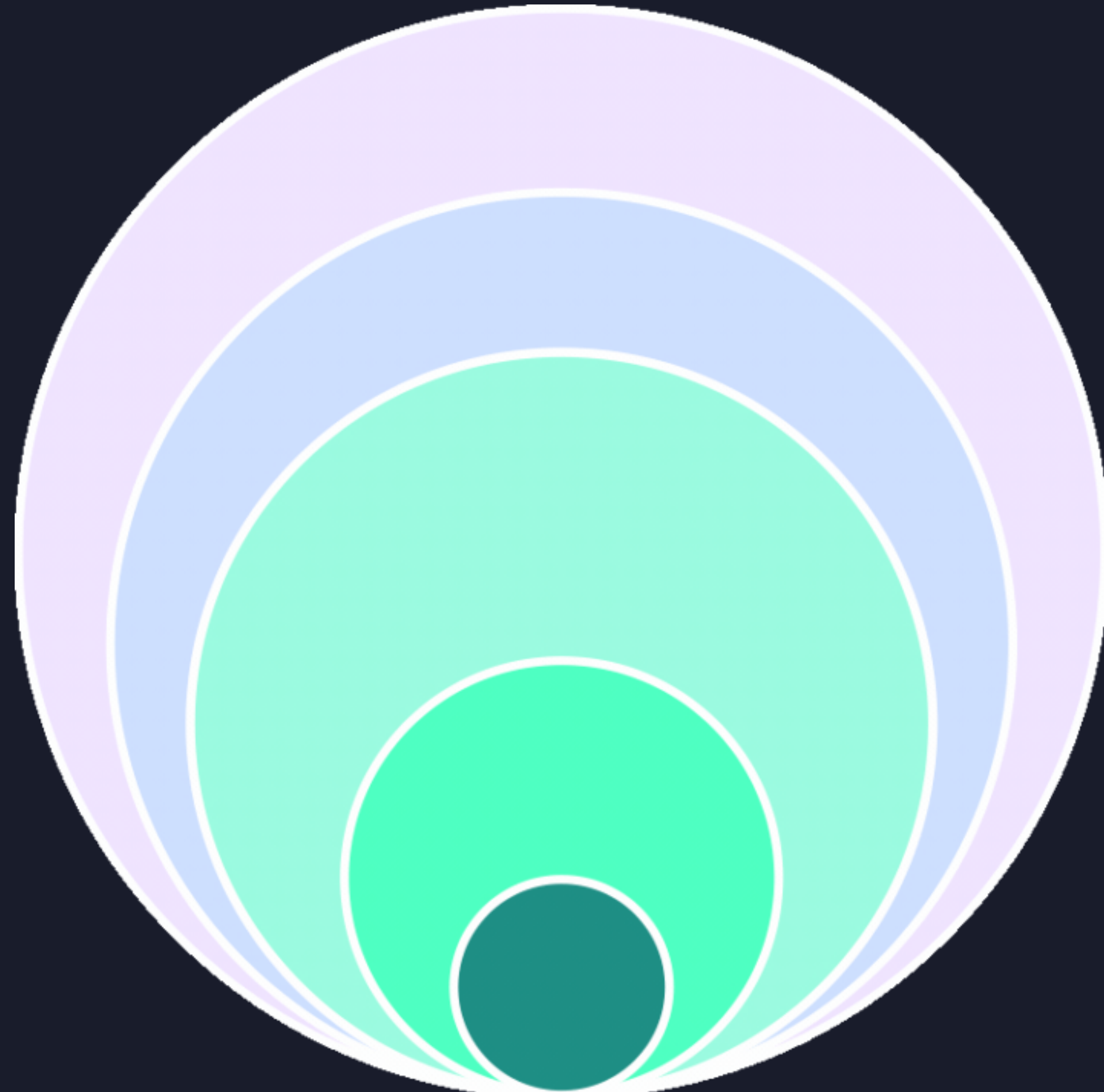
Share

VAN

# EL LLANTO DE LOS NIÑOS INMIGRANTES

Watch on  YouTube

# Community Care Pause





# From Ghosts in the Nursery to Ghosts in the Borderlands

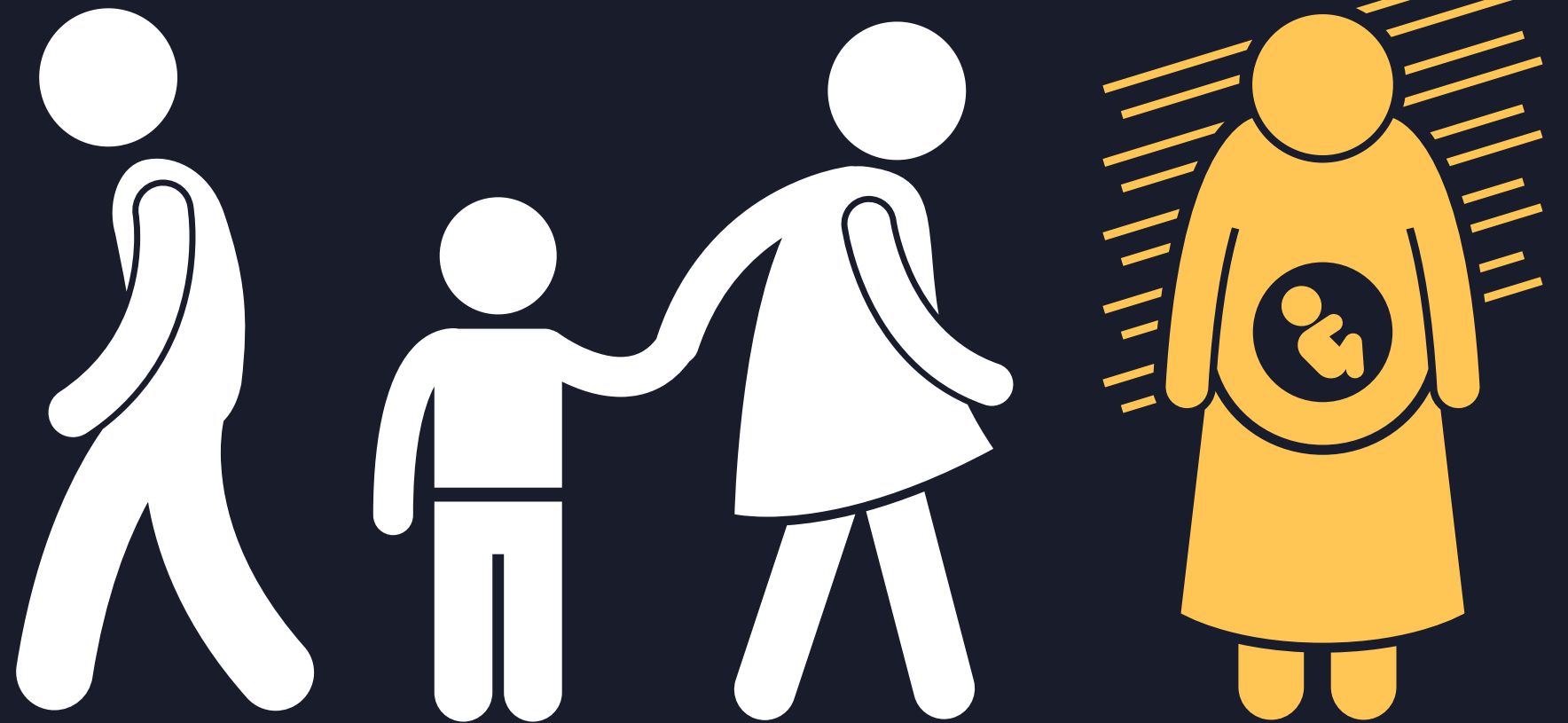


Art by Iris Boncales-Strauss



# Elena and Luis

Pre-migration separations



# Elena and Luis

In transit



# Elena and Luis

**"Temporary resettlement" separation**



# Elena and Luis

## Post-migration / Reunification

(Compensation, decompensation, transgenerational conflict)





# Elena and Luis

## Post-Migration

Naming (and feeling) the  
ghosts and the angels.



# Summary and strategies for collective healing



Core fears are activated at every stage of immigration trauma. Oppressive immigration policies confirm those fears and cause immense harm.



The Ghosts in the Borderlands can help families, providers, and educators understand the how core fears show up in their bodies, systems, communities, and relationships.



Storytelling and collective narrative building are powerful tools for healing and liberation.

What role do **you** play in the struggle for healing and justice for asylum seekers impacted by immigration trauma?



Art by Melanie Cervantes

# Liberation-based entry points

## Individual Level

What would a world without human cages and borders look like?

How do I benefit from the IIC, PIC, and/or systems that sustain them?

How is the liberation of asylum seekers from the Latinx diaspora connected to my own liberation?

## Mutual Aid Level

How do immigration prisons protect or harm our community's survival?

What tactics can we use to counteract the mechanisms of exploitation, displacement, and expulsion?

How can we use our specific skills and training, in a de-professionalized way, to support asylee/refugee communities?

## Institutional Level

How is our institution collaborating, consciously or implicitly, in the exploitation and incarceration of asylee/refugee communities?

How do detention centers and prisons protect or harm our institution and therapeutic treatment?

How is our institution investing or divesting in resources for carceral systems?

## Policy Level

What policies or initiatives exist that suggest that PIC and IIC abolition is possible?

What are some concrete ways in which a broad coalition of health associations and educators can come together to lobby for anti-violence and pro-migrant policies? Who is already doing it?

If policies were passed to divest from the PIC and IIC, which programs and services would therapists want the government and community to invest in?

Domínguez, D. (2022). Abolitionist Feminism, Liberation Psychology, and Latinx Migrant Womxn. *Women & Therapy*. DOI: 10.1080/02703149.2022.2097595



# Call to action and required reading

Organizations to support:

Haitian Bridge

Kino Border Collective

The Sidewalk School for Children Asylum Seekers

Bay Area Border Relief

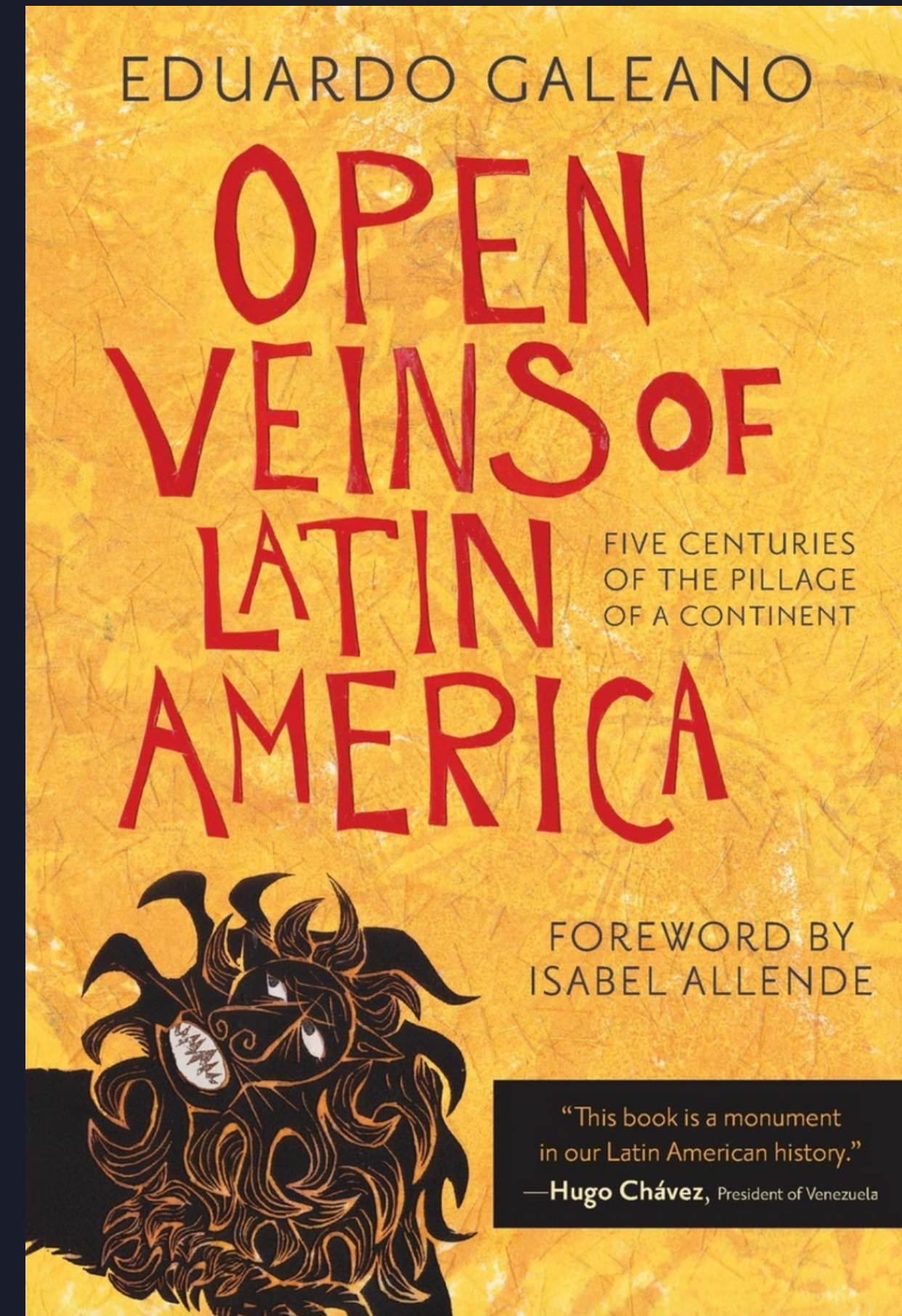
Border Kindness

RAICES Texas

Sister Norma Pimentel, Catholic Charities of the Rio  
Grande Valley

Dulce Refugio Shelter, One Mission Ministries

California Immigrant Youth Justice Alliance





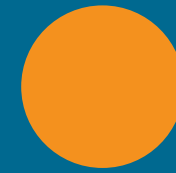


Art by Melanie Cervantes

"To survive in the  
borderlands  
you must live *sin fronteras*  
be a crossroads."  
- Gloria Anzaldúa

---

Monica Alejandra Noriega, PsyD  
[dra.monicanoriega@gmail.com](mailto:dra.monicanoriega@gmail.com)



*What's Next?*

# What's Next?

- 09/21: Early Care and Education Programs and Systems Supporting Refugee Families and Children





# Contact

Monica Noriega

[Monica.Noriega@ucsf.edu](mailto:Monica.Noriega@ucsf.edu)

Danielle Fuentes Johnson

[dfuentesjohnson@buildinitiative.org](mailto:dfuentesjohnson@buildinitiative.org)

