

FOTOHISTORIAS

LIFE AS A DAY LABORER IN SEATTLE

This is an exhibition of **photos** and **stories** of **Hispanic day laborers** as they live their experience of **migration** in **Seattle**, Washington.



This is part of a larger project in which we explore the experiences of migrants through participatory photography and conversational interviews in three distinct settings:

In the South

in Cali and Buenaventura, Colombia

At the Border

at the US-Mexico border, in Nogales, Arizona and Mexico

In the North

in Seattle, Washington

We invite you to interact with the exhibition and to share your thoughts and comments.



#fotohistorias



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FOTOHISTORIAS

RESEARCH METHODS AND RATIONALE

Fotohistorias uses participatory photography and conversational interviews as a way to elicit the life stories and experiences of migrants in different moments of their migration experience.

Inspired in other approaches such as “photovoice” and “photo elicitation,” Fotohistorias combines the power of images with the depth of stories and conversation to explore the experience of migration with sensitivity and care.

Our research seeks to understand and re-value the experience of migrants from their own perspective. In particular we seek to answer the following research questions:

- How do immigrant day laborers, recently deported immigrants, and prospective immigrants to the US reflect their identity, values and culture through photos and stories?
- What are the essential elements of everyday life for immigrants at different times and locations in their migration journey?
- How are transience, identity, and culture reflected in the pictures taken and the stories told by immigrants?



Phases of Fotohistorias

1. Collaboration with local organizations: Working in partnership with local organizations in each research location, we build on local relationships of trust to invite and encourage voluntary participation.

2. Invitation to take pictures: Participants borrow a basic digital camera (or can use their own) for a set time (between a day and a week).

Ethical behavior: participants are reminded to ask permission when taking pictures, especially of children, and not to take pictures that could be embarrassing or put someone in trouble.

Ideas of pictures to take (set goal of roughly 10): suggesting a specific list of ideas tends to work best, including a selfie, places you go, things you like to do, scenes that represent or remind you of home, etc.

Learn to use a digital camera (if needed): Very basic instructions building on Fearless Cards (training cards for very basic computer literacy for extremely marginalized populations, www.fearlesscards.org)

Variations (in Colombia): Discuss in small groups which pictures to take, then go take them, and talk about them on the spot. Discuss which pictures might be interest and talk about them, and later (ie, during the day) take them and briefly corroborate that they represent the conversation that had happened before.

3. Debriefing conversation: Participants bring back their pictures and we hold a conversation about their work.

Transfer pictures to our laptop using memory card or cable. Select photos to retain in the study, if needed (sometimes participants also take video, or take pictures of other things they don't want to include, or have duplicate images of same situation, or simply have too many pictures to talk about).

Open conversation about the photos, one by one. Question prompts include: what is this? Why did you take this picture? How do you feel when you see this picture? What has been left out of this picture? Etc.

Ask about how they felt about doing the photos and the conversation.

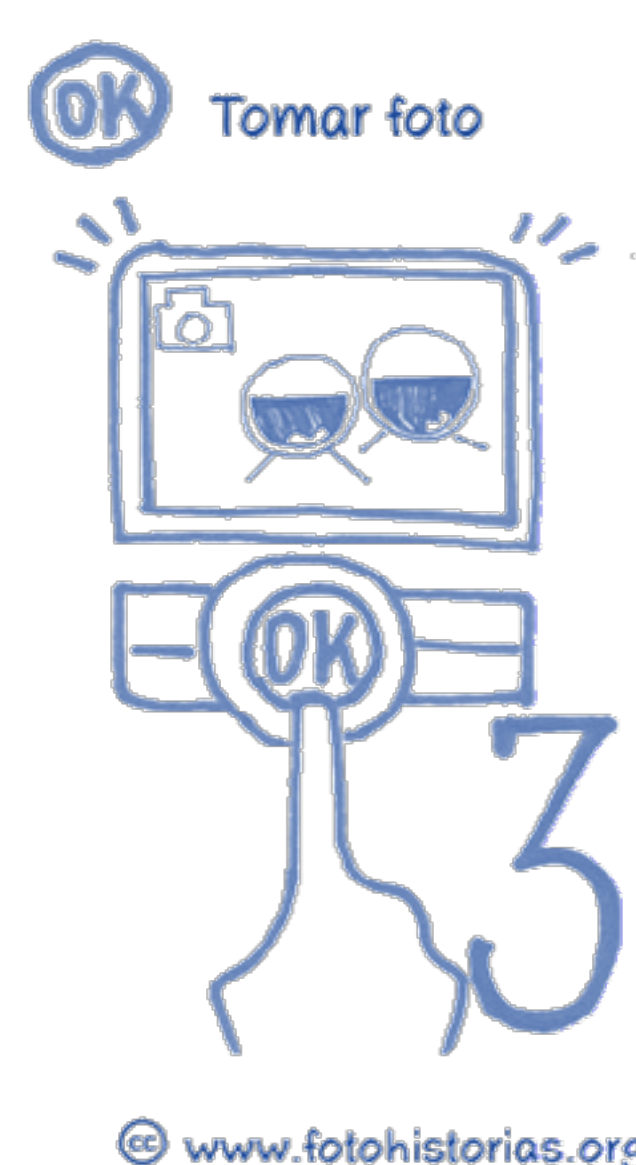
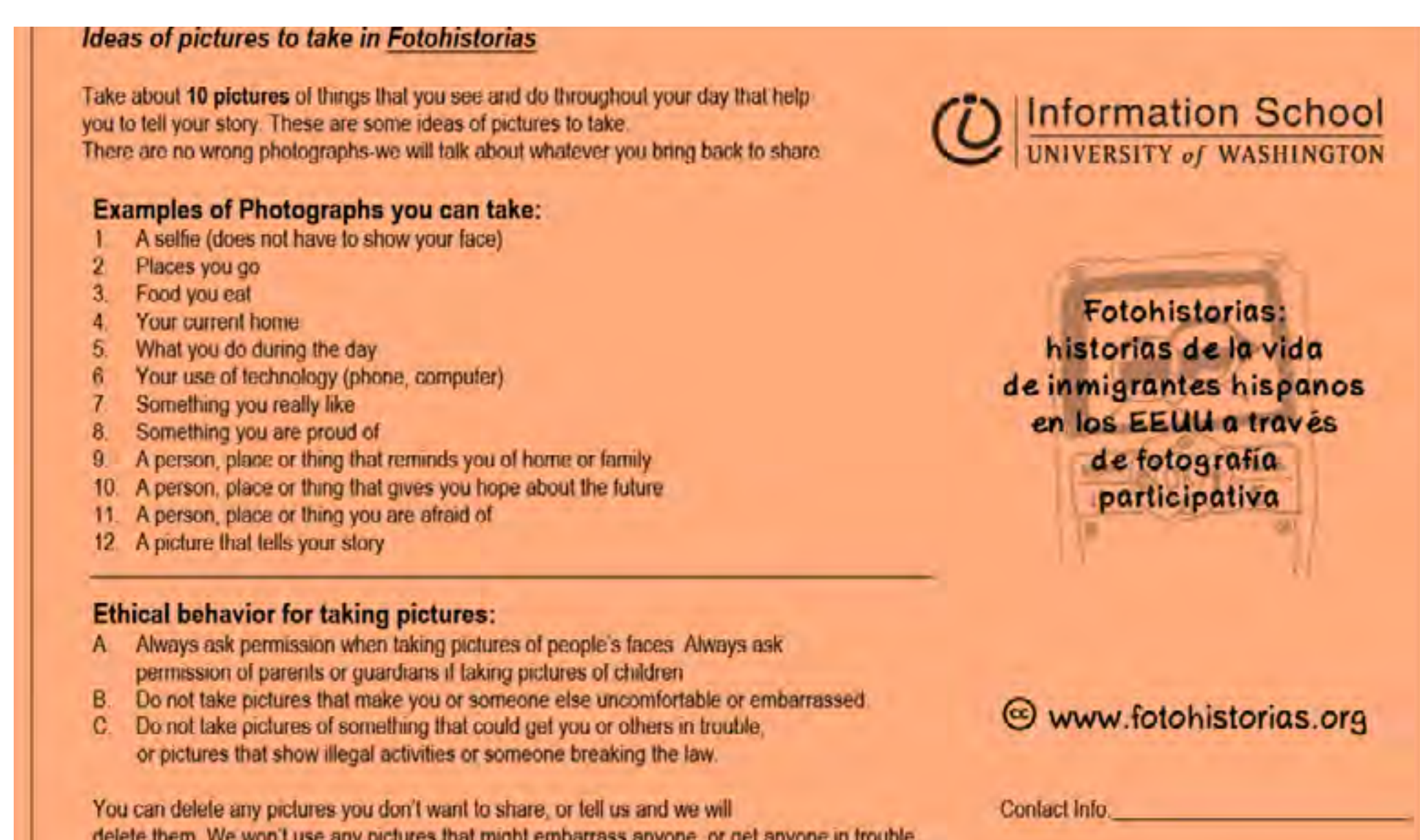
Offer to print one or two pictures if they want (portable printer on hand), or to share by email, text, Facebook, or memory stick.

4. Analysis and dissemination: Translation and transcription, coding, analysis. Dissemination through presentations, exhibitions, web site, book.

Coding of emerging themes using qualitative research software (Dedoose)

Selection of representative fragments and photos for each theme.

Copy edit texts for clarity and brevity.



CONTRIBUTIONS OF FOTOHISTORIAS PARTICIPATORY PHOTOGRAPHY APPROACH

Fotohistorias **combines the power of images and the richness of stories.**

Together, they yield more depth and sensitivity than either photos or interviews alone.

Fotohistorias helps elicit multiple perspectives and symbols from the same image or place, emphasizing how **people's perceptions and feelings shape meaning and experience.**

Fotohistorias participants frequently **feel empowered, heard and valued, and gain a new perspective and agency** over their current situation and context.



Sara: Why did you take this picture of the number 15?

Gilda: Well, because next month I will turn 15 years of living in the United States, so for me, it's a number that means a lot. These 15 years have been of many memories, many joys, many sufferings, many sadness... as an immigrant in this country, the first few years after I got here, I never thought I would reach 15. I thought "I'm going to go back next year." And times went by and when I realized it, I had been all this time in the United States. Every morning when I wake up I feel that I've made it here. I long for my country, I dream about my country and going back to my country and my family. So that's why I wanted to bring this picture of the number 15. I cannot believe it myself.

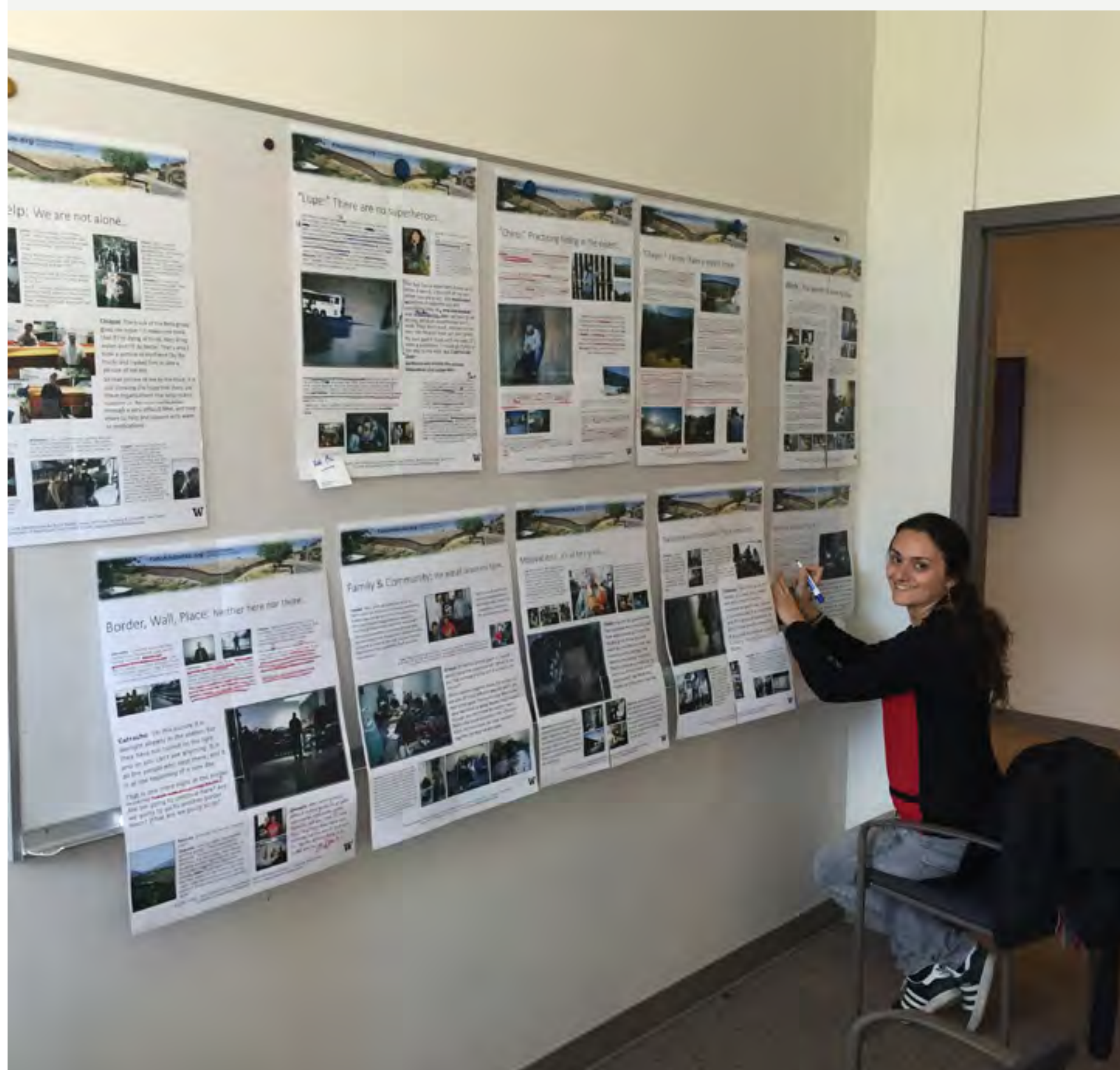


Chapin: This is the basketball court, something that I'm a very big fan of. I play a lot of basketball. In Guatemala, basketball was my passion. I haven't played basketball for a month and I would like to play it again here. But I don't have a ball. My feet are itchy. I want to play but I cannot do it. So that's why I took that picture of the basketball court.



Ricardo: How did it feel to have a camera and to take pictures of your daily life here?

Lupe: Oh I liked it. I really liked it. Just thinking what is happening at this moment in my life. Well, that I'm no longer in detention, I'm not as angry as I was before, when I was in the CCA (Corrections Corp. of America). Now I'm free, I can value some other things that I did not think were as important. I look at their smiles, for example, and yes, we all have problems, but we also have to continue, we have to keep on going. When I saw that mountain, the little hill with the houses, I felt peace, tranquility, the inner peace that you need. So those are things that have helped me to meditate.



Chiapas: Here is a picture of the cemetery. It made me remember when I was crossing in the desert I saw a cemetery. It was just a lot of crosses. Maybe people die and they are left there. I was thinking it must be very sad to die in the desert, and be buried there, and your family doesn't know. You never go back home. You don't even have a coffin. That's very sad. So you take the risk of going, and sometimes you'll make it through, you could be captured, or you could also die of hunger or of thirst. So that's why I took this picture of the cemetery.



MEMORIES OF THE BORDER



Maria

Now that I have my documents I will go back home more often. Once my kids are out on vacation, I plan to go with one or two of them. I want to be back in that peaceful place. I imagine I am there, kneeling down washing my clothes in the river, although there is no water in this picture, but I was imagining it because that's how it used to be.



Gilda

This picture is of boats in my town. I rode one of these boats to cross the sea to come here. I remember the moment when I hopped onto one of those boats in order to leave my town and come here.



Ventura

I have crossed the border many times. That was my world, always on the move. I became old in that world. Had I not known Seattle, I would still be out there, going up and down on the trains. I don't want to be in Guatemala, I want to be here. Maybe I will die here, or maybe I will die somewhere else.



Jorge

I remember when I first came here I did not know the language, did not know many things. Then, I fell in love with this country, you know? I liked it. I do like it. But again, the way things are going, I don't think I will ever allowed to stay here. I will have to put it in my mind that I will have to go back to my country, even though I don't have any family back there.

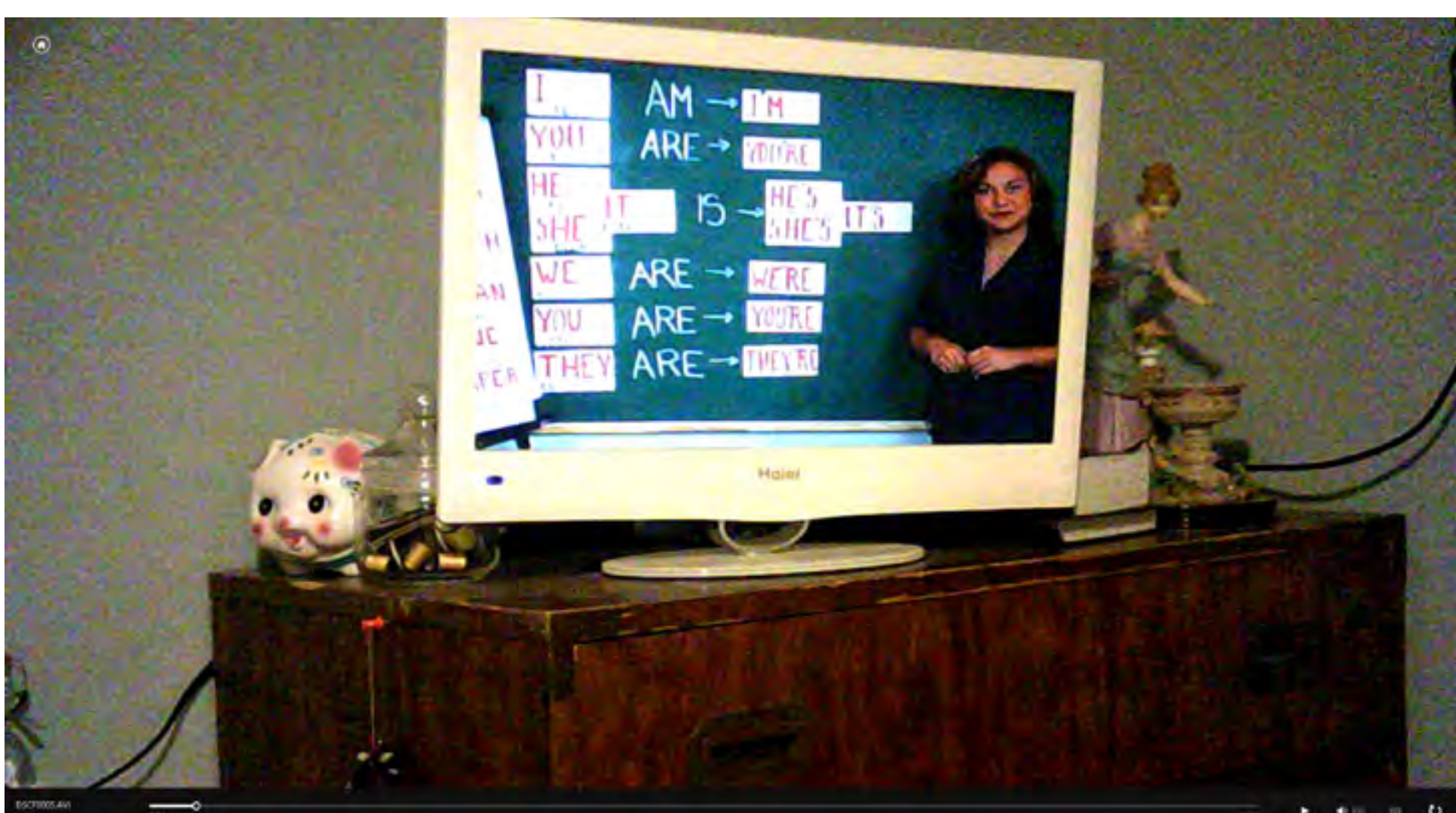


Ventura

I kept walking until I got to the city, when all of a sudden a patrol car drives by and comes to me, because they see you all dirty, disoriented, so they can spot you. He gets out and asks "Hey, where are you from, you have papers?" "No, I don't have anything." So he said "Come on!" and he put me in the patrol car. So he took me and once again dropped me off at the bridge.

Two times in the same day?

Yes, but it was a different officer. Then the third time that day, I tried to cross the river again, but by then it was freezing cold. But I said to myself, "I have to cross...what am I supposed to do here?" so I crossed again.



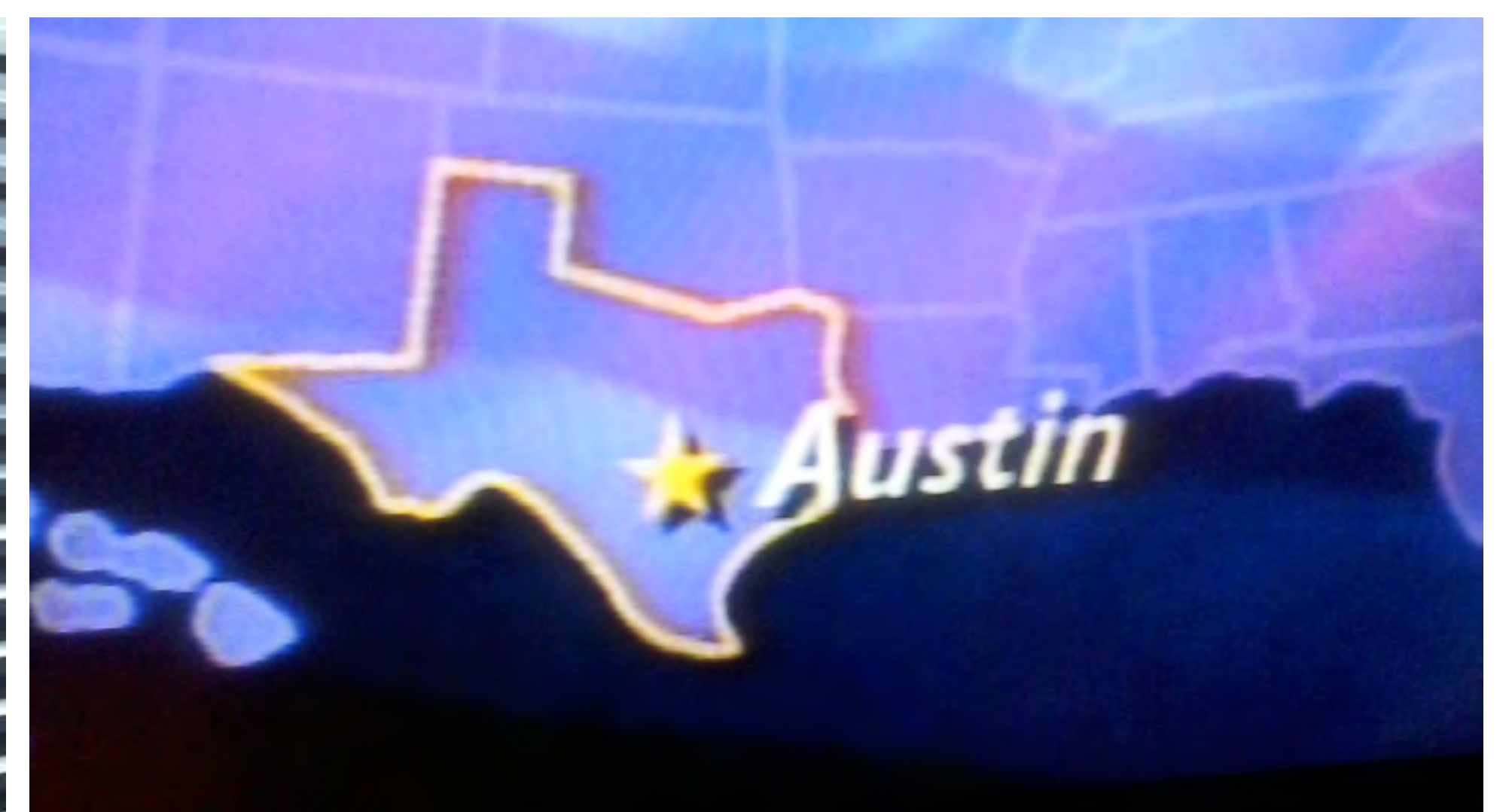
Beatriz

I'm leaving and I will not return. I've been here 10 years. I came to this country and I made the big mistake of staying here. I regret having made that mistake. I thought maybe I could help my child more, so I stayed, and you know a person that comes to this country, we get used to quick money, even though we know half of it stays here.



"Pedro Infante"

In those days in L.A. most of us crossed through different borders, through Tijuana, Mexicali, Algodones or Tecate, almost all of them connect to Los Angeles. I have been through all those borders. Where I liked it most was in Mexicali, because every day I would work on this side picking melons, and by noon they pay you. At that time the border was just made of string with little wires on it. That's it, there was nothing. In those days you would cross more easily.



Juan

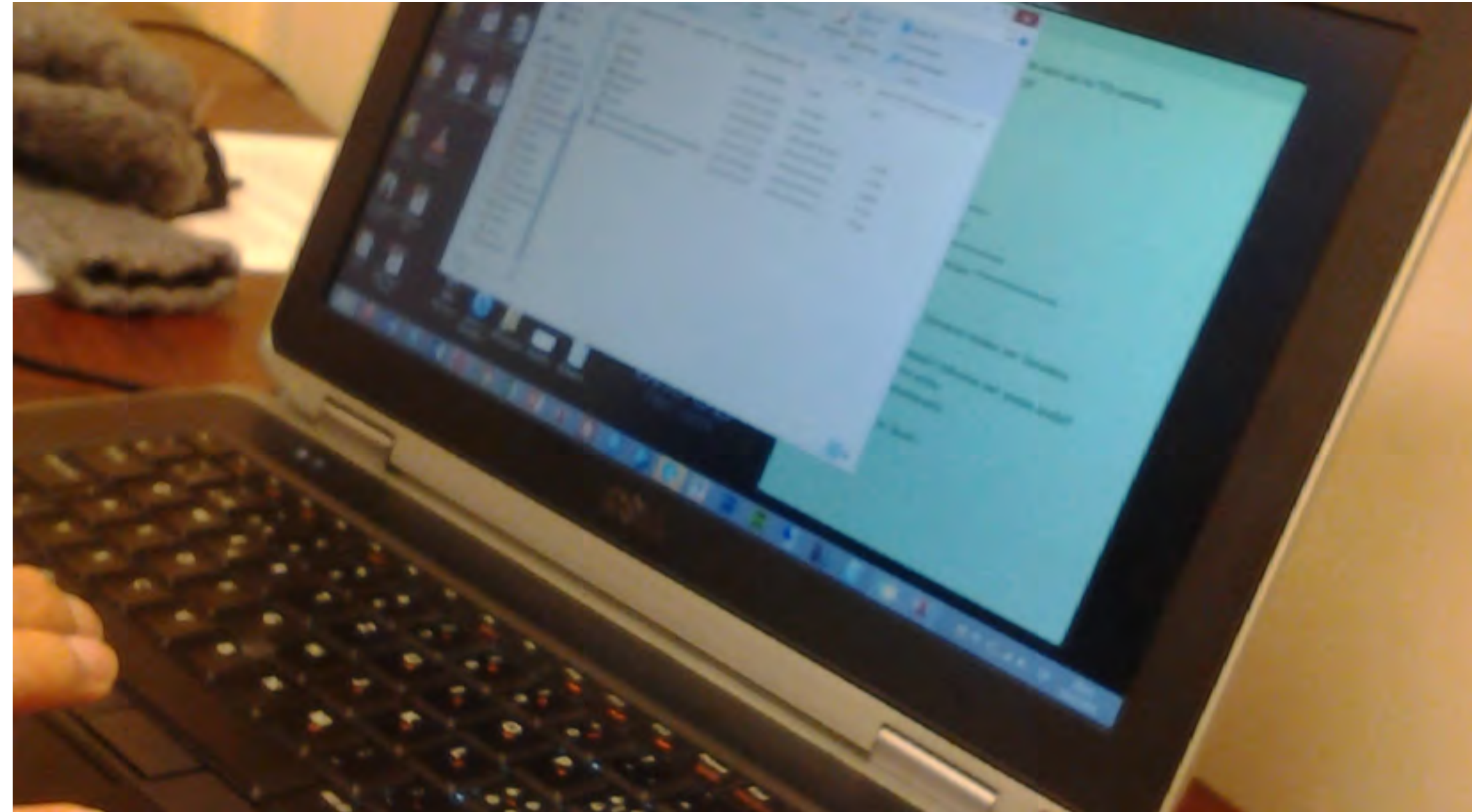
Well, this picture shows Texas. It was the first state that I entered in the US. On August 9 at 9:00 AM in 1988. That is about 25 years ago. I did not know what was going to happen. I saw people crossing and I started walking behind them. I didn't even know where I was going. I saw people walking and hiding and I just followed them. And before I knew it, I was in the US.

FUN & ENTERTAINMENT: THAT IS MY ART



Ramón

I'm learning photography. I admire other photographers except me. I'm not a good photographer but I admire good photographers and good painters like da Vinci, and Botero, and that crazy one Dali. Before, I would look at the pictures I took and I would not like them. And so I thought, "These other photographers, how do they do it?"

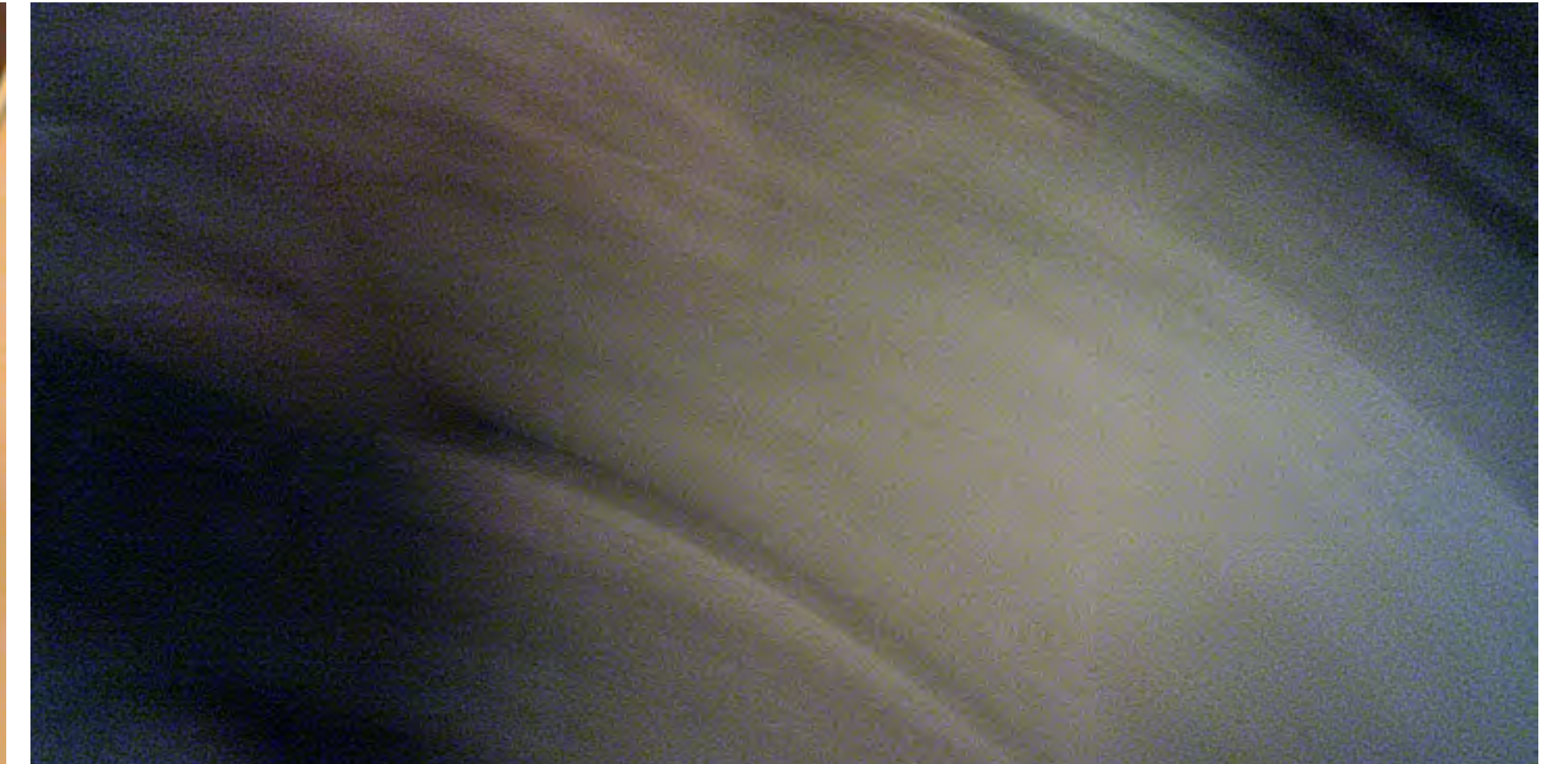


Ramón

I also like to write. I want to be a writer.

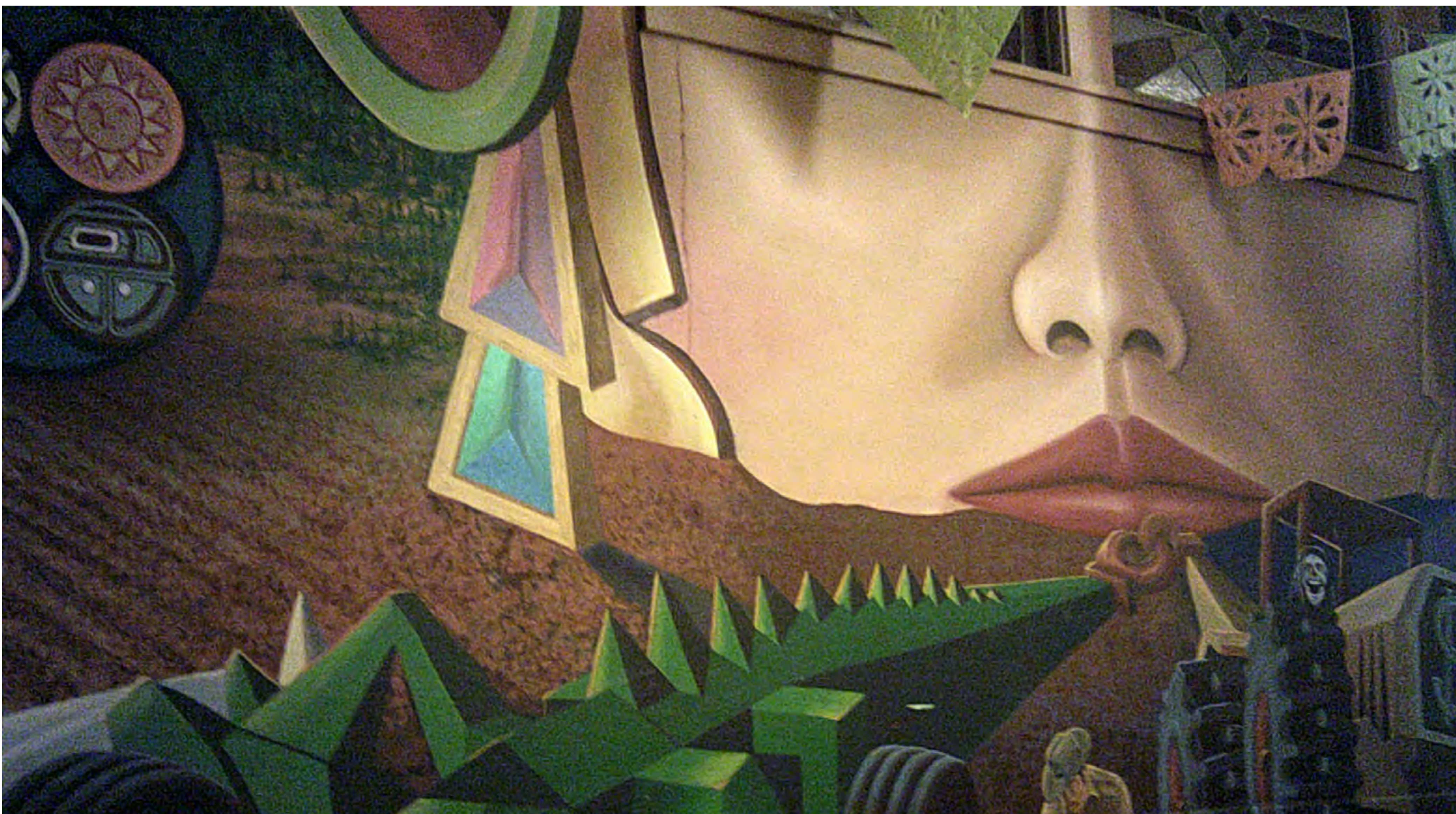
What do you write about?

I write about things I remember. Past loves, things about life, situations I've lived, memories of my childhood. I used to delete them all, but now I keep them. I also used to write by hand on a paper pad when I did not have a computer.



Jimmy

This picture is like an artistic painting. It's like something that's moved and it is really beautiful because you see it's like a color that is spread out, painted. It's like a landscape. A very abstract painting.



Lourdes

In Tijuana, where I grew up, my parents would never let us paint graffiti, but there were many mural paintings. I thought only the people of Tijuana expressed themselves in murals. But I see them a lot near Casa Latina. Murals are an expression of youth asking for something. They want to demonstrate and show themselves.



Maria

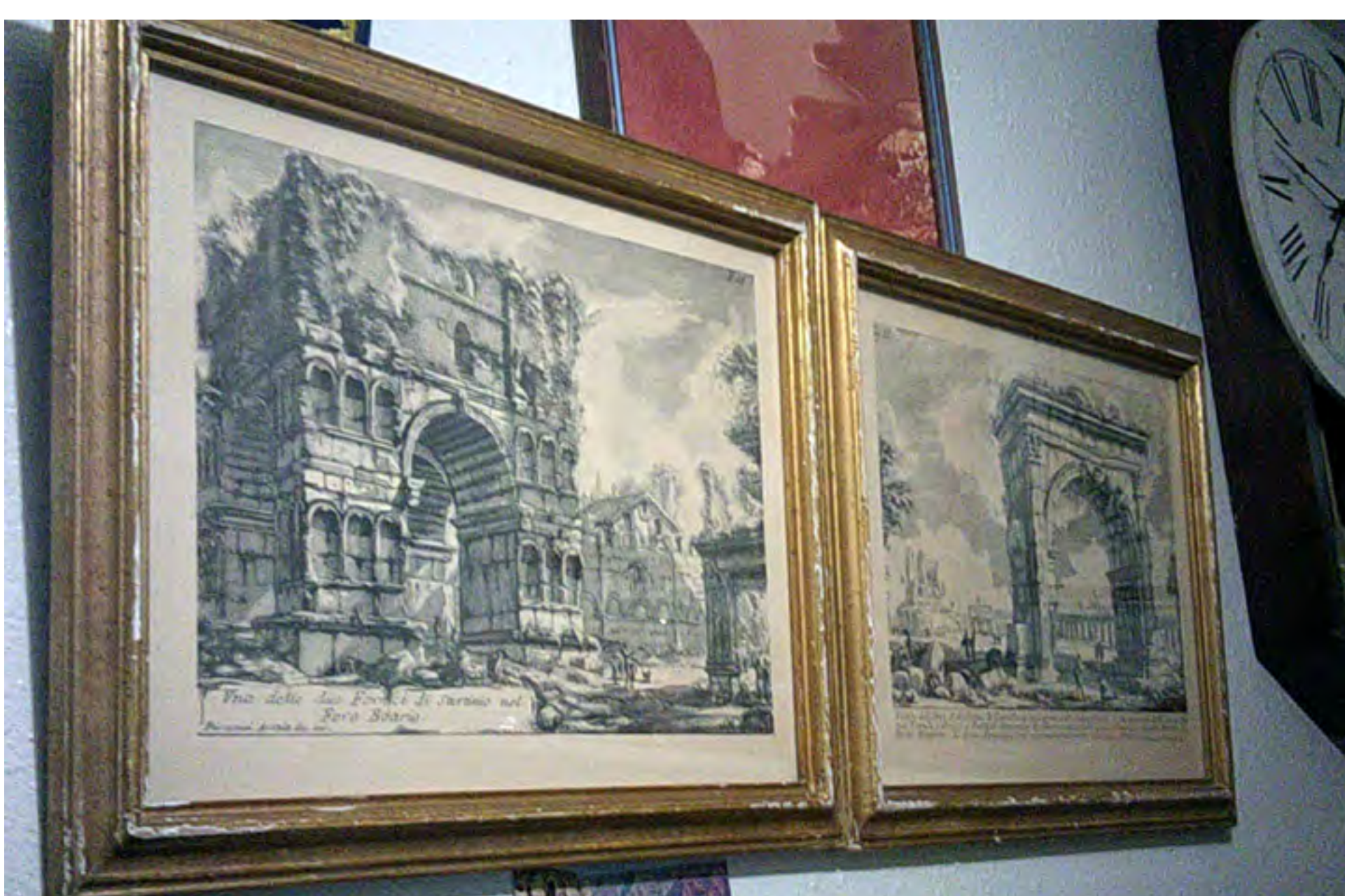
I felt like taking this photo that evening that I was eating for the first time at a buffet in the casino. In Mexico, when would you ever eat these luxury foods? Well, every once in a while you have to treat yourself.



Ramón

In Mexico we say that we laugh at death. We draw it and paint it and make fun of death.

I think everybody is afraid of death. Well, maybe not everybody. When you are young you are scared of death, but me, I'm old and I'm not scared. I see it as very normal that one day we all have to die. So death for me is a reason to make art.



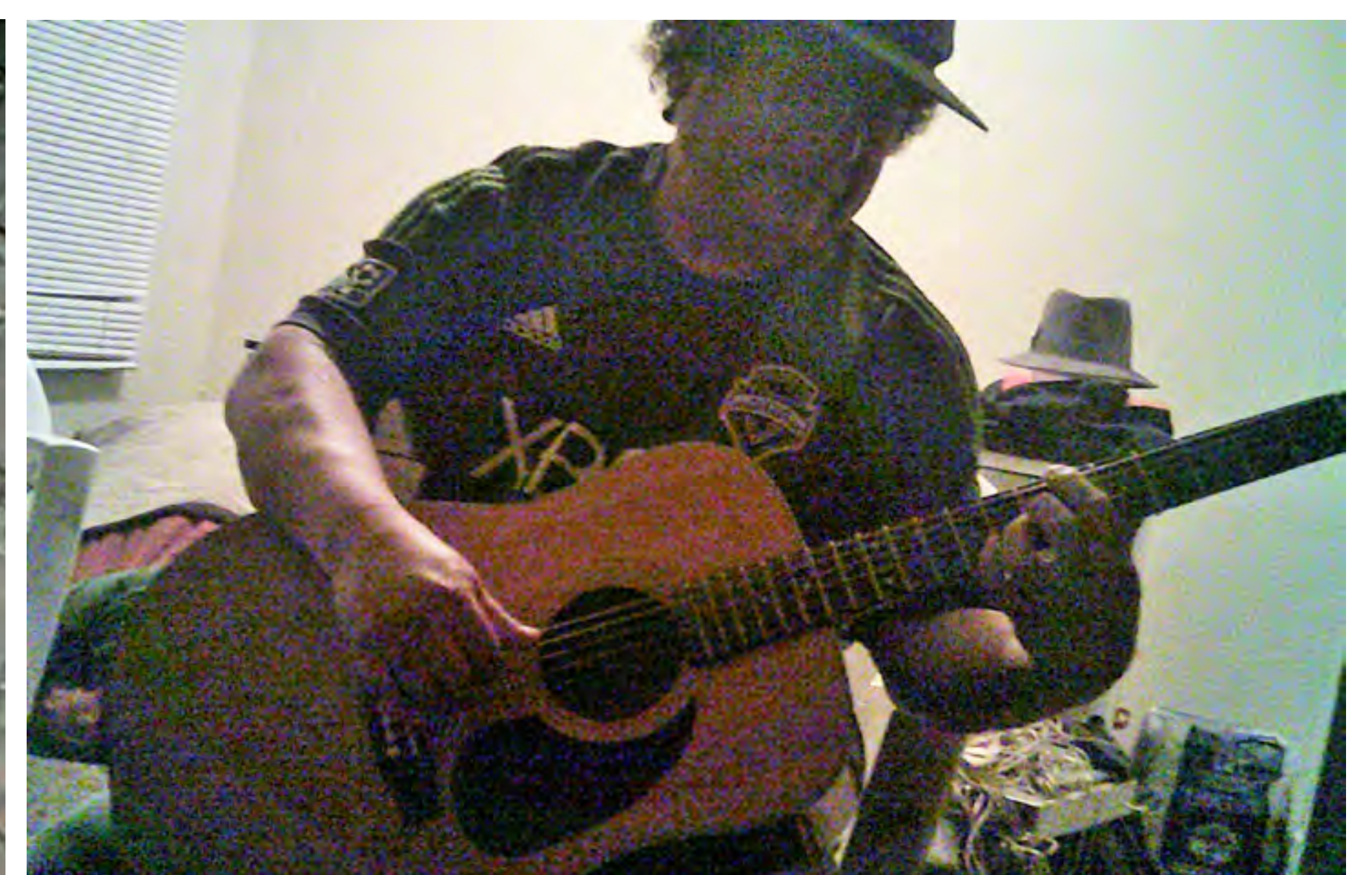
Servando

This is my art. These are Italian paintings I buy at Goodwill. I think of all the time that someone spent making this art that ends up selling so cheap. I buy it and keep it. I collect art. I also collect pennies.



"Pedro Infante"

That is in the park where I play dominoes. People feed the birds there. I'm not drinking, so I have to look for something to do. We all do something different. Instead of drinking, I have found something to do.



Carlos

I am playing my guitar there. I like playing the guitar. There's another friend who also plays the guitar. The guitar is company, I practice and I play it.



INFORMATION & SELF-IMPROVEMENT

Gilda

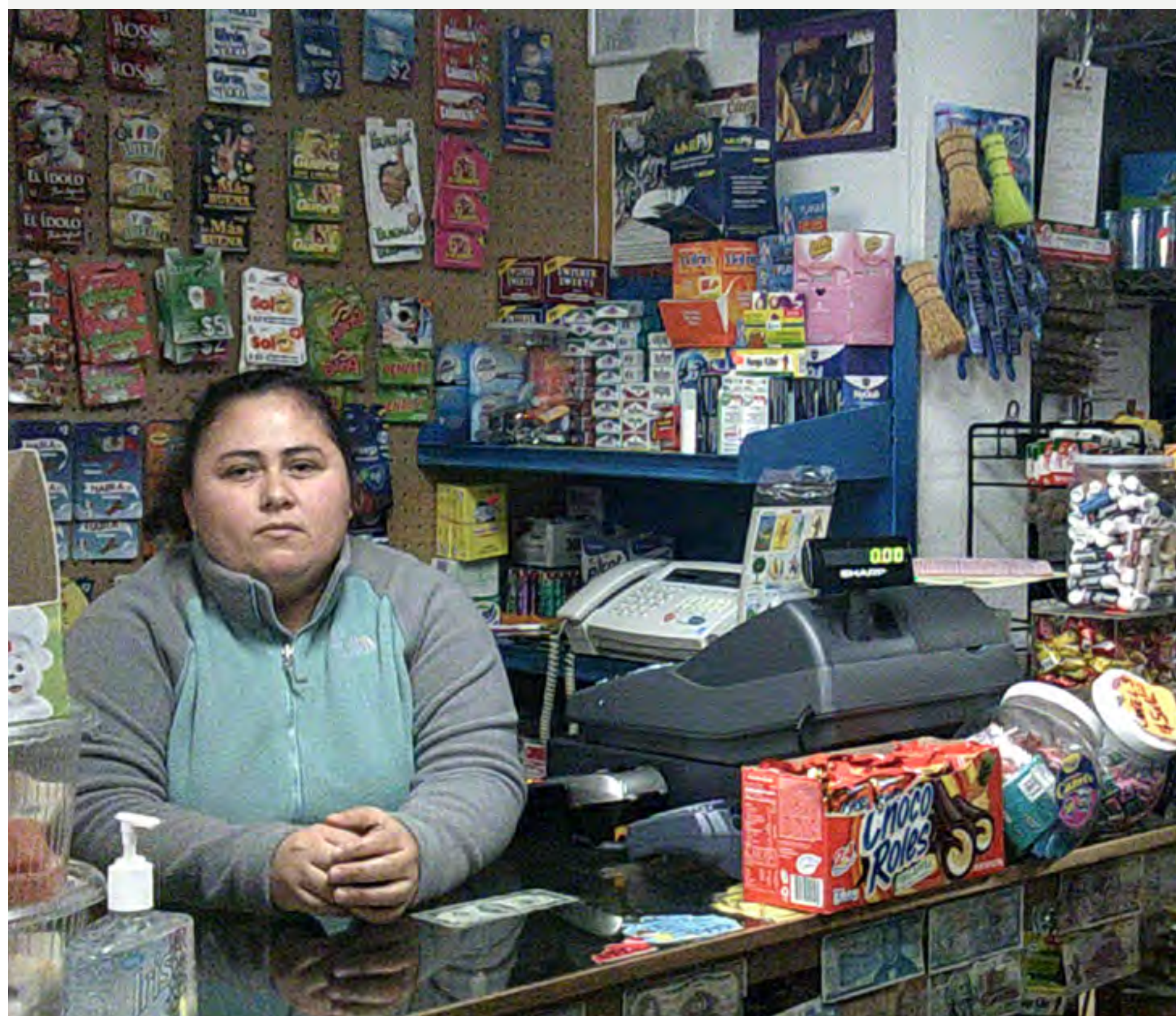
For me, the pigeon that is taking off to fly is me, because I feel that I cannot allow anybody to cut my wings... in any circumstance. In life, we have to try to fly so we can accomplish our goals, both personal and professional. For this, you need to have faith and hope that you will accomplish them. I remember that my mom used to say, 'children are not your own- you have to give them wings so they can fly off.' I remember and carry with me my mom's words. Those are very wise words. The words that parents tell you during your childhood and youth. Even though my parents were not educated, they shared very wise words with me.



Lourdes

They started small, and now they have a little store. They are humble. They will help you. When they don't have anything, they won't deny their friendship. They are always telling you: "whatever I can do, you can do too. What you need is to never give up, to keep on working. Sí se puede, yes you can".

The most important thing is to have and value your dreams.



Juan

This is my American Dream, for me and for all the Hispanics who are here. You dream about going to the US and you think: "Oh, I will earn dollars and return to Guatemala and buy a nice car, a nice house, buy cows, etc." So this picture of me sleeping and dreaming about my American Dream of coming here to the US to earn dollars and baskets of money and go back and be rich. And then you get here and it's not like that. Where is the money? Where are all the riches? Where do you pick up the money? It's all lies. The American Dream that everyone is talking about is not like that.



Servando

The picture is not about the white car. It's about the Starbucks, the first Starbucks on Pike Place. All the other ones originated from this one. I want to set up my business and want it to be as successful as Starbucks. When I go back to my country to set up a business, I want to be as lucky and successful as Starbucks. Or at least, I want to have that in mind. I want the luck because I believe in it. If a man does not believe in luck, then he has nothing.

Ramón

Why am I here? It's because at my age in Mexico it's a lot more difficult to find a job because there is a lot of youth. And here even if you are over 60 and you're retired and they don't have a full time job, maybe you can still work. And in Mexico if you go to look for a job and one is younger than me, the other person is the one who is going to get the job. I'm okay here, it's not that I want to stay but I'm okay. I would like to learn some more technology or learn some skill so that if I go there I'm not just depending on anybody.



Gilda

This last picture is of a stone with the word "BELIEVE." Every day, I carry it with me in my bag. When I leave home, I have it in my coat. I have to believe in myself. I have to believe in life. I have to believe in others. I have to believe in so many things... things that I want to fight for, because if you fight with faith, then you can accomplish things. Faith is something that I want to maintain because I am a human being. Weakness will make you vanish. With faith and hope, one can keep moving forward.



FAMILY AND MOTIVATION



Maria

Well, I'm from over there... but, we're here for many different reasons, some in search of a better life, others we are here for from our families. I have a son that I can't leave. I have him in a hospital due to an accident that he had, so I cannot go and leave him behind. If it was not for that I would have never left my children and my family, but my son was already here in the US and then he had an accident. That is why I am here.



Jorge

These are my friends. There's always going to be a group that we know who are, the ones who come here early. Many of my friend who come here, I learn a lot from them. Many of them, even if they don't know much, like reading or writing, they have very clearly mapped in their minds what they come to accomplish in the United States. They have their families in Guatemala, in Mexico, and I see that every penny that they earn, they save it and they send it. This is the lifestyle they lead. Five, 10 years, but they have in their minds what is it that they're here for.



Lourdes

This is a picture of this family's place. They came here as poor migrants. This woman was looking for a job such as cleaning houses, and doing any other labor work. Also, her husband is very humble too. They both came from Mexico. He dreams of doing something where he can see his kids, where he can feed his kids, and where he can do what he loves, which is commerce.



Jorge

This guy I met 3 years ago here. He has his kids in Ciudad Juarez, and if he makes \$100, he will send them 90 and he will live with 10. I never see him wasting his money. He prefers to eat where it's free, but his money is sent to Mexico, to his kids. I send money to Mexico but not like him. If I want to buy a pair of shoes I buy them, but he doesn't. He's set in his mind on what he wants for the future. It doesn't mean I don't, but... I think if I'm not going to stay here, I need to do the same.



Blas

This is a picture I have in my wallet. She is my daughter. She is the only one I have a picture of and I always carry it in my wallet. I have two more daughters. When I'm sad I will pull out the picture and I look at it, and then I get calmer. I call them and we talk, I tell them "I'm OK, it's all good here." They're in California now and they give me the strength to keep on struggling to move forward to improve my life. I send them money for school and for their shoes when I can. I wish I had more to send them more. Right now I live with some friends in an apartment but when I first got here it was not very easy, I was living on the streets. And my kids would ask me, "so where are you living?" And say, "I'm living in an apartment," because I would not tell them I was living on the streets.

FUN & ENTERTAINMENT: NATURE

Ramón
Nature for me is the expression of something that you don't see. You cannot see God but these things are an expression of God. God made them, but these are expressions of what you cannot see. You cannot see the seed and you do not see how this flower blooms but you see the result. For me that is the meaning of nature. Nature just fulfills a duty and it has to yield flowers and fruit even if it's the last thing it'll do. This is the time of year when it has to bloom and it blooms. And after that follows the fruit. This plant is almost dead but it has to fulfill its duty of yielding fruit. So the plant wants to leave its seed to survive more. It is the survival of the plant to leave its seed, but at the same time, it's just pretty. It's pretty to look at the flower.



Gilda
What attracted me to this picture is that somebody will look at this picture and won't see anything. For me, it has a very important meaning because the tree is trying to submerge its roots. From here, you do not see how the roots are interrelated until they come out to the surface. When I saw the tree and the roots, I told myself, "WOW, I identify myself with that tree because I feel that I can also grow roots and I can maintain these solid roots."



Maria
This landscape brings me memories of the peaceful place I used to live in. You desire to be there in that tranquility, no noise from anything, only the roosters, the dogs barking, the chickens cackling, the sheep, the cows, the burros... We would go wash to the river, and we'd look for a rock like that to wash. I imagine that I am there, kneeling down washing clothes in the river, although there is no water here in the picture, but I was imagining it.



Ramón
I'm learning photography. This is a picture of a landscape with a cactus by a guy who is a writer from my homeland, from Jalisco.



Gilda
I wanted to smell the sand and the beach. I wanted to connect to that smell of the water, so I took my shoes and socks off because I wanted to put my feet on the sand and connect with the sand. I used to do this in my village. I felt that I was receiving all the energy of the sand. For a moment, I felt like I was free. It's as if I was going back to the past, to how I was before I came to the US. When I take my shoes off and walk on the sand, I feel freedom.



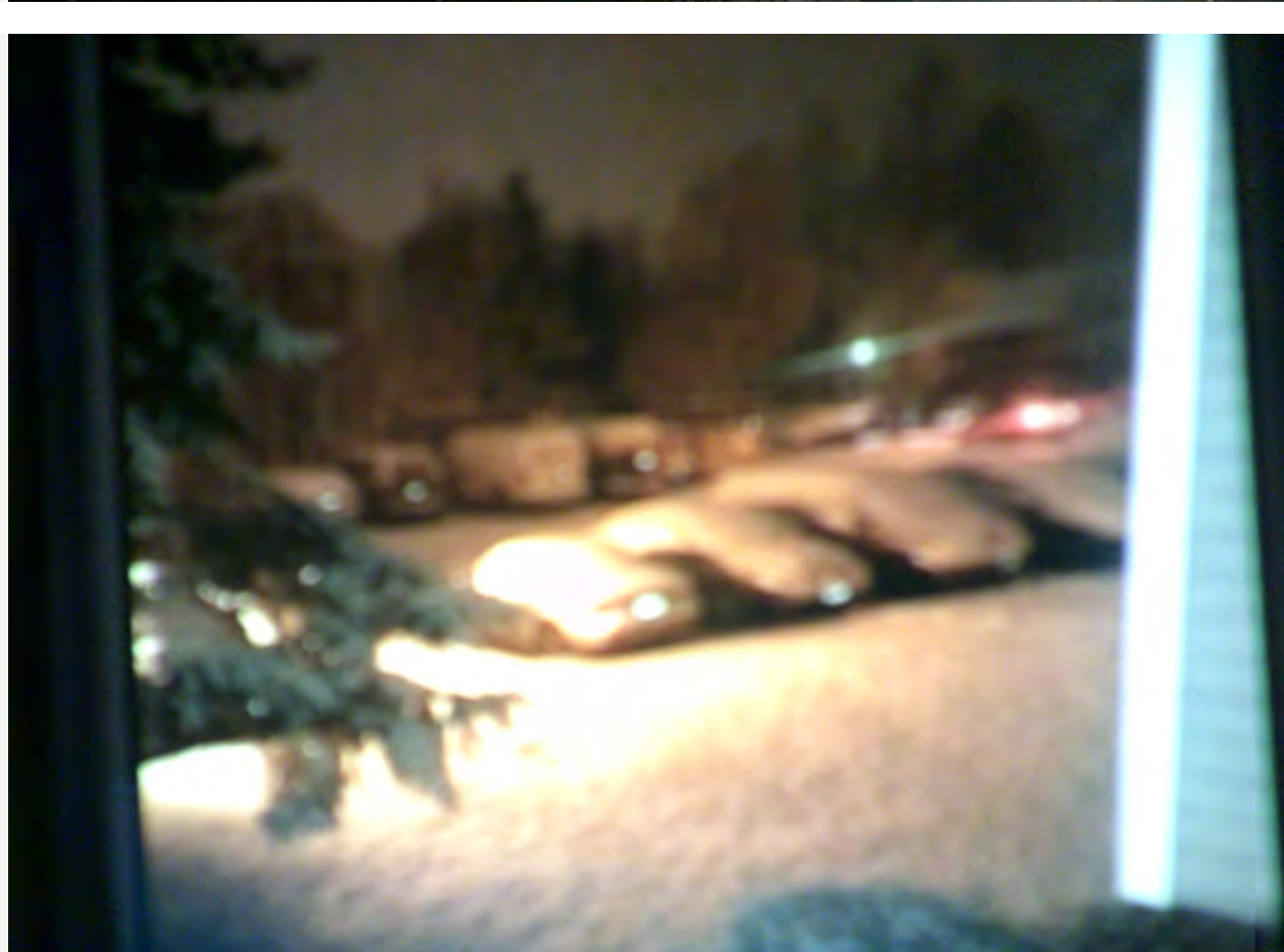
Beatriz
The photo is of water... every time I feel very stressed and lonely, I sit and look out to the Ocean. I like to see the seagulls and the ducks. Sometimes when I am very confused, to clear my mind I go watch the water. I have very few people to talk with. But after watching the water I leave with a whole new mentality, with other thoughts, a different feeling...



Servando
There are some pictures of shinning. Those are signals in the sky. This is the kind of sunset over the Puget Sound. Yes, those are very bright lights. Here, I like seeing the reflections on the side. Personally, I have always wanted to see the auroras. Especially, the auroras borealis because I have never seen them. I'd like to go to the library so I can learn about all these things.



Lourdes
I like the way the light color covers it all as a sheet. This is how pretty nature is. We come from a country where it is very hot. In Tijuana, there is no snow. When my sister came, there was a snow fall. They had never seen snow. Never! It was nice to see their reaction. Here, I learned to appreciate the snow more because people from other places enjoy it a lot. I can show you how all those dark, grey and black cars were covered in white.



SECURITY: LEGAL STATUS



Ramón

Migrants are what the politicians take and use when they find it convenient, and when it's not convenient they kick us out. So the Republicans are like the wind: they move when it's convenient for them and it goes back and forth, and same thing with the Democrats. I don't understand much of that. I would like to understand it better. I don't need the visa or citizenship. If they gave it to me for next week then I would go but if they offer it and it's going to take three years or six years then by the time I get it maybe it'll be to enter legally back into Mexico.



Ventura

If I go back to Guatemala, who knows how it will go? Here, I am undocumented, and there too. My brothers sent me my documents, and I went to the agency. I lacked a consular ID, birth certificate, a passport. I showed them my ID from the college on Broadway, but they didn't give me anything. I went crazy because they wouldn't give me anything. I was very sad, very depressed, abandoned, I lost my backpack, someone stole all of my documents. Recently I called a cousin, I said "Hey, can you send me my documents, I will send you money." So I paid, and now I have a birth certificate again, I was able to recover it and the college ID from Broadway. So that's what I have. Now I need those other two things: the rent, they ask you for a bill, a rent receipt. I don't have any of that because I live on the street, I don't have money to rent a room.



Gilda

There is not a single day that goes by where I do not think about getting my permanent residency. This picture shows how I feel about the service of the immigration and citizenship. I feel that is a very unjust service. It's a service that plays with the life and feelings of human beings... It is just politics playing with the feelings of human beings. They hurt you as if you were an enemy, so I am annoyed to think that there is a service that is supposed to be serving the laws and the people. I feel indignation.

Servando

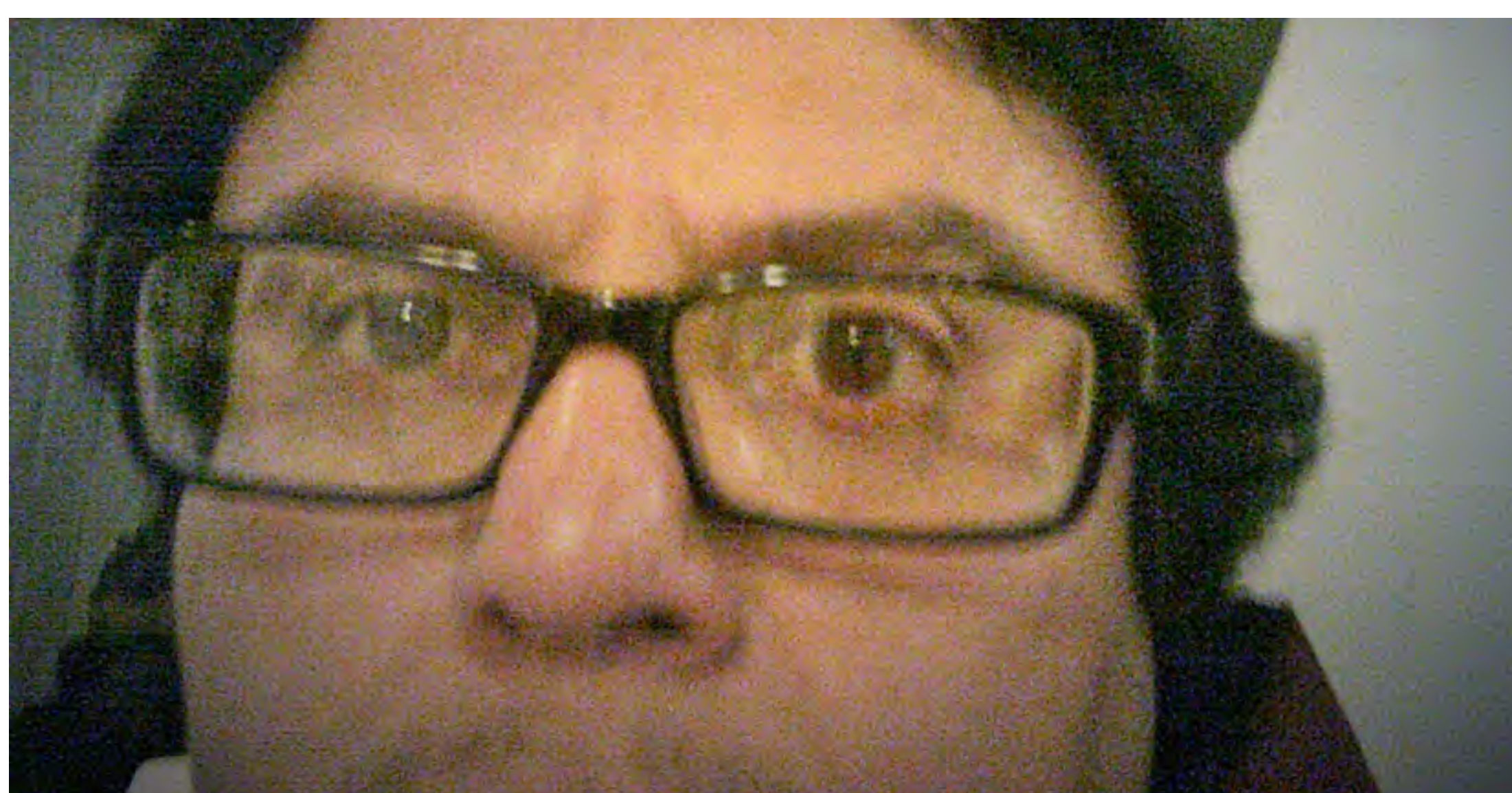
This is a picture that has Obama and somebody who is clapping for him. Also, there is someone who is not paying attention to him. Personally, I think it is very difficult to be the president. Nonetheless, he is doing it. I admire him more than any other previous U.S. president. I also admired Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton. He was a very good president. After his term, he left the country very rich. Then came George Bush, and he spent all the money and transferred all his problems to this guy, Obama.

I would like Obama to give us legal documents so we can start working more than just one day at a time, as day laborers. There are times in which we spend a whole week or two without any work.



Carlos

I need to start doing something for when I'm old. Where will I be? Maybe I can live quietly in somewhere in Central America that is not too expensive. I am from El Salvador but I really like Guatemala. So I would like to live there. Or maybe when I get my papers I can come and stay here.



Jorge

When they announced there was going to be an immigration reform, we were happy. But when we saw what they offered, well... I'm glad that the law will maintain families united, but those of us who have no family, even if we have been here a long time, then we're left out. If I'm not married, I don't qualify. My friend has also never married, and doesn't have kids. And he's says: "once again, we are left out".



Gilda

About 15 years ago, I came into the country with a tourist visa. I am now able to work because I have a work permit. Somebody was helping me with my legal documentation for residency but it turned out he was a fraud. I am now again doing the paperwork. This is why I cannot leave the country, I would not be able to come back in.



SECURITY: MARCHES & PROTESTS



Blas

The march is important so that the government can listen to us. What we want is to work honestly, to bring our bread home for our families, be it here or away, to send some money to the family in Mexico or wherever they are. And each one, each head is a whole world and we're all thinking about the same thing. We're all thinking about work.



Juan

This march was on Martin Luther King day. There have been other marches that I have participated in. And I like to be active, to let it be known who I am. I also participated in the march in 2006, and last year, when I was detained in the immigration detention center in Tacoma, I participated in the hunger strike. I share what some of the leaders here at Casa Latina say: "we have to be part of the battle for the rights of Hispanics." It's not just about me. It's for the others too. Maybe I won't get what I want individually. I have to participate in the march even if I don't get a direct benefit. Maybe in 20 years or 30 years, other Hispanics will benefit from these changes.



Blas

These are four women, all from Casa Latina, at the Martin Luther King Day March... They're all holding hands together, the four of them, like struggling together. It was a nice picture, as part of the march and in solidarity. That made me proud of my colleagues here at Casa Latina, with their strong will, that we can all keep on moving forward together.



Gilda

I advocate for the rights of immigrants in this country. I travel around the country to do demonstrations, marches and carry the voice of the people with whom I work. I'm in the same situation as many of them. Why do I do this? I have the strength to keep on struggling for myself and my own rights. It is not the same to be fighting for immigrants if you are in the same situation. For this reason, you will fight harder.

SECURITY: AUTHORITY & JUSTICE



Ventura

They handcuffed me, and put me in the back of the patrol car, they put me there in that cage, I was there about 15 days, then they transferred me to a cell, and then another cell, then another, and finally the last one was in the big house in Mexicali. That was the last cell they put me in. Then they sent me back to my country. All the way over there, so I came back again. I could not stay over there because it's even harder over there. Sorry to say this but over there, they will blow your head off. If you ask, they say, "Ah, get a job," but there are none. And if you don't ask, you die of hunger... My stomach hurt, great stomach pains that I would get, because I wasn't eating. But not now, I don't suffer like that. I am eating, and I have money. Here I say, damned be those days when I had to endure that pain and hunger. Now I will eat well, I say.



Blas

I took that picture downtown because sometimes, with just seeing them, the cars of the Border Patrol, you're afraid. You wish you didn't have to see them because they'll ask you questions, just as a precaution. I took that picture just for the fear I have of seeing them. I was happy to be able to take the picture.

Question: Even if you're not doing anything wrong they are intimidating?

Yes, because they're looking and I don't know if they want to ask you some questions and it's as if they're looking for you. I'm fearful. You have to behave yourself and work honestly so that you don't get into trouble. I would not want to be inside one of those at this time.



Jorge

What I want to say with this picture is that here in the United States I learned that there are laws that are clear. If you break the law, you have to pay. This is a sign when you get on the light rail, and if they catch you without having paid the ticket it's \$125 fine. There is no way out of it. I like that it works this way not just for me but for everybody.



Juan

I was caught by the police. I had not committed any crime but the police was looking for somebody else and maybe I resembled the person they were looking for. I don't have any problem with the police. They held me for 3 or 4 days and they turned me over to the immigration detention center in Tacoma. I was there for 6 months in detention. They asked me if I was afraid to go back to my country. I said yes, and so they did not deport me. Because the truth is I cannot go back to my country. I worked close to the government in my country and that's the way they are. When you leave, if you have worked with them and then have deserted them, you become their enemy. They will look for you. So I really cannot go back.

Blas

I took those pictures at the Court House. That represents justice for me, that this guy is being taken away. You know, there are people who come here and rather than trying to work and to help their family, they come to hurt others and to damage others or their family or friends. Those are people who come to take away other people's dreams. I took those pictures because they took that person who had done something wrong and they are putting him away and locking him up. This person killed a friend of ours, here from Casa Latina, to rob him maybe a bit of money. He and another person, they killed him. The other person was not caught but this one was caught. So he's the one who killed our friend Alvaro Reyes. And so we went to his trial and to his sentencing. They put him away for ten and a half years; for me, that's too little, they should have given him 20 or 25 years.

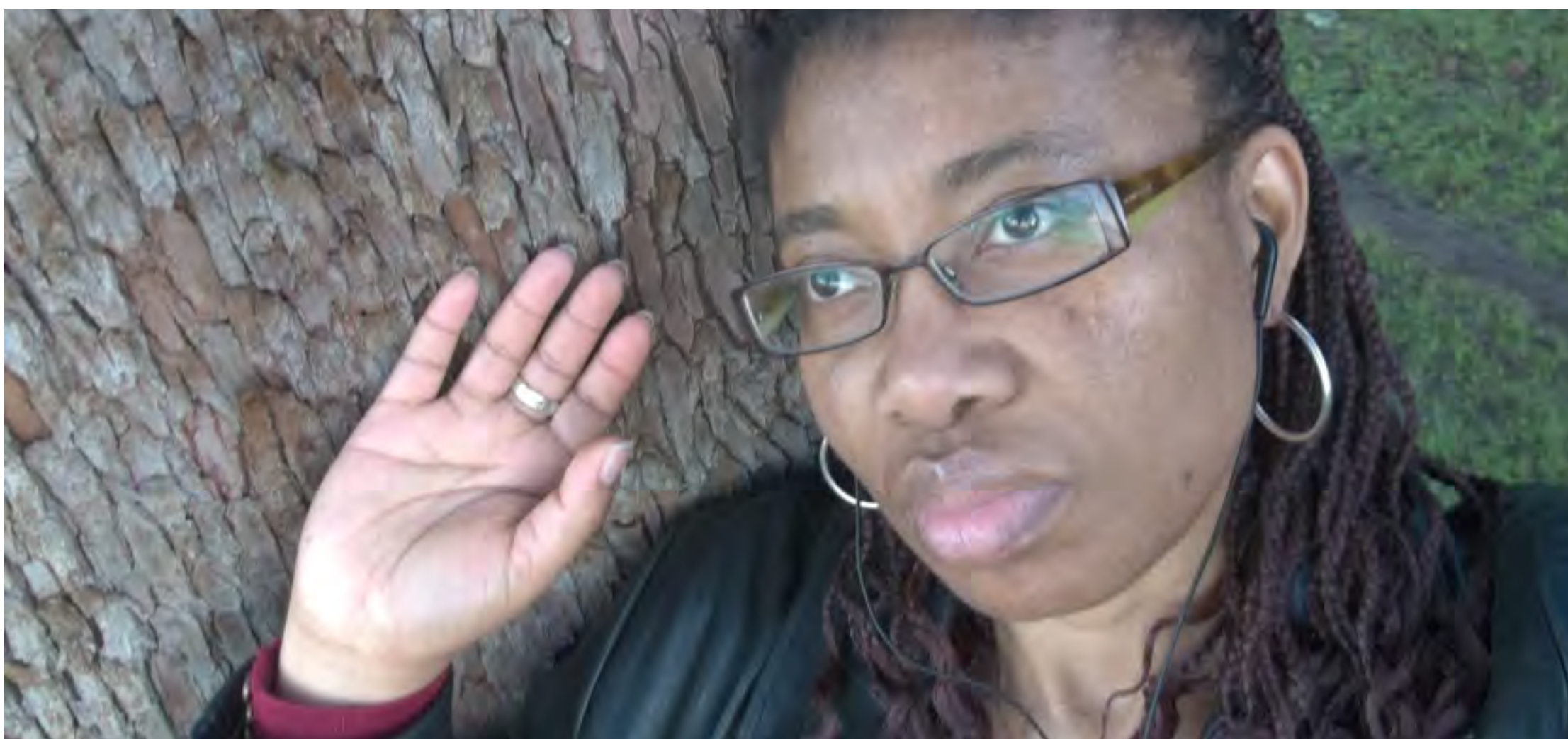


WORK: WE ALL TAKE PRIDE IN WHAT WE DO



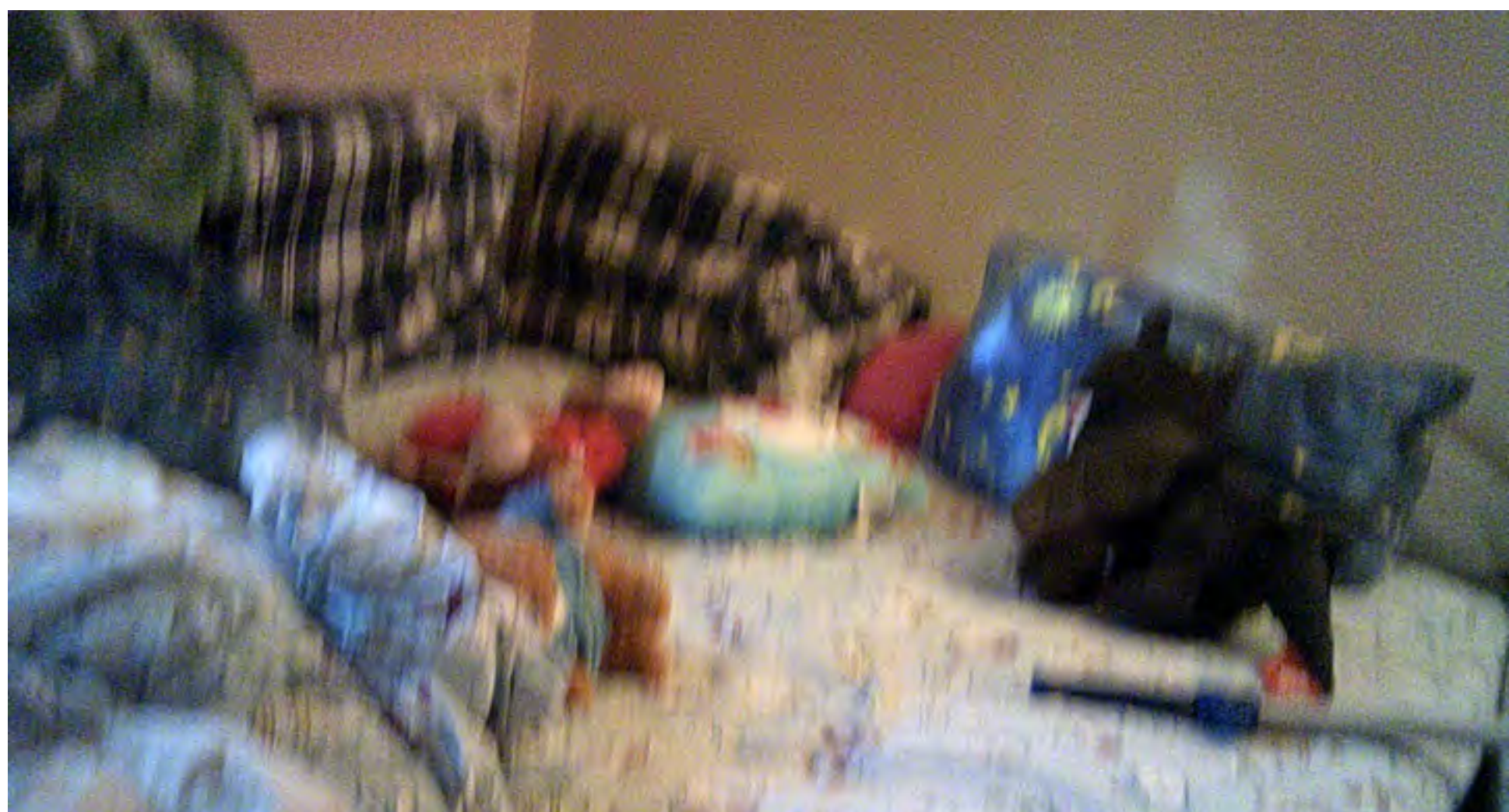
Pedro

This woman is my teammate. She works doing housecleaning and I work outside doing patios or cobblestones. We have worked together and people like how she works and people like my work so that's why we are associates.



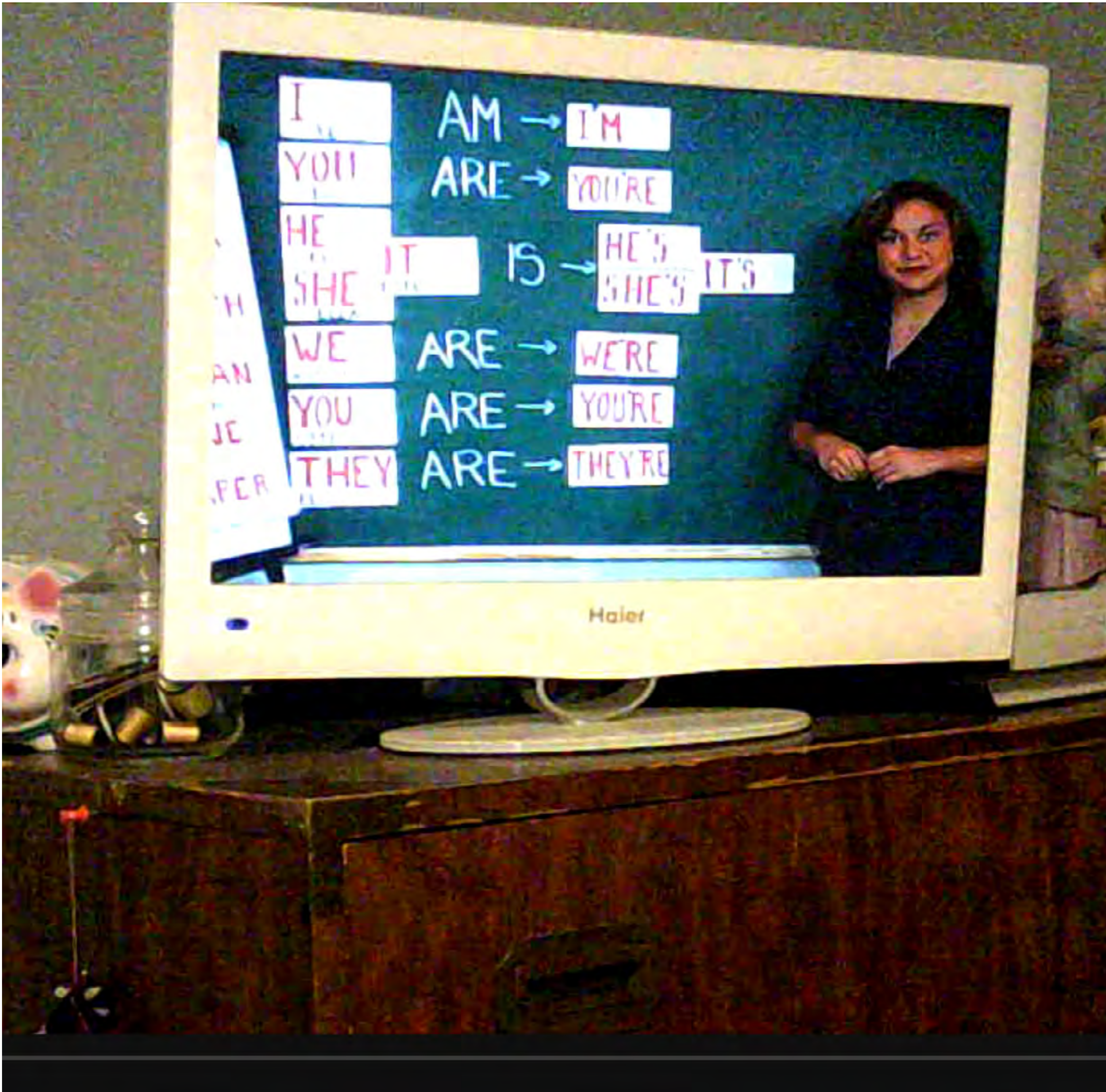
Gilda

I get hope from this tree. I was trying to connect with it, to absorb its energy. The fruit of my work is to positively impact someone. I have made many changes in the life of the women that I work with. For me, it is huge when people tell me 'Gilda, you cannot imagine what you have done with my life'. I will continue believing in myself and in what I do.



Beatriz

My employer in this house is very particular about how she wants her house cleaned and her bed done. I clean very thoroughly, and she likes my work. So if it were not for that bed, and the way in which I tend to it, I would not have this job. I believe I have this job because of how I work and clean, the special touch, the delicate approach, whatever nice thing about it she likes. I have worked with her for 5 years now.



Beatriz

I like my work doing housecleaning. It's hard but I like it. I plan on being here two more years, maybe less, then I'm going back home. Here is a piggy bank, I'm trying to fatten that piggy bank for my trip home.



Pedro

I am proud of myself and of my work. I think we all have pride in our work. Like you, or me, we both have pride in our work, of something that we are, something we do. Because if we don't have that pride then we cancel ourselves and we are nothing.



Blas

I took this picture because it reminded me of a small town in California where I work picking grapes for the wineries. Every time I see grapes I remember that because I picked many grapes for wine. I was 15 or 16 years old. That's where I left my youth.



Pedro

I like taking pictures of the work I do. Then when I go to another house and they want a referral I can say, "Here, I show you some pictures and you can tell me if you like it or not." They look at the pictures and they give me the job. The pictures are good as evidence of the work I can do. Also to have new ideas, because we are always learning.



Lourdes

I teach cooking. I like cooking and sharing. I make food for sale in different events. Cooking is something that I have in my blood. Selling is what moves me forward in life. When I host a food sale, It feels as if I have won the lottery.

WORK: HOW WILL I MAKE MY MONEY TODAY?



Beatriz

People come here with a wrong image, they think it's very easy to make money. When I first arrived in this country I worked in a fishing plant for two years, and every night I would get to my room and stand in the shower and cry. What you have to go through is terrible.



Maria

This photo is at the job that I have right now, I work in this house every week on Sundays. I really like that it is secure, every week I know I will work there for the day. There are a lot of antiques in the house. I took this photo, and when I saw it I really liked it.



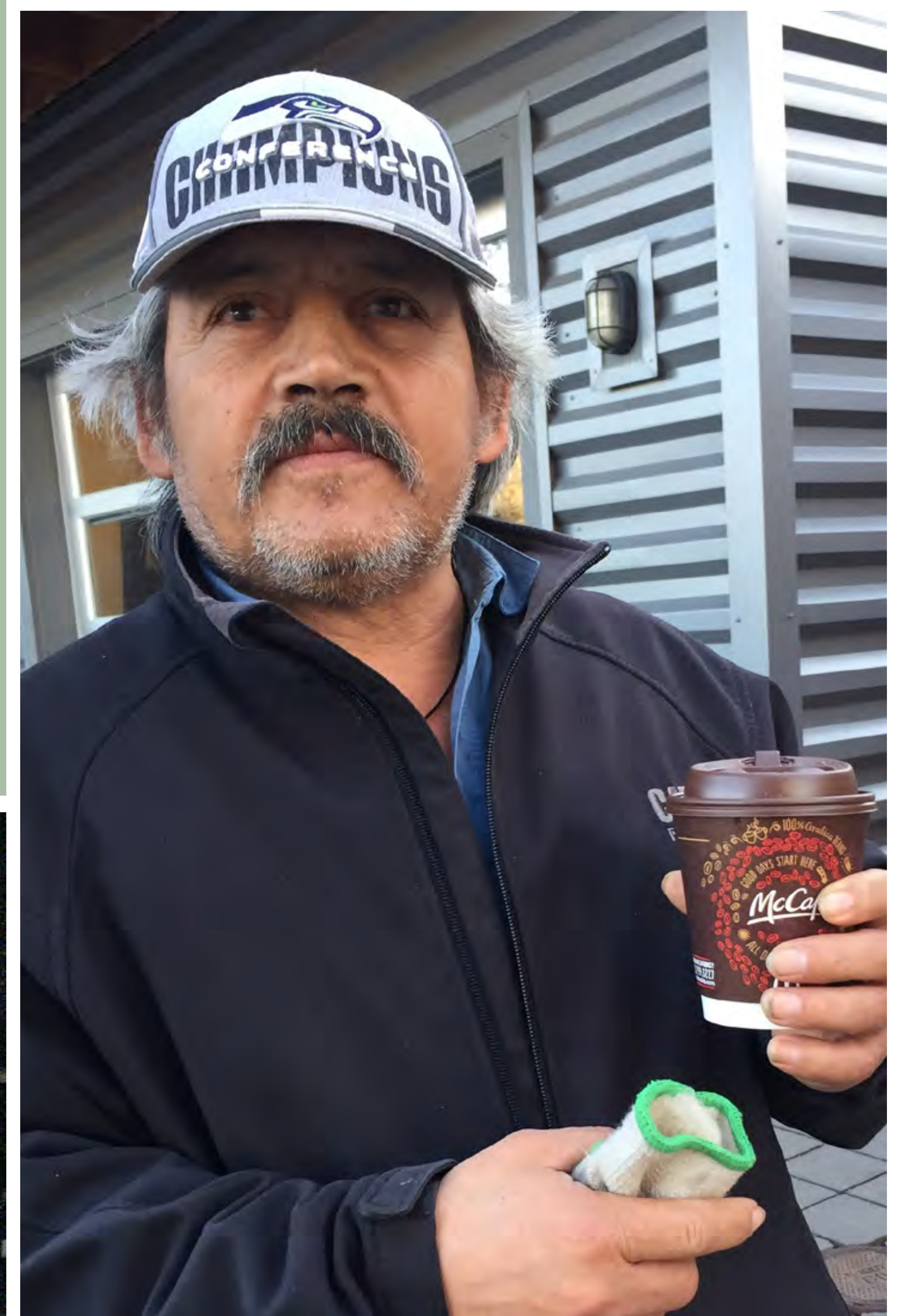
Jorge

This is the board we have at Casa Latina, we call it a raffle. We have to have luck because we pull cards with names and you need luck to get on the list to go out on a job. So, what I'm saying is that as a migrant, apart from being a good worker, you also have to be lucky.



Jimmy

These three people standing in front of Casa Latina, like we all do every day, talking about where we will get a job today. This is what they're saying, "Oh, SOB, how will I make my money today?" It is a big sadness to get up each day and not make any money, to end up empty and not have any work. You can pray to Jesus and say, "Give us our daily bread," or you can also say, "Why are you not giving me enough bread?"



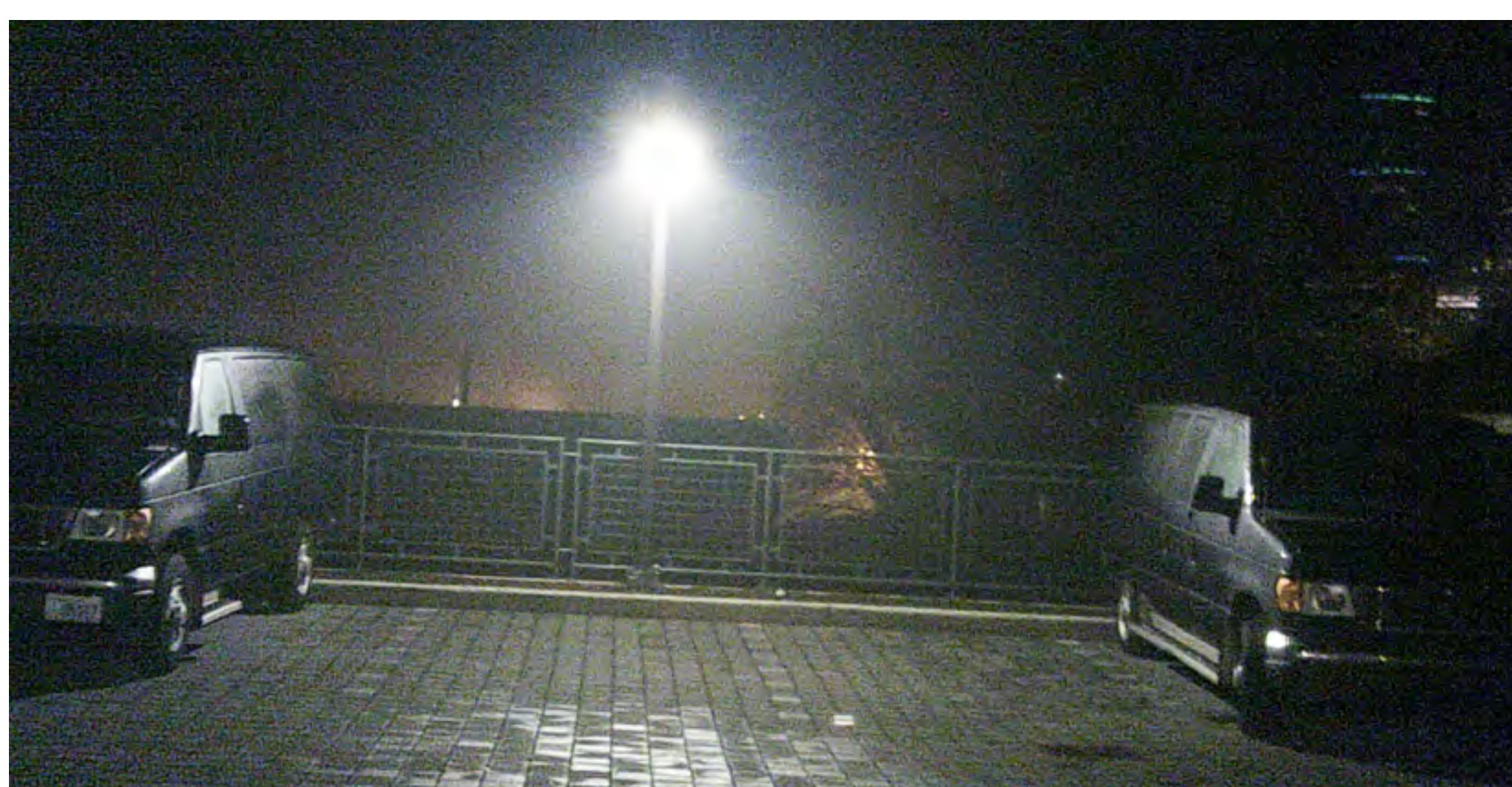
"Pedro Infante"

If you want, I will go wash dishes at your house. You will pay me, right? Or bathe your dog, whatever....It's work. I work when I am paid. I think we all work for money, right?



Ventura

Here we have to take on work courageously, if not they will ask, "Who can use a jack hammer? Can you do it?" I said: "Yes, yes I can." So they sent me. I have used the jack hammer only three or four times before. Once I had to break down a bench, it was the first time, and I broke it down, but I don't have a photo of that.

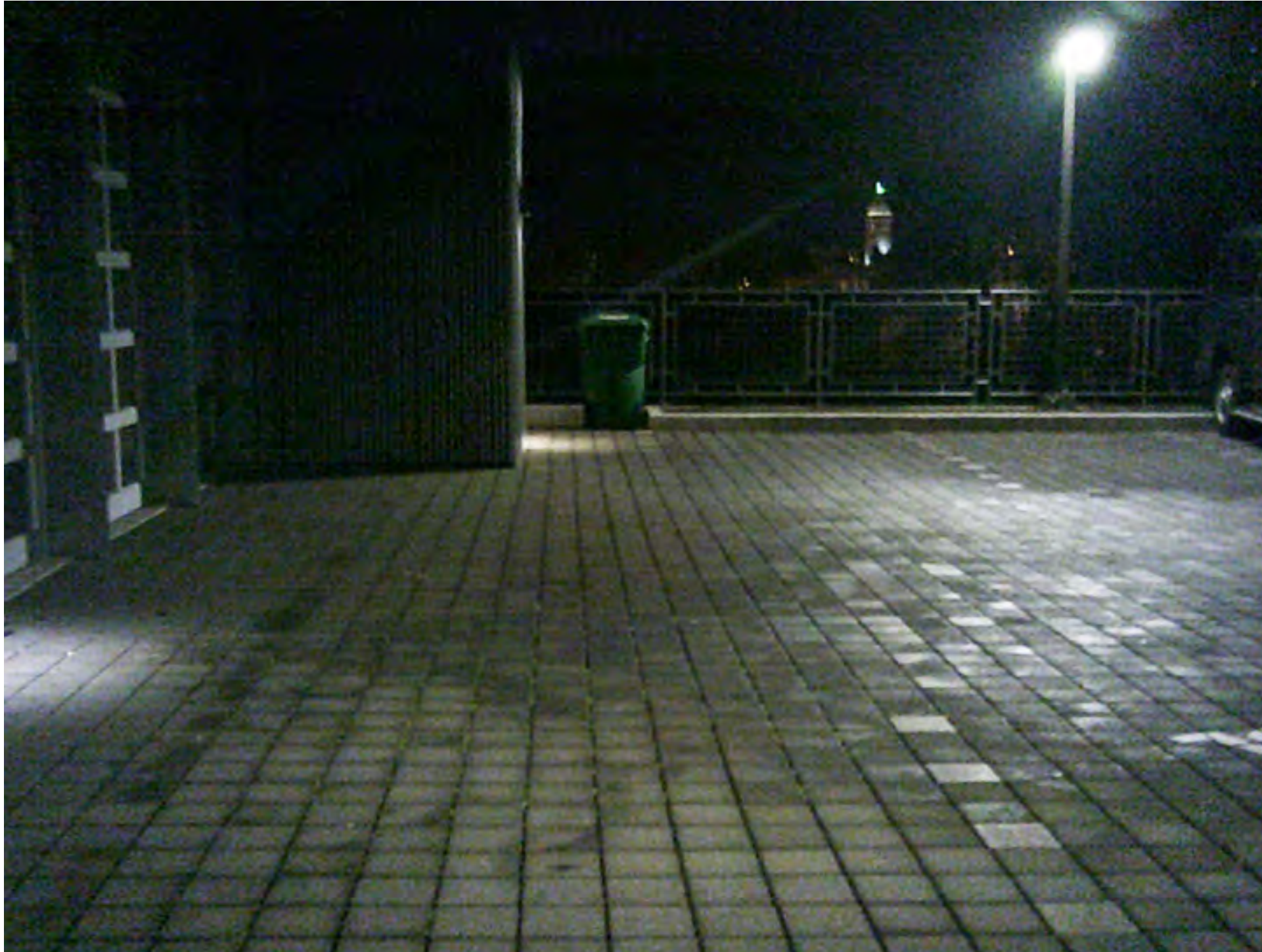


Jimmy

This is the parking lot of Casa Latina. Those two parked vans represent that there's no work. If there was work those vans would not be parked there; they would be taking workers to different places. But right now they're parked, which is sad. It means there's not enough work.



WORK: DAILY LIFE OF A DAY LABORER



Jorge

I like this photo because the life of the day laborer starts early in the morning. If you want to work you have to get up very early, at least at 5 in the morning. And in the winter, this is what the day looks like. It's dark. This picture is here at Casa Latina at 5 in the morning.



Ramón

These are gardening tools, very useful. I like gardening because even though I cannot change the beauty of a flower, of a tree, I can help shape it. I can help it grow and make it live longer. That is our work as gardeners.



Pedro

I take a lot of pictures on my phone. Most are of job sites: pavers, flagstones, yard work. I like to keep a record of my work. The other day I had an interview with a business and I could show them the pictures. I have my letters of recommendation, but sometimes an employer wants to see evidence that I can do it, so I can show them on my phone: "This is a design that I have done. Do you want it this way, or that way, or how do you want it?"

Carlos

A good employer is somebody who gets interested in what you can do, they pay you and they like what you do. I do landscaping and I know how to do things with rocks and patios; I've learnt all that here in Seattle. Here at Casa Latina I find new friends and I get jobs. They treat we well and I treat them well.



Jimmy

These are all my friends at the assembly here at Casa Latina. I've worked with this guy and with that guy, and with that guy, and all these people. We all get up very early to come looking for our dollar.



Jimmy

They will ask you what do you know how to do, and if you can use the machinery he will hire you to do that work. And if you produce then he will hire you again and he will pay you. If you don't produce, then, well that employer will say, "OK, have a good day, bye bye," and they will not call you again.

Juan

Seattle is a great city. There's a lot of money here. This is where you get paid best. I have worked in Phoenix and in California, where they pay you \$5 or \$6 per hour, depending on the employer and the job. But here in Seattle, doing landscaping and yard work, I can make \$18 to \$20 an hour. The only problem is I don't have many employers just now because I left and I came back and I am starting again here in Seattle.

FAMILY & FRIENDS



Gilda

For the past 2 years, I have been going to this church. Before I finally went, I heard a lot about this church. Once I discovered it, I was attracted by the many migrants that go there. I go there to meet other people, so I can become involved in the community. One thing is to work, while another thing is the congregation. Also, it is so the church takes me into consideration within the community.



Pedro

This is a friend I met at the community college. On that day we went out and we went to have out coffee at Starbucks, and so I took her picture and she's my friend.

Lourdes

Here in Casa Latina, our main purpose is to work. However, we are not alone because we are in this together. We come from different countries, different cultures, different places. For the past 20 years, I have lived in Seattle, but this is the first time I feel in a family. We are able to laugh, cry and tell each other things. Honestly, I thought I had a unique story because I am a victims of domestic violence. However, I have learned that there are others who have lived longer and dealt with worst. After seeing their strength, I do not think of being unique, but rather special.



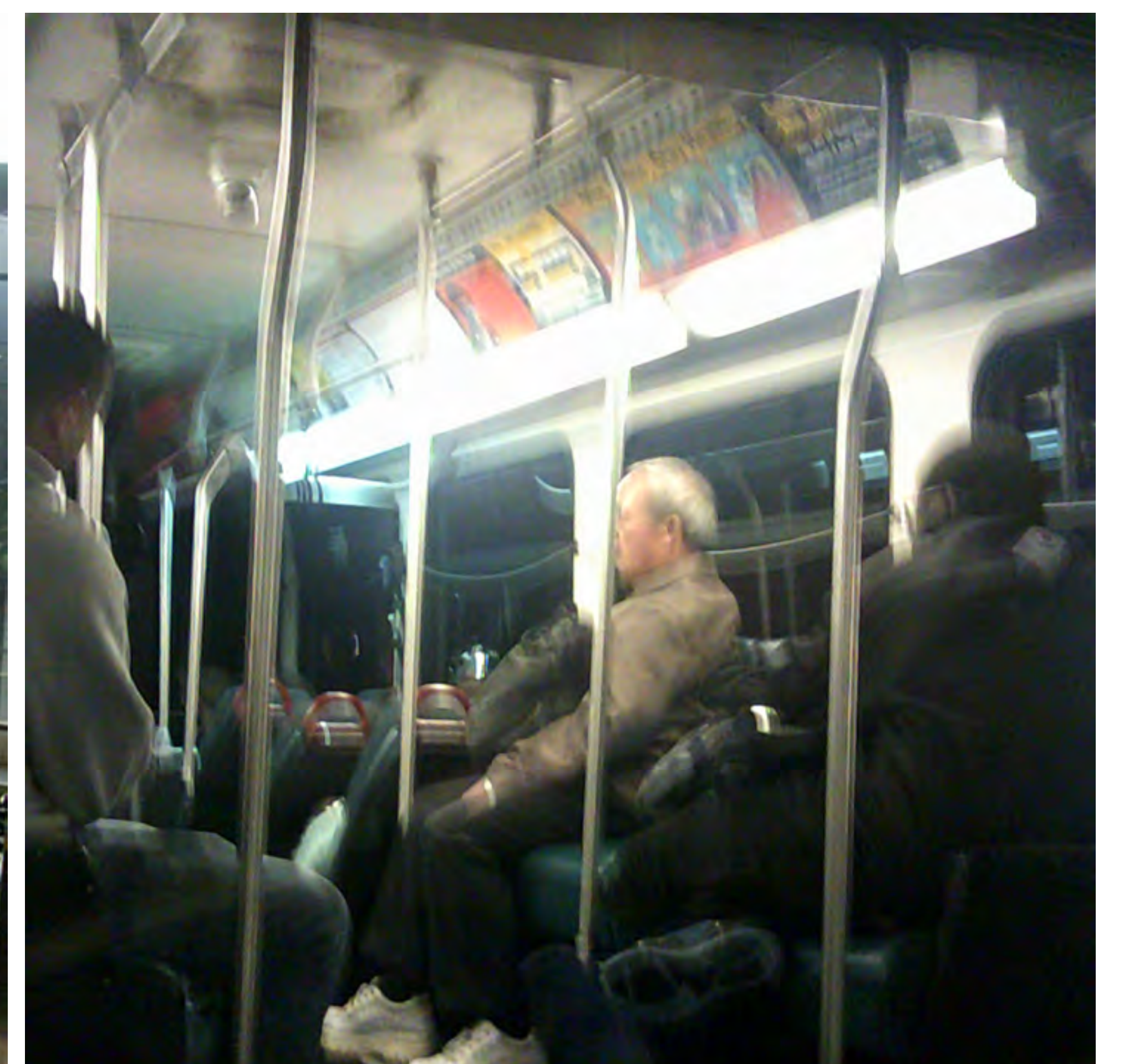
Salomón

That is a prayer that is said before the meeting, so it's part of a church where we get together. We all have a family, but I don't have a family. They all have their families and we get together every two weeks to talk, to share, what we're living, what we're going through, how we're feeling, how the family is doing and to ask God for help to keep on moving forward. I have three kids and then I got a divorce. I don't have any family in Seattle. Or in the U.S.



Jorge

It's another friend here at Casa Latina, he's been here a bit longer than me, and he's one of the first persons I met here in Seattle about 10 years ago. And we both lead the same lifestyle, we don't have family, we're independent. Sometimes we are lucky and we can pay rent, other times we have to go to the shelters and we both have the same lifestyle. When I was in Chicago, I had a strong addicted to drugs. We're talking about almost 10 years ago... and it was very hard, with no family or anything. So you go through a lot when you're alone in this country.



Carlos

This is a Cuban guy who takes the bus and goes downtown. He works on the ships. And so, I see him in the street a lot....
So, why did you want to take a picture of him?
Well, because he is Latino as well, and also because we speak Spanish. These are people that I know, and they are my friends. I have many friends around the city.



FAMILY & ABSENCE



Maria

This is the eldest of my brothers and my sister in law with the four nephews, the family. It had been almost 30 years since I had last seen them. Many years. They uploaded that photo to Facebook, and so I took it. They had a big meal with seafood, with very large mojarras, ceviche, shrimp... he enjoys it with his family, they come together to eat. I see them and I imagine that I am there with them. Even though I am here, I feel like I am there among them.



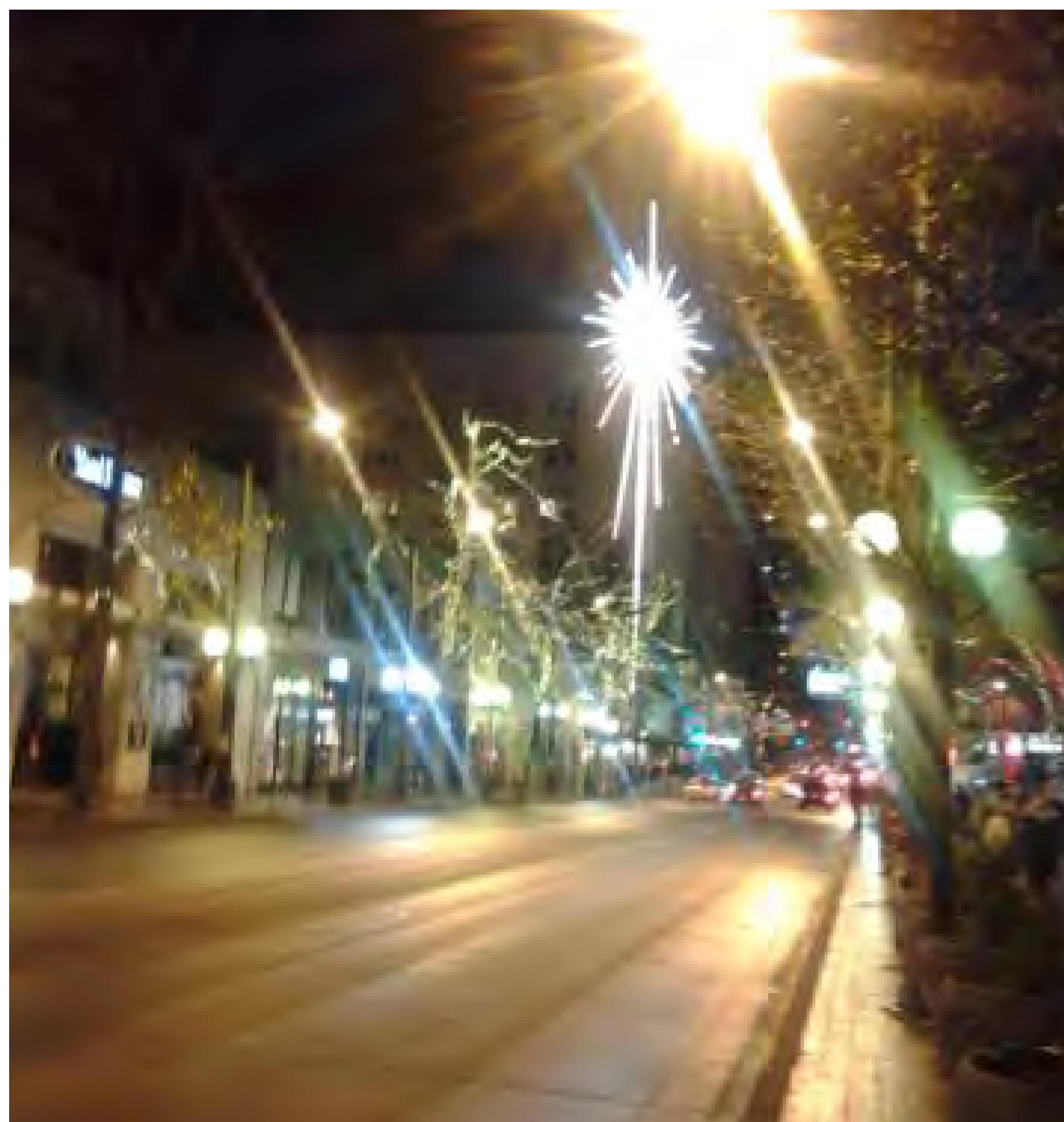
Gilda

I saw she had a walking cane and she reminded me of my mom because my mom is now 77. My mom is at the age where she needs to be taken care of. I felt I wanted to hug my mom and have her nearby. Also, I remembered that when I brought her to Seattle, I took her on walks.



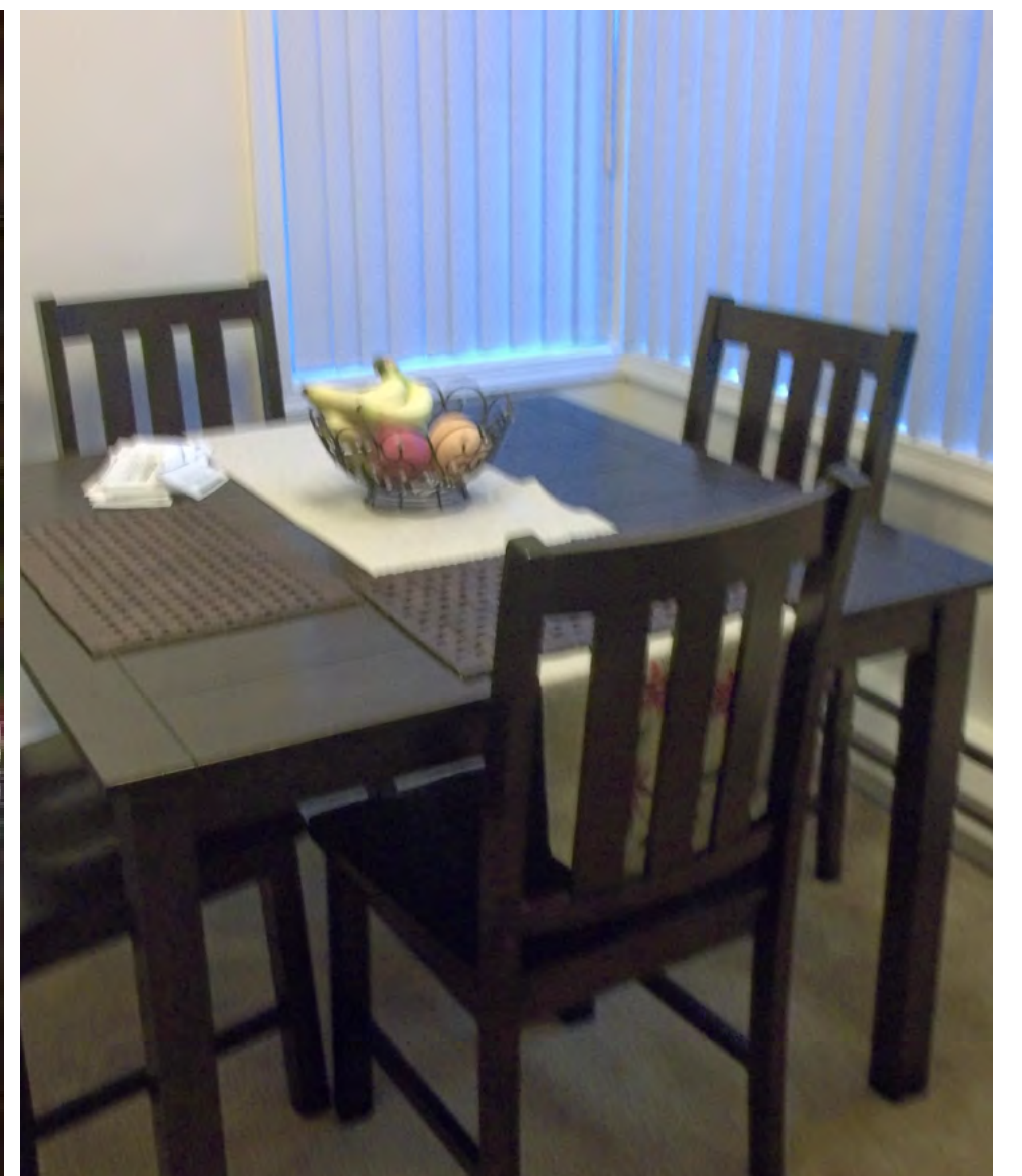
Maria

I was at the bus stop, and the airplane passed by. I remembered that after 20 years of not going to Mexico, in June of last year I went to Mexico. So when I see airplanes I feel like I'm in there going once again, and I start to cry. Every time I see one, I wish I was arriving once again in Mexico. You know what it feels like go to visit family. I now have my residency, thank God, so I am able to go back and see them.



Ramón

That picture is at Christmas time and I had to work on Christmas day, so when I was coming back home I remembered that in Mexico there is a nice tradition of getting together with family and to spend time together for the dinner have pozole and other traditional dishes... I was going back to the shelter. In Mexico I have my brothers. My parents, they're dead.



Gilda

Every year, I sit with my sister and nephews, even though we are one chair short since we are five. However, we take turns to eat. We get together with my sister, her kids and husband. Also, I sit there with my boyfriend and people who come visit me.



FAMILY & ROOTS



Gilda

This is my nephew. In 2012, I lost a baby. During this time, my sister was pregnant and she had her baby. In my family, I am the only one who didn't have kids. When this child was born, I identified myself with him. He has the most tender hug that I have ever felt. That is why I brought this picture... because he is part of me.



Maria

Well that is me, but that was many years ago... So many that the photo is even blurred. I appreciate my time, my life, the way that I have lived it. Even though I am a single mother, I have lived my life with my children, which are the most important thing for me, and for most moms, I think. Our children are most important. I was pregnant in that picture with one of my children. I really like that picture. I love myself- if I don't love myself, who will love me?



Maria

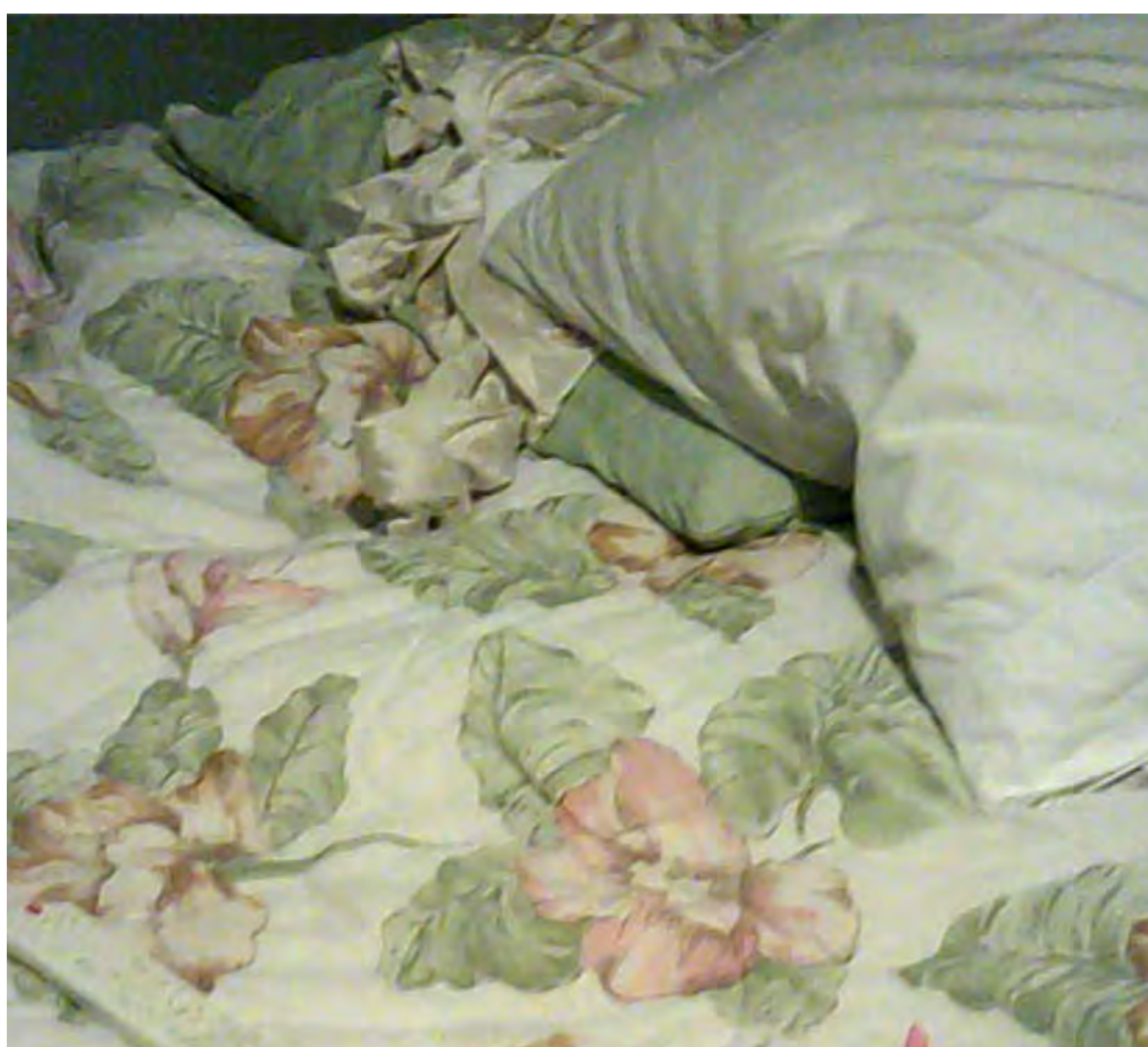
My daughters were born and raised here. It's a different culture. They don't know their other brothers and sisters who live in Mexico. They say "Yes, yes mom, they are your children and they are over there in Mexico." I say "daughter, call your sister," and they say, "nah, why... I really don't know her." Can you believe that? Because some of them don't know them in person, and well, it's difficult for me to convince them.



Gilda

Where are your roots?

Wow. That's a very strong question. My roots... I carry my roots with me, you know? It's because I'm always thinking about my grandparents, and my parents. My parents brought me into this world. Also, they raised me and taught me many things. Also, I think of my grandparents and ancestors. This is a root. This helps me to continuously move forward by working. Wherever I go, I feel that my roots are with me. I carry them with me.



Beatriz

I took this photo because it is the place where I rest, where I speak my triumphs, my frustrations, my sorrows, sometimes my pain of being away from my family... it's my home, my "love nest," as they say, because I live alone. For me, the pillows have a special meaning because they are my partners, I share with them my sorrows, the good and the bad things that have happened to me.



Pedro

This picture reminds me of a woman I had when I lived in California, until we broke up. I've been here a few years and I'm still alone, but I'm thinking of maybe making a home again with somebody. But it's not easy, especially for us here because it's expensive. It is especially hard in the winter, when there is not a lot of work. You have to pay rent, and you have to pay for food and utilities, electricity and gas, and the phone.



HELP: MIGRANTS HELP OTHER MIGRANTS



Salomón

The work that I am doing contributes to other people's lives. I want others to see people who are not hiding but who can go show themselves. And also struggle and say 'Yes we can,' and prepare ourselves and work to take different type of actions because just having a job, or two jobs, or three jobs is not enough. You need to develop yourself as a person.



Blas

We went to that march because they are part of the community, so we can all move forward and we can all help each other. And maybe one day when it's the workers day, they will also come and be with us so they can also support us, so we all support each other in the community. As you can see there are several of us here, there's women, there's men, some older, some younger, everybody joyful, keeping each other company.



Ramón

I think I know almost everybody here at Casa Latina, but if I want to point out the real friends, it's three or four. We all know each other, we all share the space, but each one has their own group. I think you end up going to those with whom there's more trust or where you have more things to share. But I think everybody shares a beer.

Blas

This picture is at a march on Martin Luther King Day. We went on a march for everybody. So many black people have been attacked recently by the police. They've been killed in other states and so we went on that march to keep them company. We're part of them too, we march in solidarity with them because immigrants also get beaten up. I really liked this picture because when we were in front, I thought that maybe we were few. But then I looked back and I saw how many people were behind us. So then I raised my arm and took that picture. A lot of people came to protest against violence against blacks and everybody. It's for everybody. We're all human.



"Pedro Infante"

I took this picture of Ricardo because I know him, he comes here, he helps us. He is a person that I like the way he is, because he gives us a chance to be exposed to many things, you know? Because, we can all learn from each other, and I learned from him how to take photos -- it's the first time I take photos.



Gilda

The fact that I am part of the same situation is what pushes and motivates me. When there is a woman who approaches and talks to me about her situation. I am with her because of her personal situations as a migrant in the country. I understand her because I'm there too. It is not the same thing being on the other side when fighting for immigrants because in every circumstance, you are in the same situation and for this reason, you will fight more strongly.



"Pedro Infante"

This is Capulina. I took this photo because he is a fun guy. I know a lot people like him, and he also works at Casa Latina. I lived on the streets many years, and I know almost everyone from the streets. For many years I slept wherever I could, and it's never bothered me, I didn't care.

HELP: CASA LATINA HELPS MIGRANTS



Ramón

He is preparing the agenda for the assembly at Casa Latina, organizing the topics that will be discussed. When he's done he says, "Does anybody want to comment on the agenda? Do we want to add any other topics?" We discuss many different topics in the assemblies. There's many rules here at Casa Latina and for me that's good because you come here to be at peace, and that's why the rules are there.



Carlos

Casa Latina helps a lot. They help people who really need it, people who cannot find jobs. They also teach you English. It is a social center to meet people, and there is also work, getting jobs, things you know how to do and you can get a job. We are a big community here in Seattle. There might be many political problems. They have to be really smart to find solutions to these problems. Maybe we don't know what the solution is but somebody really smart needs to find a solution.



Pedro

Casa Latina has been a good connecting place ever since I first came here. They give you a connection with an employer, and if the employer has a lot of work, then it's up to you to maintain the relationship with the employer. I wanted to have another picture at Casa Latina because it is a place where I come to meet new friends, I come to look for work, and we live here as a community.



Jimmy

Casa Latina is gold for me, because from here I started, and I have also helped myself. I have learned the language, it has given me an understanding of many things that I didn't use to have. I know when somebody new comes here they are helped a lot. At Home Depot it's more difficult because there's no atmosphere (ambiente) and here there is atmosphere, there is love and there is hope. If you're out there at Home Depot, you can be waiting and if it's raining you're getting wet. And here, we're dry. Here it won't rain on you, there's coffee, people are happy, and so we're here in this picture.



Salomón

This is Casa Latina; it's the demonstration, at the march. I see people, workers who get together every day with the purpose of getting a job, but also to contribute, to have the voices of each one of us heard. That it's not just like people think that we are, that we're here to take other people's jobs. No, we want jobs and we want to contribute something.



Beatriz

I took this photo because despite the bad things I have experienced here, I also experienced good things. When I first came here I suffered a lot because I didn't know anyone, and it was a difficult situation. But later on there was Vero here at Casa Latina and I learned so much from her. She had so much patience, she treated us with equality, and we felt good. And some of us women have learned to speak English, and this is why I took this photo because for me, it has a little bit of everything.



Servando

This a group talk given by a policeman who talked to us about our rights. However, I don't know what he was doing here, either he was talking or looking for someone. They asked if they could take pictures of us, and we said there was no problem. Since there is no problem with them taking pictures of us, there should be no problem of me taking pictures of him. So I took a picture of him.



HELP: OTHER ORGANIZATIONS HELP MIGRANTS



Ramón

Here in this picture we are in the Centro La Raza, and we are in a program for seniors. When I have a chance I go there and they give us breakfast especially prepared for seniors. They don't give us much meat but mostly veggies and fruits and because according to them it's more adapted to our age. I'm 72 years old, almost 73.



Servando

This church is a shelter that represents a sanctuary for us immigrants. From here, they cannot kick you out. They can kick you out from many places but not from here. It does not matter whether you go or believe in God. However, you always have to bear in mind the commandments and not to sin, or at least sin as little as possible. I go to this church from time to time, but not always. On that day, I went and decided to take the picture.



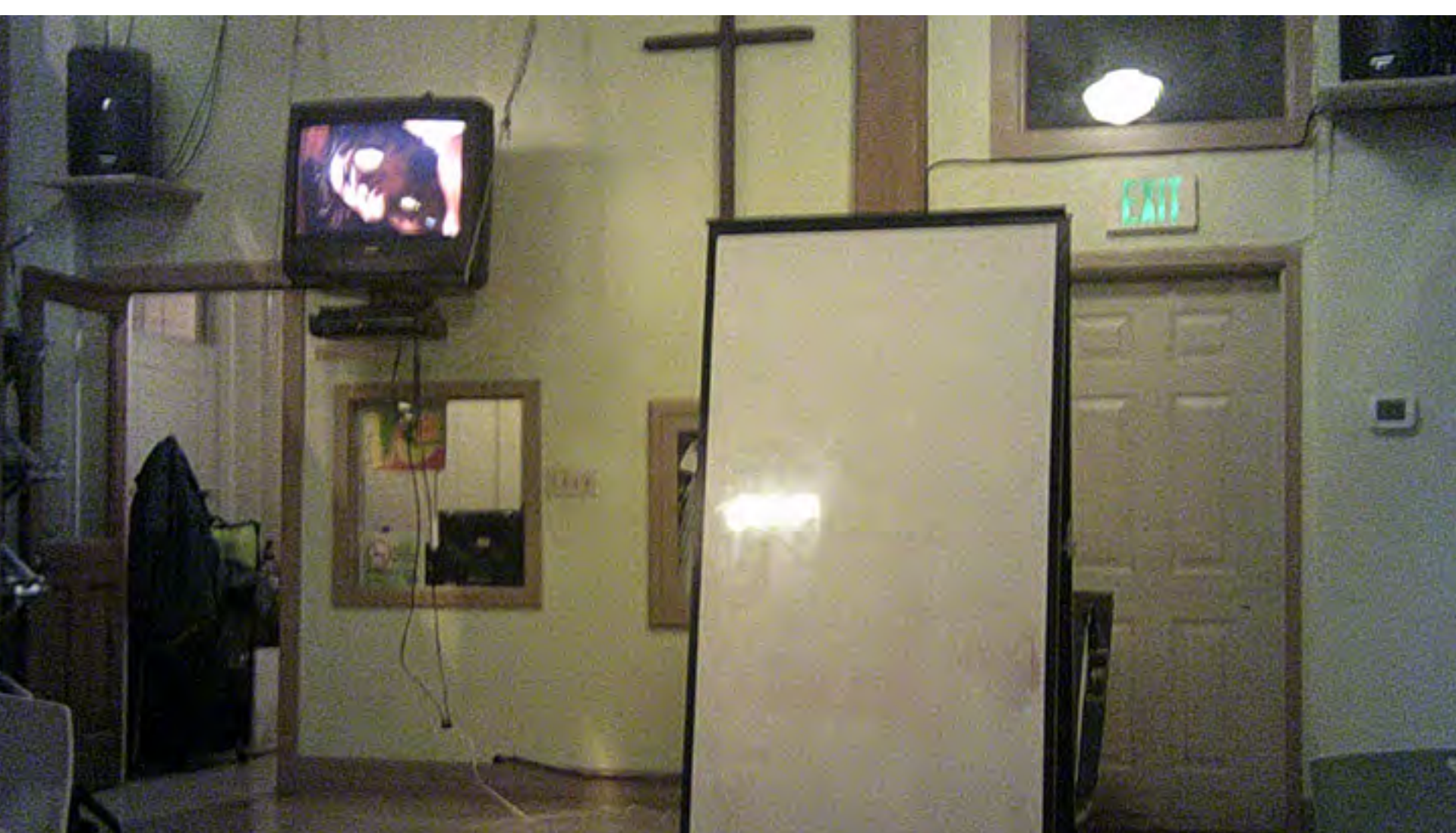
Jimmy

This is a building where people go, it's like a church. You go in there and you can rest, and they have bathrooms, and you can sit there and relax and no one kicks you out. It was really a nice picture because you can see the plate with a clock and below that there is the door, and some people go in and out that door to smoke or to hang out by the door. That's a shelter and that's where people eat.

Ventura

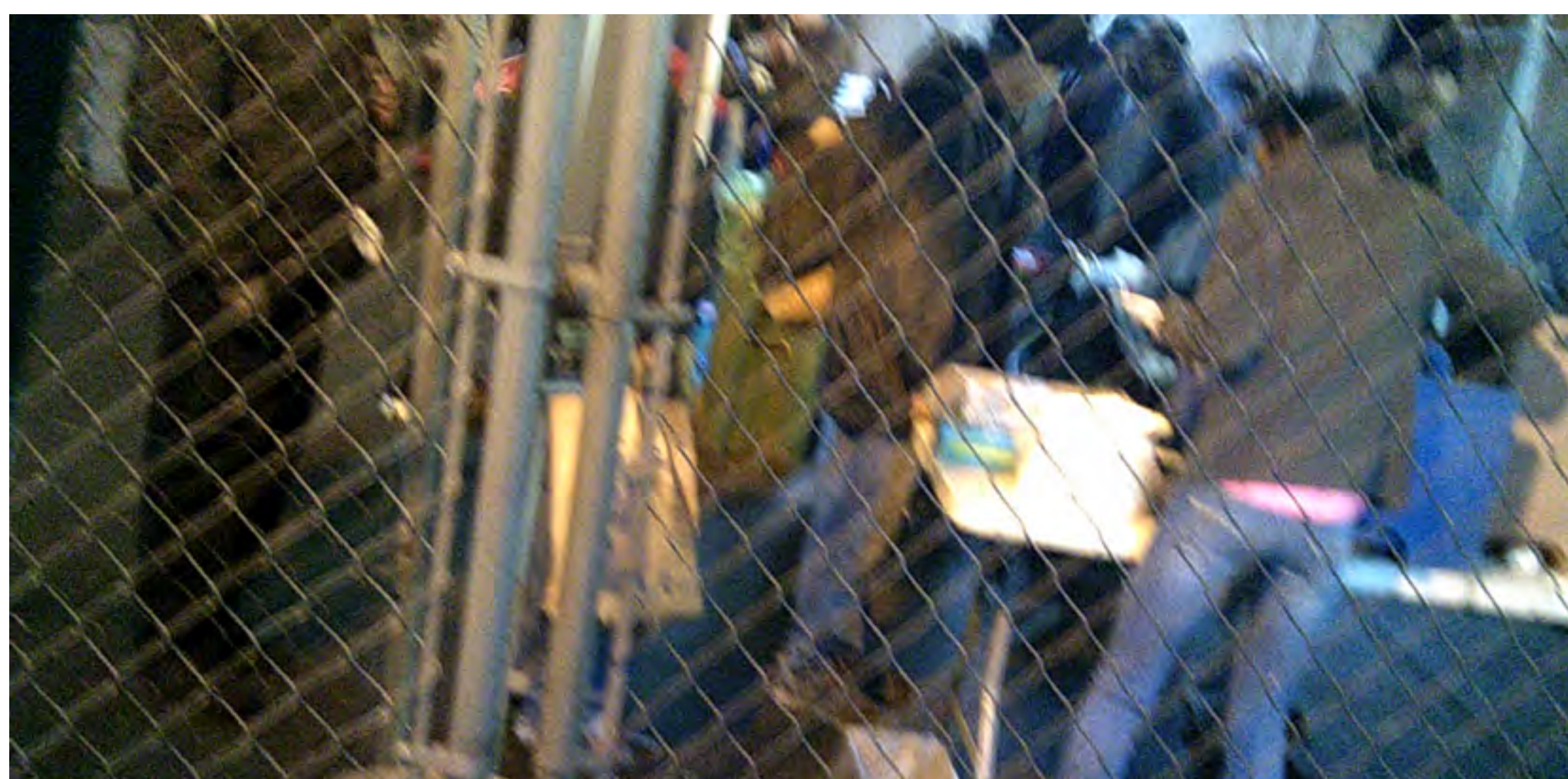
I live there in City Hall, that is where we stay, and where we can sleep. During the day there are people who arrive to work.... I don't know what they do, all I know is it is called City Hall. For us, all we do is sleep when we arrive.

Sometimes when I make money, I don't visit the shelter. I eat what I want, drink what I want, but when my money is spent, I go to the shelter and I get in line. In Seattle there are many places where they will feed you. But it is food that many don't like. It's not like buying your own food. You know what you like to eat, but there you have to eat what they give you.



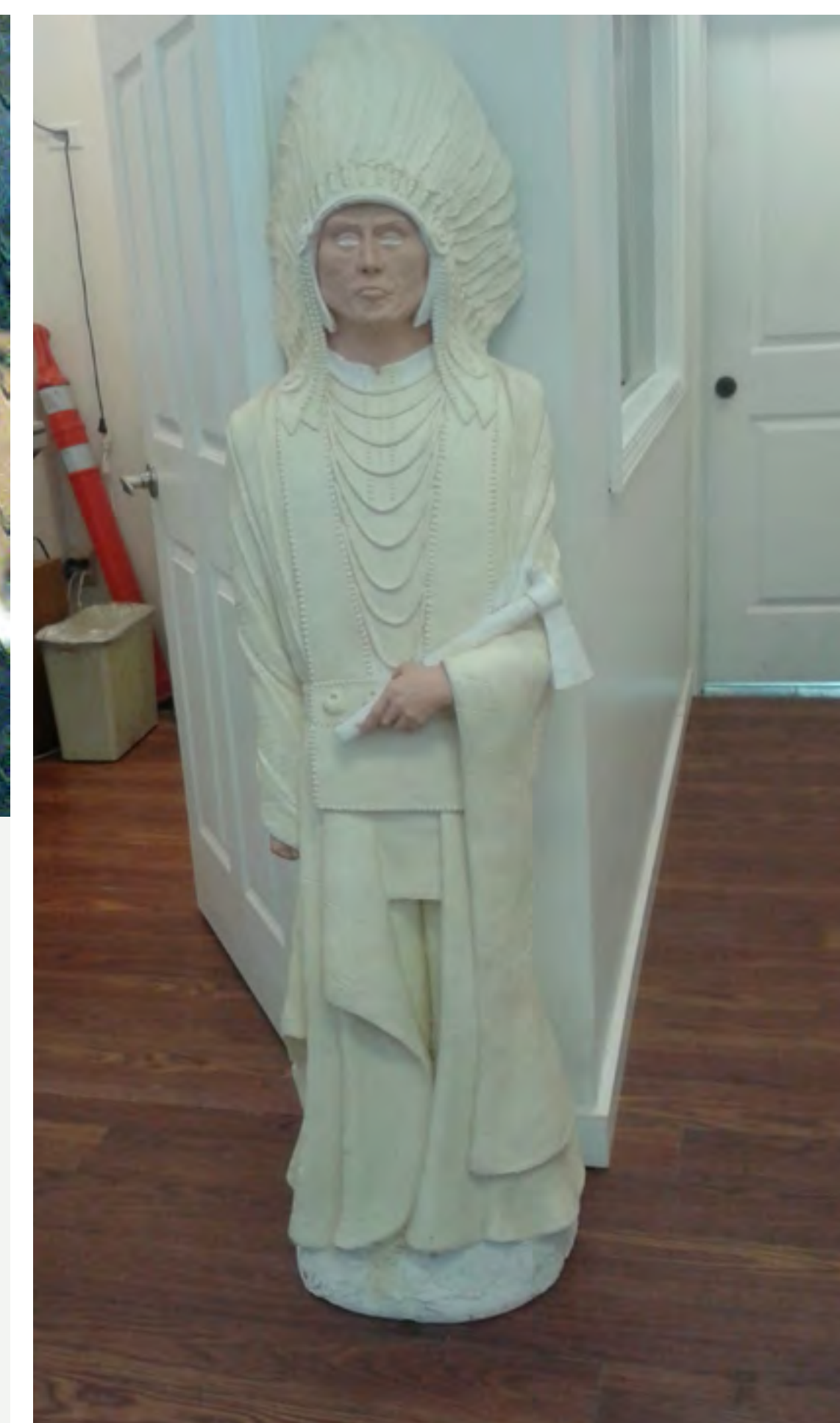
Jorge

This place is a church and a shelter. It represents that you have to believe in something. I don't know how to explain it but you have to grab onto something. Some people grab on to their family, or to their job. Some people simply believe that they will do better the next day. I don't always go to church. I go more to talk to people. Having lived here 20 years, you don't just depend on luck. You also have to have a bit of faith. Faith is not bad. It's luck and faith you need. Luck and faith.



Jorge

This is a place where they serve meals every day at one in the afternoon. When there isn't enough work and you only have \$10 or \$15, sometimes some friends and I go to these places, so, you know, we can keep our \$10 or \$15 in our pocket. It's simply a big help that they offer people. This is right in downtown Seattle.



Maria

This represents my breakfast, because we come here to Casa Latina and we leave with no work, then we go to this place and we have breakfast, a bowl of oatmeal, some juice, a doughnut, something to start the day with breakfast. We arrive there, we ask for a ticket, and we go have breakfast. They've also told us that we can come during the mid-day and have a meal.



INFORMATION & LEARNING AT THE LIBRARY



Servando

This is the central library, but I also call it "the office" because for a lot of people, that's everyone's office. That is where we went to see the football game of the Seahawks. This is the entrance of the library.



Servando

Those are signals on the sky... I've always wanted to see the aurora borealis, but I've never seen them. And I like to go to the library and learn about all those things. I read the newspapers in the library. The library is really like a shelter for everybody who is on the street. Like a church, they cannot kick you out of there. If you go to the central library, the majority of the people there are homeless, and the other 20% is normal people, people who live in their homes and those who work there.



Ventura

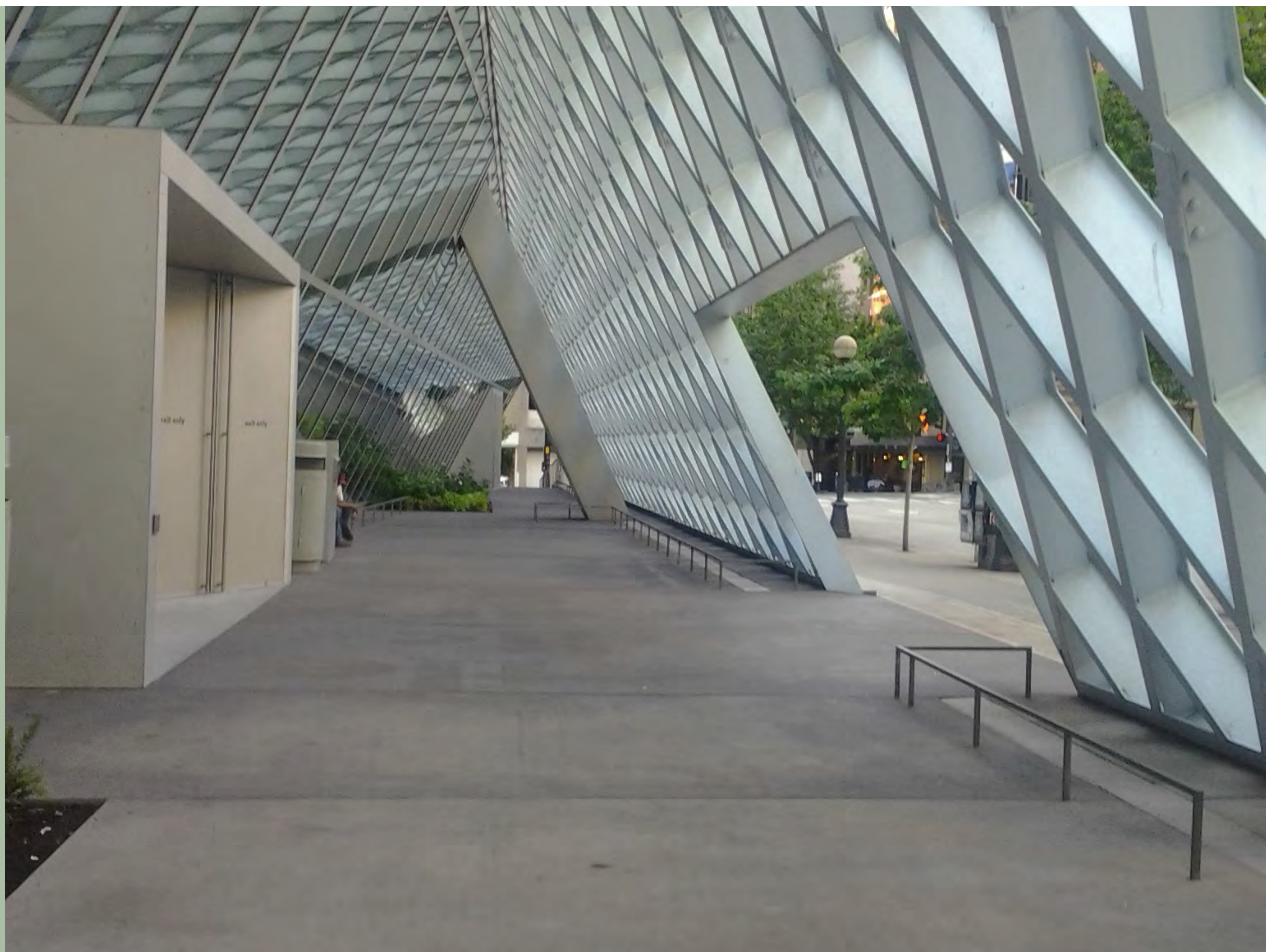
There's the library. A friend asked me, "do you want to speak with your family? I will show you how to get onto the computer," and that's how I got to know the library. He begged me, "let's go to the library!" because I don't like to read books, but one day I agreed and up to now, I'm still going there. I use the computer for the translator, and I see movies with subtitles. And sometimes I speak to my family.

Ramón

At the library you can just look at books and if you like one, you can read it and if not, you can just leave it there and you don't have to buy it. There are many many themes that you can explore! I like Pablo Neruda. I like to listen to his poems.

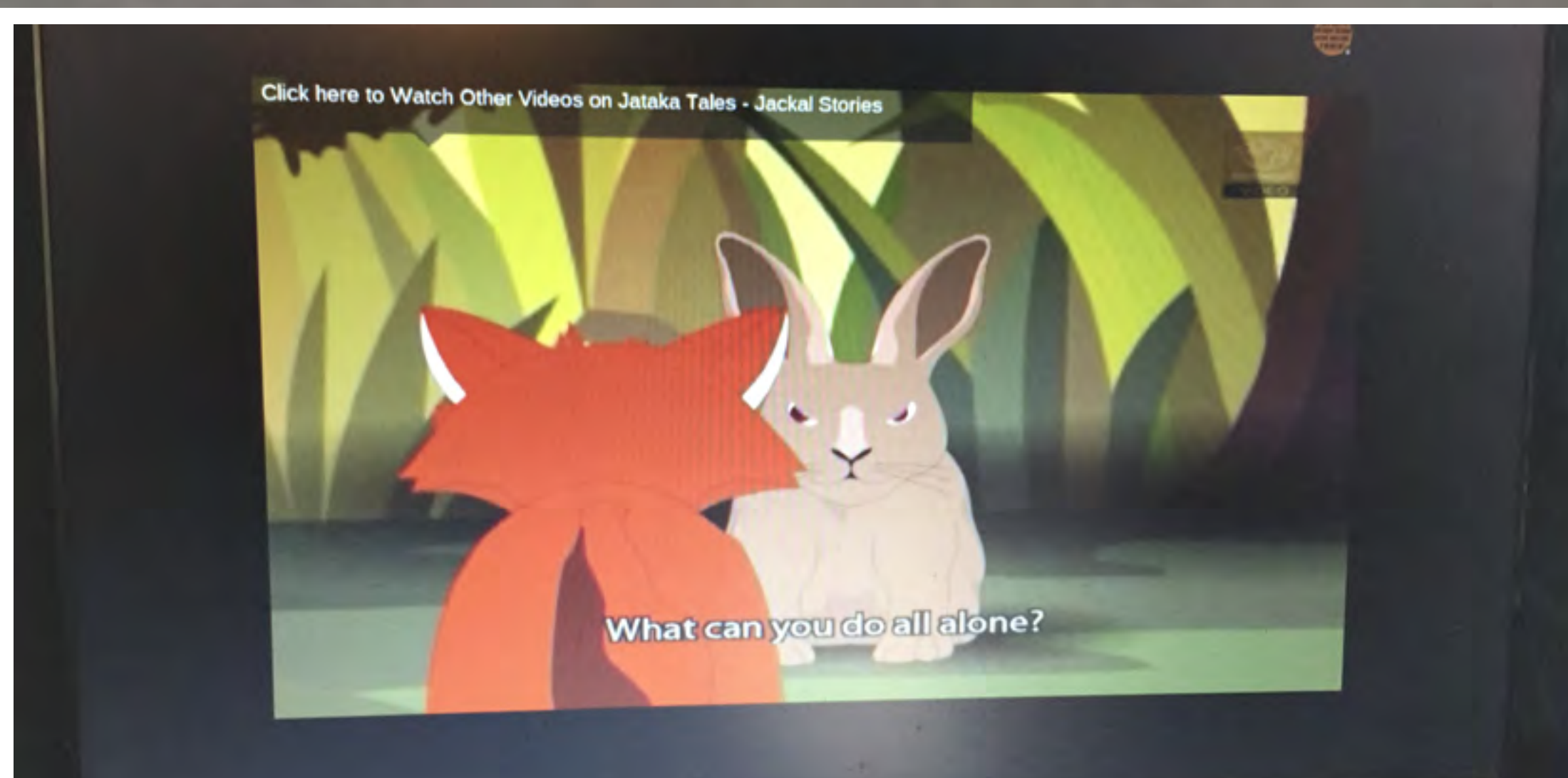
I go to the library any day I have a chance. If I don't find work here at Casa Latina, I can go and spend all day at the library and improve myself. I can fill in all the knowledge that I'm missing and also it is a safe place to go hang out even if I have nothing to do. It's very comfortable there because outside it's cold and it's raining and in the library it doesn't rain and it's not cold. At the library you don't have to pay anything.

Here in Seattle, it's such a beautiful structure. Any level that you go to, there's a lot to watch and to admire.



For me the library is a really great place for people like me who don't have internet, who like books...

Ramón



Ventura

I always go to the library to use the translator, since I am an aficionado of English. I learn a lot of words and phrases there. I watch videos as well, but they have to have the closed captioning, otherwise I don't like it because I don't understand any of it. If the captioning comes up, and the person is speaking in English, that's what I like. I want to hear the pronunciation. That's why I go to the library.



Ventura

Well, that was the first day, when I arrived to Seattle, I got off the bus, and we went to the library with a friend. This is my friend, the one sitting there... It's been about three years since I took that photo.

INFORMATION & TECHNOLOGY USE

Gilda

These are my laptop, my cell phone and my desk phone. This is the place where I work, where I grow every day, where I discover my professional side. These tools push me toward success. This means a lot to me. I learn how to fight and argue. Also, I learn how to find reconciliation. I work with people with different cultures and levels of education. I understand that it's not just that people have problems and you need to confront them, it's about trying to understand the root of the problem. These tools have taught a lot of things throughout my job. I am open to learning because I am a human being.

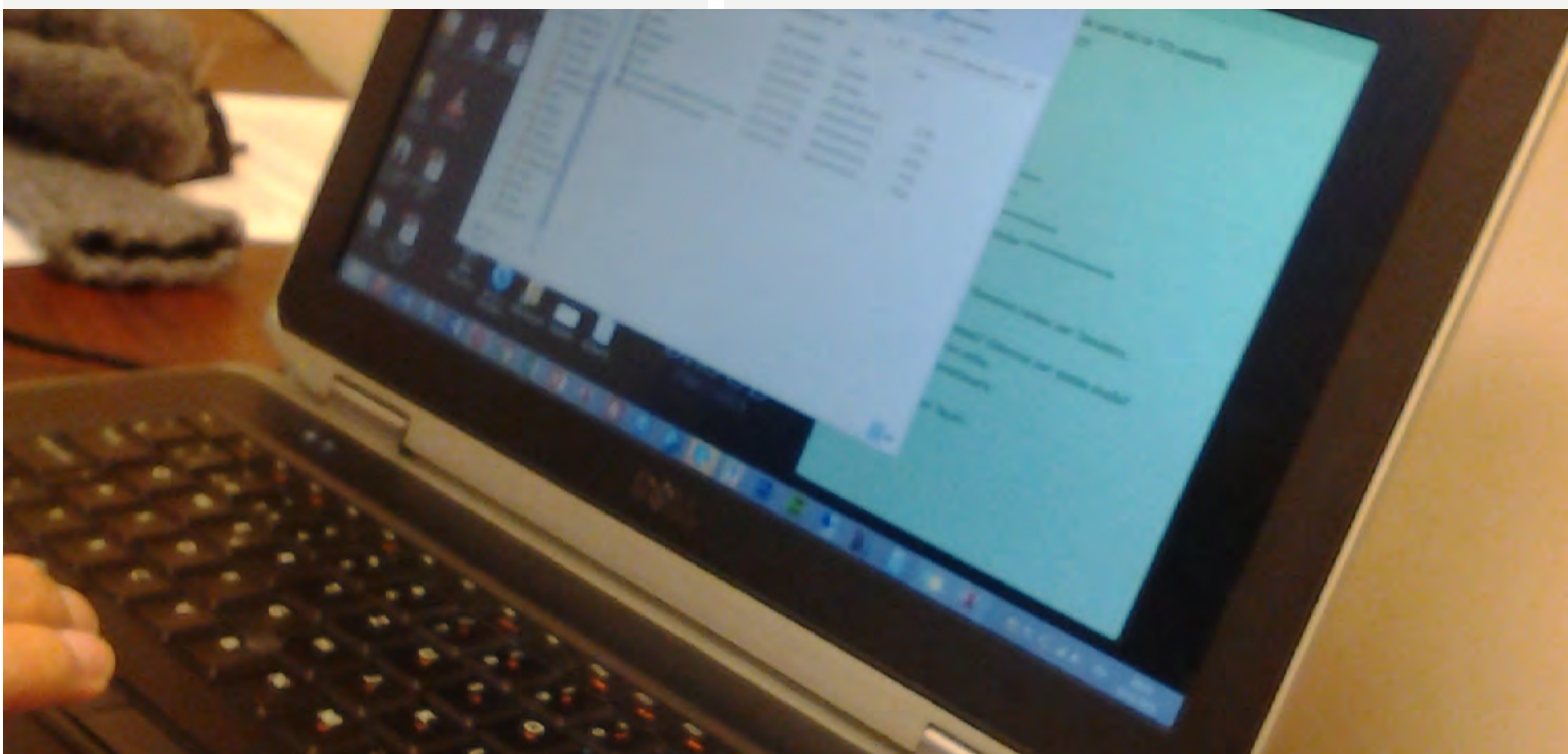


Ramón

How did you learn to use the computer?
I started to come here to Casa Latina to the computer classes. Here they give you the very basics: how to use email, how to open an account, and how to use it. I learned those basic things here. I would like to learn how to repair cell phones or tablets because there's a lot of work I can no longer do because I don't have the strength. But my mind could do other jobs... I dream of doing something like repairing computers. I want to learn other things related to technology.

Ramón

This is a picture of a laptop. I have a laptop but it doesn't work anymore. Now I use my phone. I have two cell phones. One has a phone line, and this other one is smart phone but it does not have any phone line. I put a Bluetooth keyboard on it and I use it as a tablet. I watch programs in English, I play games, math games, and I watch things on YouTube, I listen to music. That's how I relax, because if I just stay watching then I get sleepy.



Carlos

We talk on the phone. I have a niece in El Salvador and we sometimes talk on the phone. I go to the library to use the computer and the internet but I don't use it for communications, I use it to study things that I like, such as metaphysics, things about other planets and about astrology. That's when I use a computer.



Ventura

There I am I am with some friends: with you, the interviewers, you are interviewing me. Here you were showing me how to use the camera. I would like it if you send me the pictures I took to my Facebook. I have my photos there to keep as memories... Maybe one day I will be in a different place, so I just open my Facebook and I see the memories.

Jimmy

The phone is like a taxi, when you get lost it has the navigation, so you can put it in and it will take you where you want to go.



Ramón

This cartoon shows homeless people who live on the street but they are not as poor as they are supposed to be. They have their laptop, they write on their tablets. And here it says "Save our Jobs" but this is really about Steve Jobs, not about work. I don't have any money but I like technology and they also like technology. I know how to use technology, even if you don't understand it all, and it's a really good tool. You don't really need to know what is behind it. Just use it like any other tool...

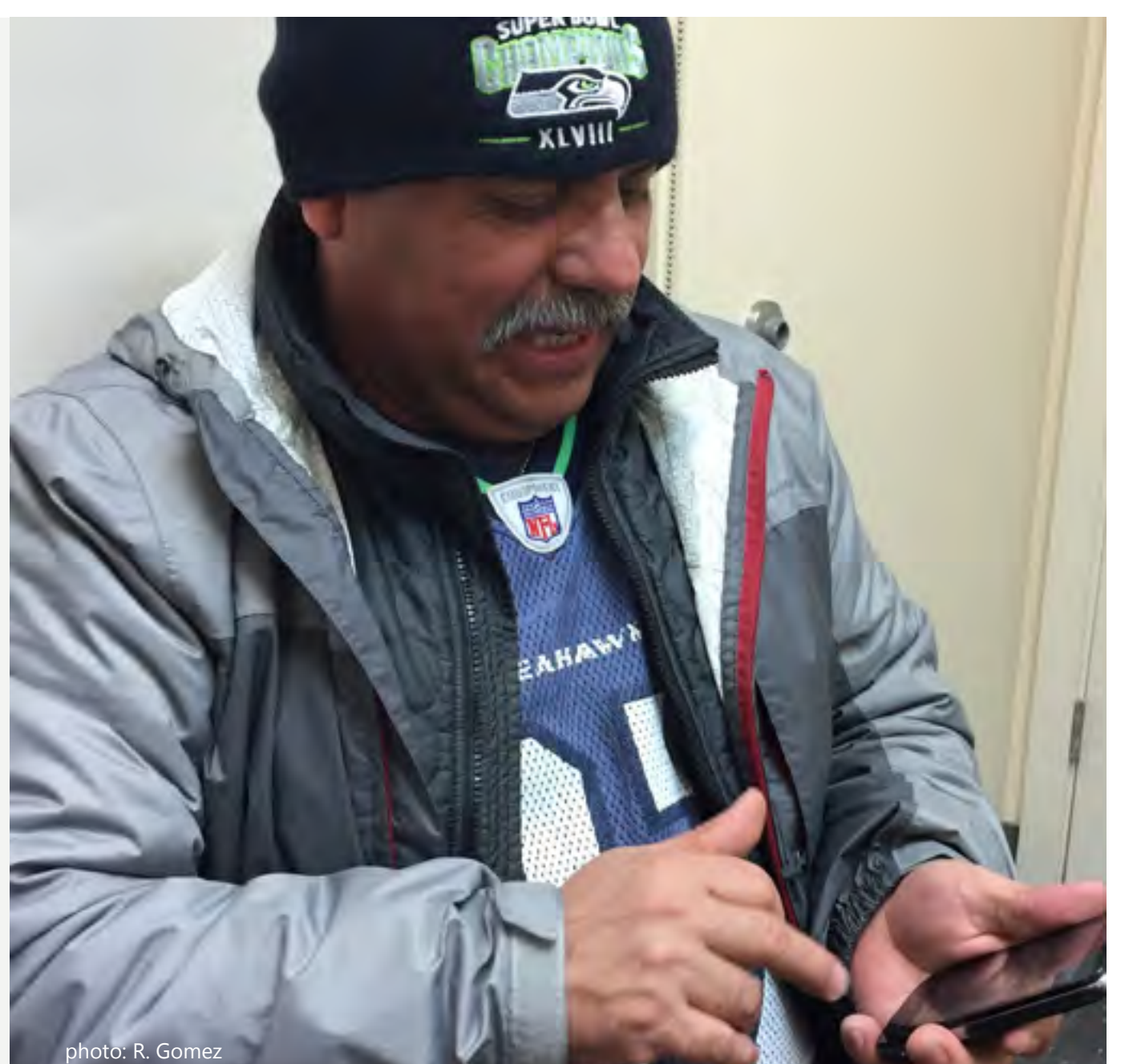
Juan

I call my mother... I don't tell her the bad things that happened to me. I just tell them the good things. I buy prepaid cards at the Azteca store on Jackson to call long distance. I call her 4 or 5 times a week. I don't really know how to use the computer or the cell phone. I can just talk and I like to hear their voice and talk to my family. I really miss my family. The cell phone I have is not a very fancy one. I can take pictures but I can't send them to my family in Guatemala. I can send them to my nephew in New York and he then sends them to my family.



Servando

When I first bought my smart phone I didn't know how to use it and so I lost a job because I didn't know how to answer. He would call me and I just touched the screen like this, and I wouldn't answer. It was only later that somebody told me that you have to actually swipe over and then answer the phone. Now I know how to answer. It's easy, everything is easy once you learn.



INFORMATION & NEW SKILLS



Maria

This is a map of the bus stops in Seattle. We are always looking for maps to go to our next job, because they give us our work order and we go to the bus stop, and we are trying to get to the address we are given. I think the map is important because if not, then you have to keep asking for directions. Even people here at Casa Latina are always asking, 'how do I go here, how do I go there.'

I just go and look at the map, and this is how I find my place. I don't read and I don't know how to write, but I say 'well maybe my mind will help me with this.' That is why I like this picture.



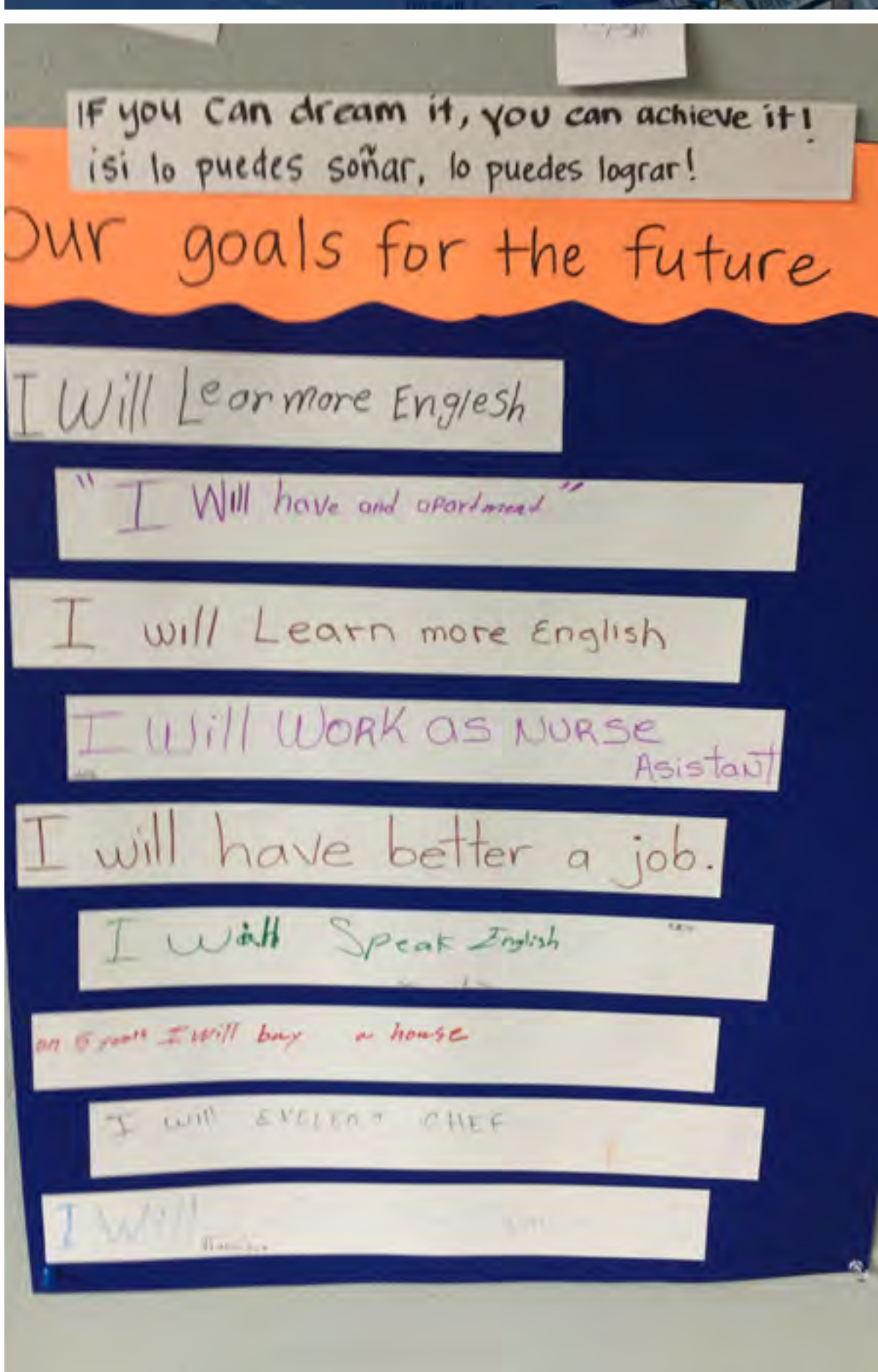
Salomón

This is my English class, at Seattle Central Community College. My classmates are from different countries: Morocco, Colombia, Vietnamese, Chinese, Mexican, very international. It represents that we can all be here not just to work, but you can go to school and if you can learn the language better, you will have more opportunities.



Salomón

This is a class here at Casa Latina, we get together for English and Spanish classes. The program is called "Somos Vecinos," We are Neighbors, and people come from the neighborhood because they want to learn Spanish, and we want to learn English, and at the end of the class we get together to share how it's going and what we've learned.



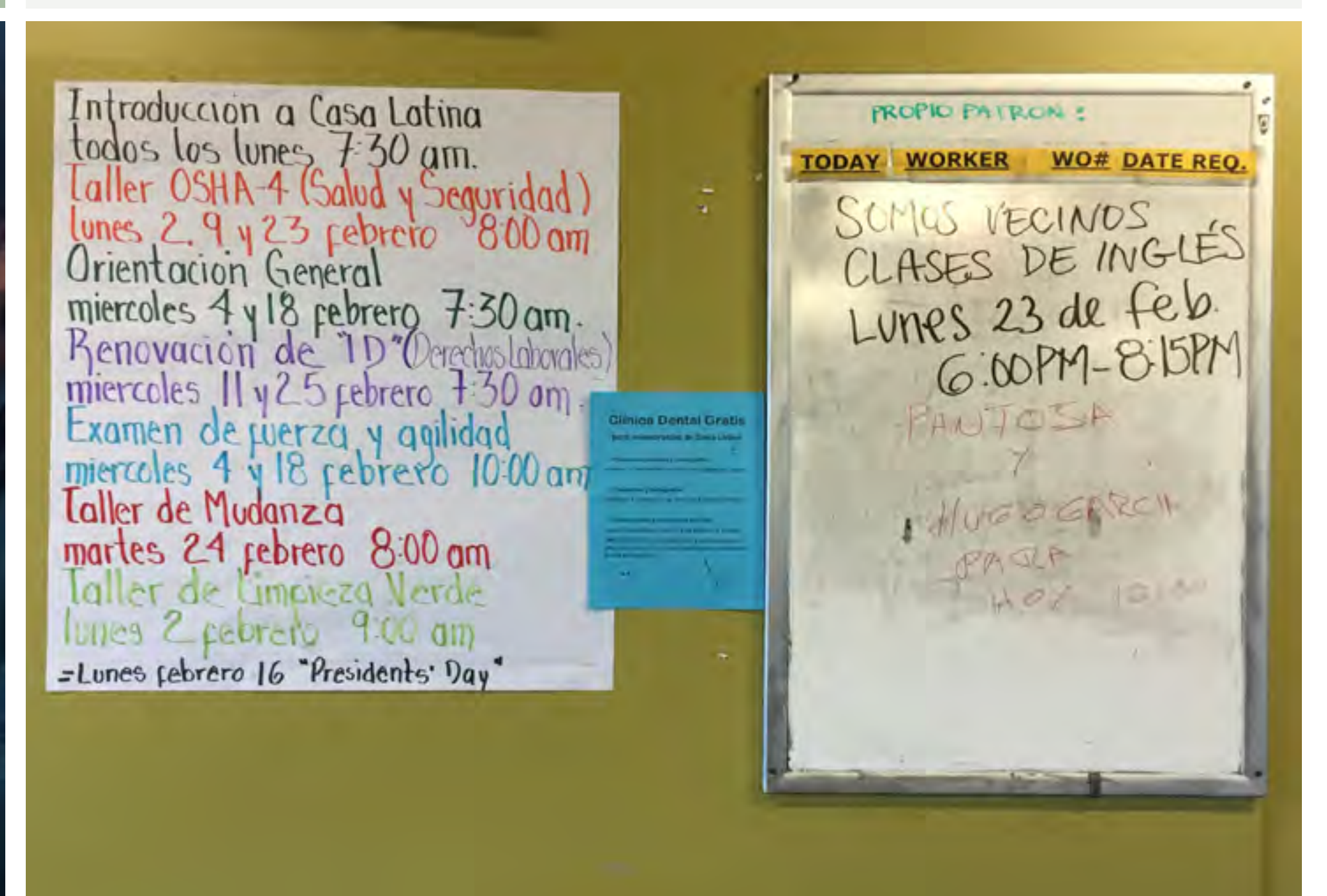
Jimmy

You always have to be learning. You have to contribute your part, you have to do your part and learn how to use the computer, how to use the keyboard... you have to learn how to do new things. So they say, "oh no, learning English is too difficult," but I say learning English is very important because even so English is now what feeds us, you will get better jobs if you speak English.



Jorge

In Mexico, I only did elementary school. I came here and I didn't know what was going to happen here. I had no idea they spoke another language. That was the first thing that impacted me, the way of life... it's very different. But I liked it, I liked the way of life, so that's why I stayed.

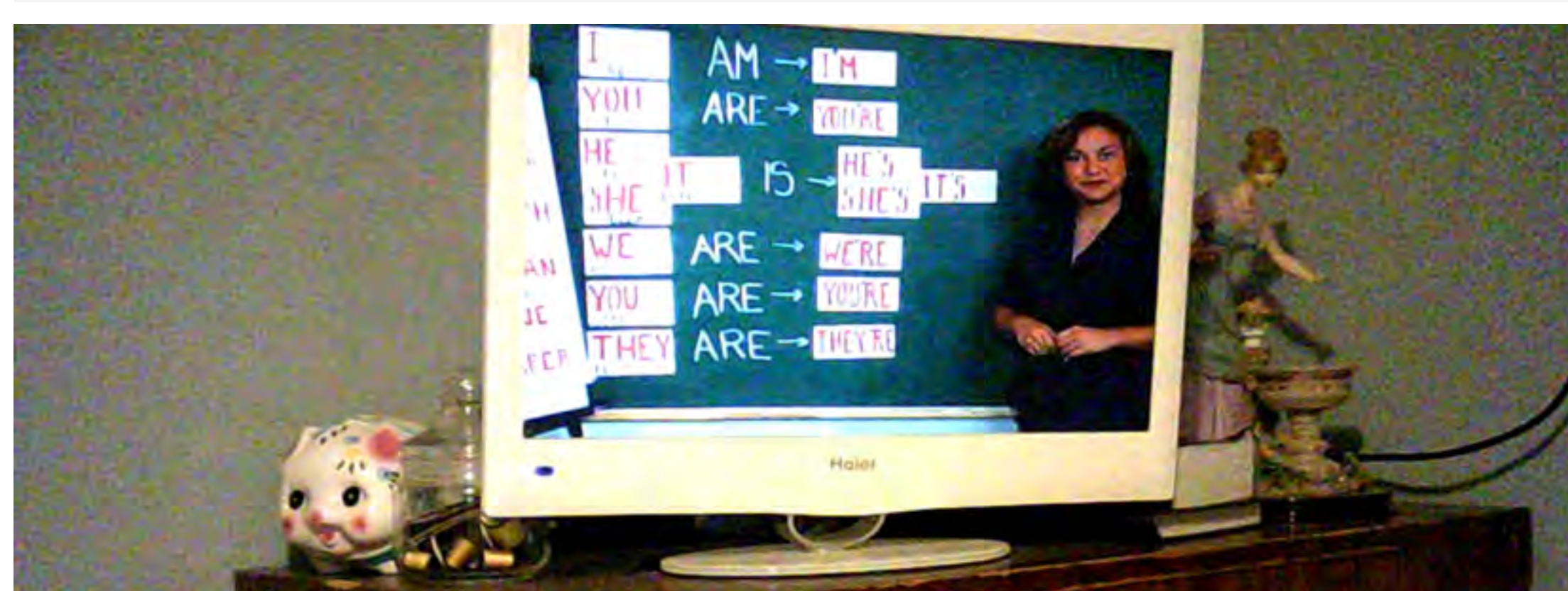


Casa Latina offers many training workshops and classes.



Ramón

Well, yes, I have to some English classes but I forget and it doesn't stay with me. I have this application called Bilingual and I think it's better, more entertaining because first it asks me to pick an image and write it or describe it, then it asks me to say it and then it asks me to write again, so I think it's very complete. There are other courses that I've seen that are just blah blah blah. It's also easier because you can speak and if you don't say it correctly then it'll say it's an error and you have to repeat it.



Beatriz

This isn't the news, it's an English class because when there are things I don't understand, I go and I put on a CD. I have struggled a lot with English because I didn't have a formal education in my country. I never had the idea that I would come to this country. But I'm here and I need English so I strive to learn. I am understating the verbs and via the smart phone I have learned grammar, and to write better in Spanish.



Ramón

We went to a very nice workshop to learn how to do pruning. This was a very nice workshop. First they gave us the theory, how the tree is a live being and you should not hurt the tree, how trees are important in this world. Then they taught us how to prune. At the end they gave us a certificate. It was at the university but as members of Casa Latina we didn't have to pay.



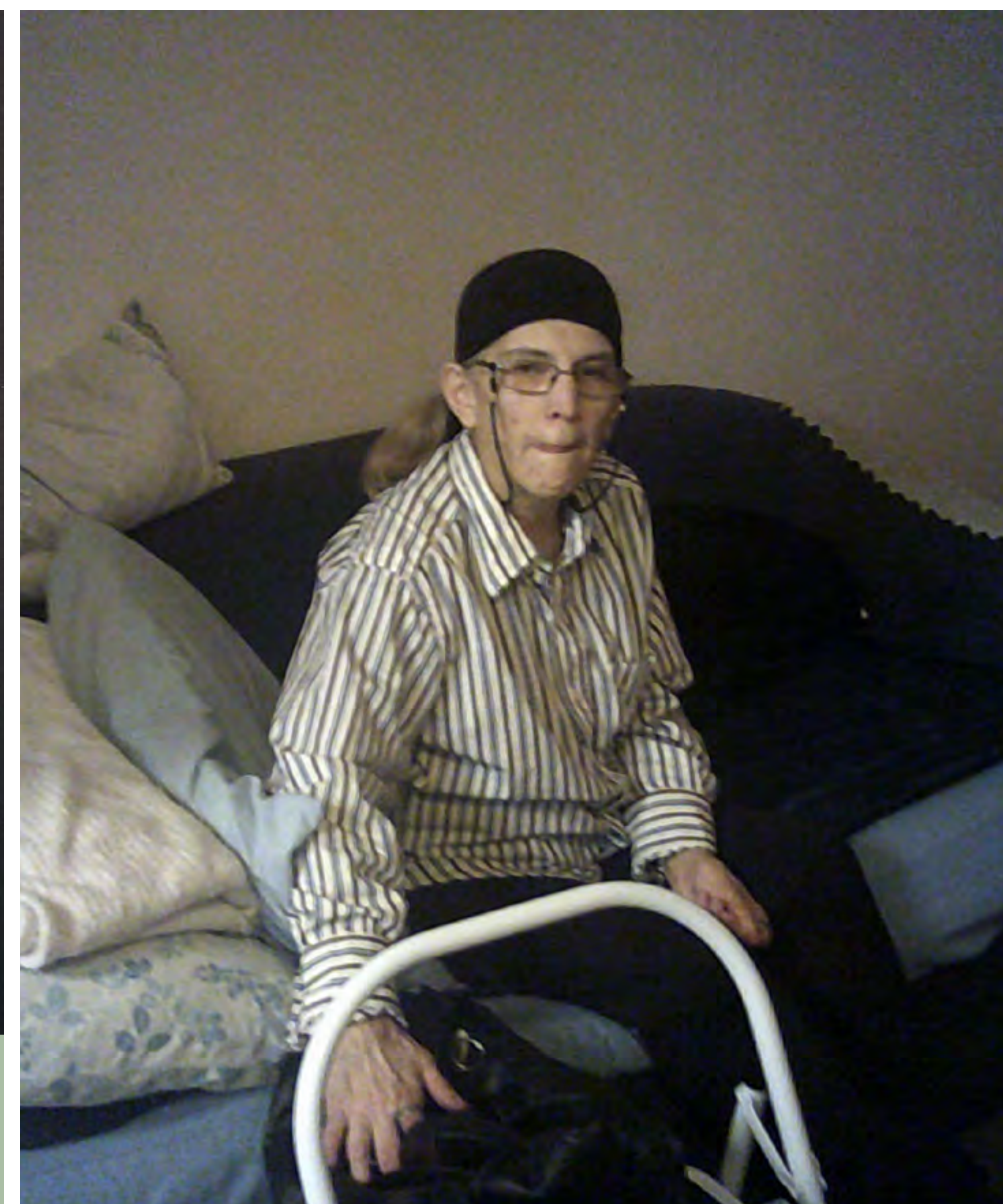
IDENTITY: STAY OR LEAVE



Gilda

I have many memories after living 15 years in this country. They remind me of the joy, the suffering and the sadness of all these years. I always thought 'I'm going to back next year'... This is why I took the picture of the number 15.

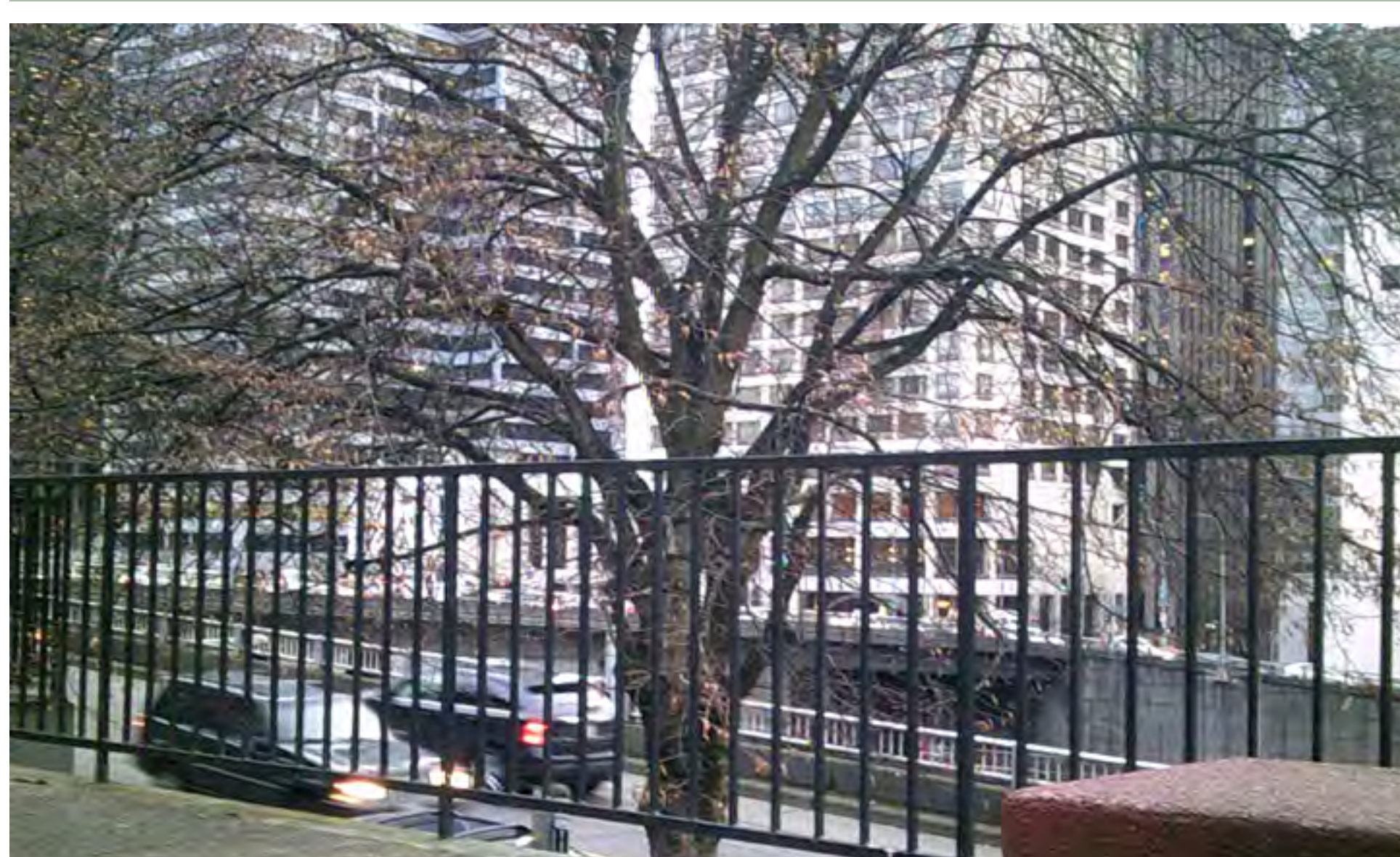
I dream about going back to my country and to my family. I see Guatemala as my home. That is where my belly button is buried. I feel that my essence, drive and energy are in my country. At the same time, I love this country despite all the things that I have gone through. Here, I can accomplish many things and seek out my own path.
...It's a conflictive feeling, very difficult to define.



Carlos

How do you imagine yourself when you are 80?

I think I would like to be back in Central America....There are nice places in the mountains that are not expensive so when you are an old person you can just go live in those places....I think you can live better out in the country or in a small town. I am from El Salvador but I really like Guatemala. So I would like to live in Guatemala.



Ventura

Do you ever feel like you want to return to Guatemala?

No. I may go, but maybe when I'm dead. Dead, perhaps I will then return. They don't want me alive there.



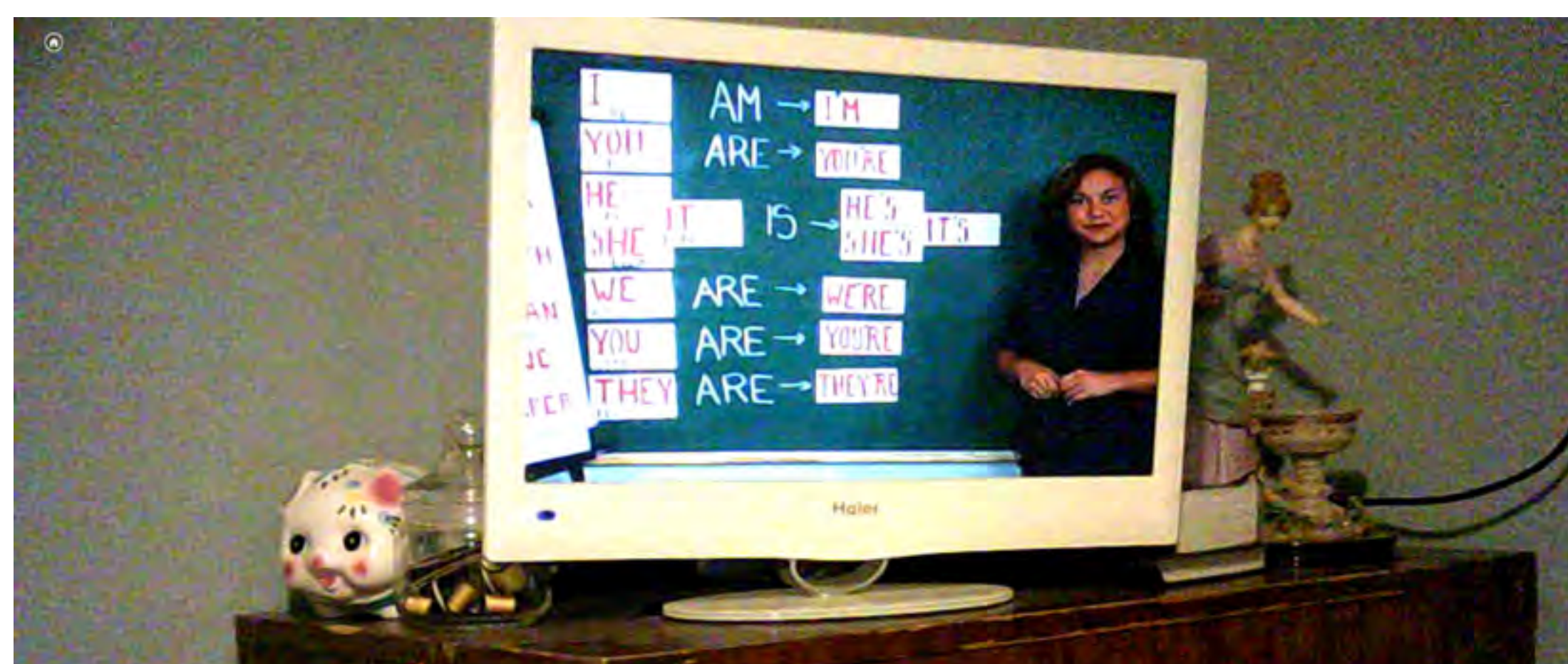
Ramón

Why am I here?...It's because at my age in Mexico it's a lot more difficult to find a job because there is a lot of youth. And here even if I am old, maybe not full time but you can still work. In Mexico if you go to look for a job and one is younger than me the other person is the one who is going to get the job. Here it is true as well but less.



Beatriz

Dreams advise me of things that will happen, and I give thanks to God and appreciate very much this country and the people that have helped me, people that have given me work. I know I will be happy in my country because I leave fulfilled, happy.



Beatriz

So your piggy bank is saving money to fly back permanently?

Yes, it's for the plane fare [laughing]. I'm leaving but I will not return. I came to this country, I worked in natural medicine in Ecuador, and I came, I won a contest, went to Cancun, and after I won in Colorado, and that was the big mistake I made, of staying here. I regret having made that mistake because, well, in my country we have the dollar, and with my work, I had the ability to live well. You know, a person that comes to this country they get accustomed to quick money, even though we know half of it stays here.

Jorge

As the years go by, I realize that there is a day in which I will have to go back to my country. When I first came here, I did not know the language, did not know many things. Then, I kind of fell in love with this country. I like it. But again, the way things are going, I don't think I will ever allowed to stay here. I will have to go back to my country, even though I don't have any family back there.

But if you could choose, would you stay?

I would stay here. As the years go by, you realize that a way of life has a cost. So I think if I stay, I don't have enough savings to retire in this country. I could live over there with half of what I would pay here. I would not like to have medical expenses here in the future.



IDENTITY: HOME OR HOMELESS



"Pedro Infante"

I took this photo because he is a fun guy... he also works at Casa Latina. I lived on the streets many years, and I know almost everyone from the streets. For many years I slept wherever I could, and it's never bothered me, I didn't care... I just live one day at a time. Now I have a small apartment, because I have a friend who helped me. If not, I would still be out in the streets.



Ventura

I live at the shelter in City Hall, with people who also have nowhere to sleep... Ever since I arrived in Seattle, I have stayed there, on a mattress... Home is wherever I land, like the saying goes, where the night falls, the body falls as well.



Carlos

These are homeless people at Pioneer Square. This is a picture of what reality is like. I have been homeless, too, but now I have my home, I have an apartment.



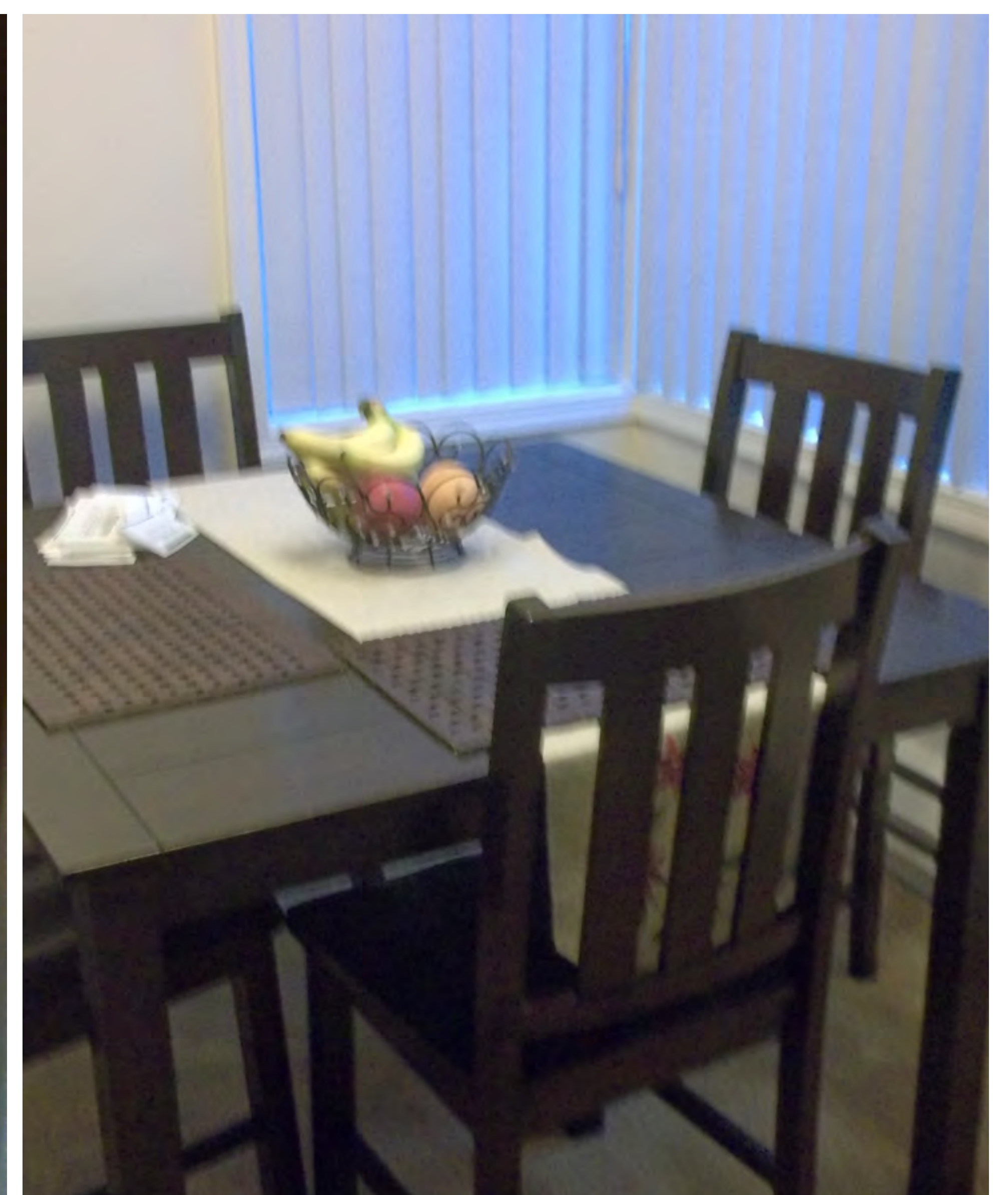
Carlos

That is in the deck of my house. That is me. That's the little plant that I have for decoration on my deck. I like seeing myself there on my deck. I don't feel proud or ashamed or anything.
Do you consider Seattle your home?
Yes. I know I come from El Salvador but this is my home. I have been here for many years.



Salomón

This is when I first got here to Seattle. This is the apartment I rented. This is my kitchen.
And, in the future, do you want to continue living here?
Oh no, for the future everything is transformation and change... Seattle is a nice city, but there's better cities. I want to see the world. I want to keep on traveling.



Gilda

This is my home. There is a table with four chairs. If only I could tell you all the things that have happened at this table. We eat together with my sister, her kids and husband. Also, I sit there with my boyfriend and people who come visit me. For me, this place is very sacred. It's my favorite place in the world. This is my own space. Here, I have the feeling that I am.



IDENTITY: FOOD & CULTURE



Maria

A friend sent me this picture of corn through Facebook. The maize is primordial for us in Mexico. If we have maize, we make our tortillas. If we don't eat tortillas it's as if we didn't eat at all... You can go without other things but you can't go without tortillas; there's nothing like a tortilla.



Beatriz

My children all know how to iron, do laundry and cook, because I taught them. This is one of the things I learned from my parents, and my parents learned from my grandparents... So there is no need to come to the US to change one's ideas or ways of being.



Juan

This is the Mayflower. I took this picture because it made me remember that the Spanish came to the Americas in boats like this. The Spanish came and fought against the Guatemalan hero, Tecun Uman.



Juan

I feel like an indigenous person. I am an Indian in Canada, US, Mexico, Central America, and all South America - it is all the same continent. It is true I am from Guatemala and I am here in the US. But I am still in America. One single America. It is one same continent.



Jorge

This is a taco truck I like to go to once a week. I like the seasoning of the food, even though after 20 years here I've gotten used to the food on this side. The good food is good, but the flavor of Mexico is hard to find. But those are things I don't really miss, I don't miss the flavor of Mexico, I don't miss the life of Mexico. I'm used to living here.



Blas

Mexico is a country of many cultures and many languages. Take me, for example, I speak Otomi, from Queretaro. My parents were born there, but I was born in Baja California. So [seeing this woman as a Native American] made me think of my indigenous roots. So with a lot of pride we took this picture together.



Servando

This is the food that they gave us in the church. In Mexico, the churches give food as well. Although, the churches in the US give more food since we don't have a stable home. It feels like a wheel of fortune. At times, we are up, or we are in the middle or we are down. We cannot forget about our current situation, so the food does not really matter. The most important thing is that it is a place where you cannot be poisoned. Church is our safe place.

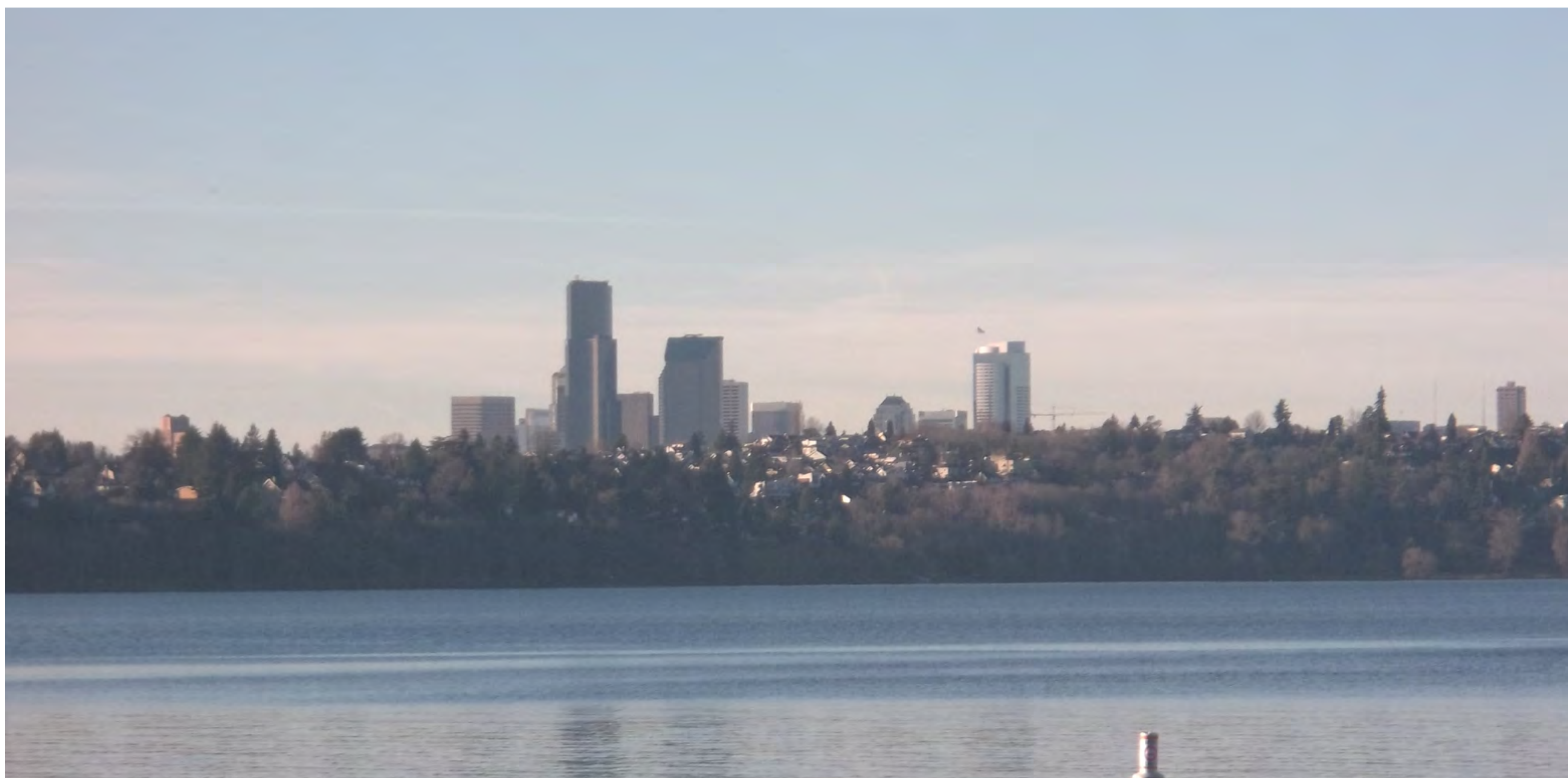


Blas

This is a meal my friend invited me to. He had worked and I had not worked so he said "I'll treat you, we'll go eat something". This dish reminds me of when we would all get together with my family, it reminds me of the red rice like the one my mom used to make. And the beef reminds of my brother, he used to make it on the coals and a put a bit of lime. It's been a long time since I had something like this, and then beans, well you know that everything is with beans otherwise it's no good

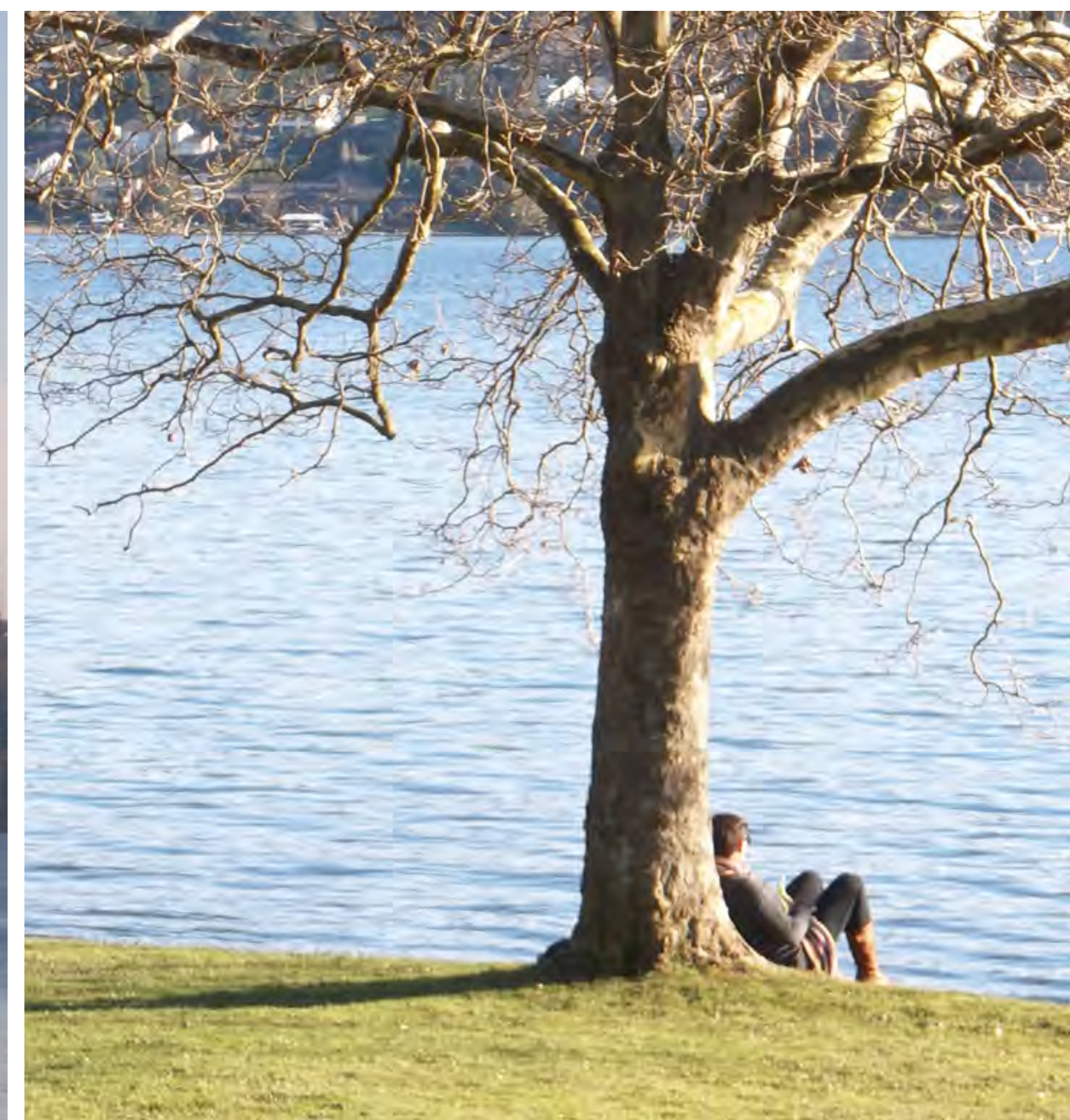


IDENTITY: SENSE OF BELONGING



Gilda

I took many pictures of the views of the city. Each time I look at the other side, I see my town. I see houses that are not buildings. I see things different than what I remember, but I need to realize that I am here. I'm on this side. I don't identify myself with this city because it is not my root... but I am here. I need to plant my feet on the ground. This is where I live. I don't want to lose my culture, but I have to adapt. The picture is saying 'I am here, I am here.'



Gilda

I saw this person sitting under a tree by Lake Washington. When I lived in my village, I would go out to the beach and sit to watch the waves and the ocean. So, I remembered myself sitting there looking across the water. I saw the other side of the water while being in THIS side of the water.



Juan

This is a picture of the two main parties of the US, the Republicans and the Democrats. I was not born in this country but one day I would like to be able to vote. Maybe in 10 years, in 20 years. One day.



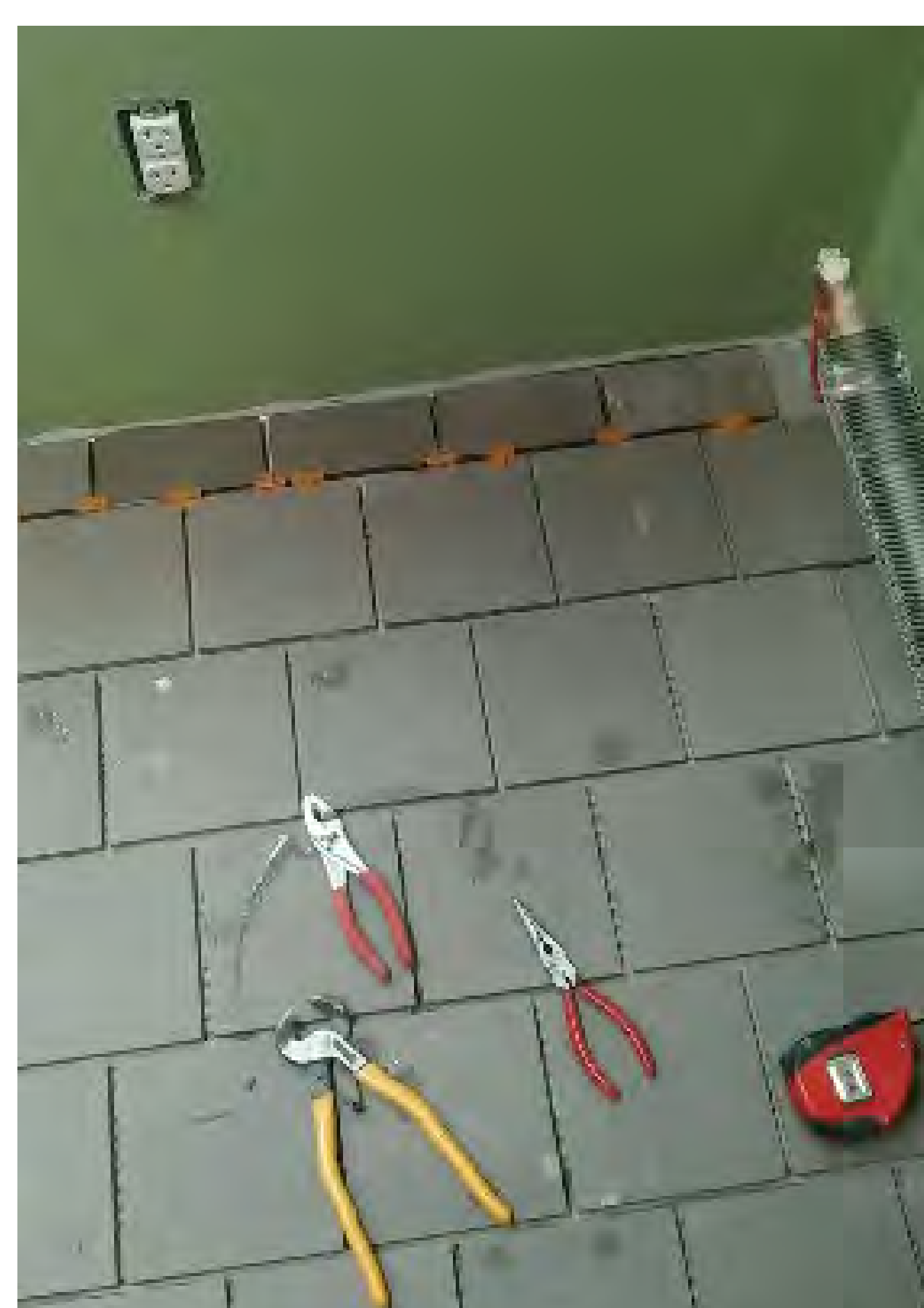
Juan

I took this picture because I've been in the US for years and I would be embarrassed if I did not know who was the first president of the US. I feel this is my home, and I feel like I'm from Guatemala, but this is my home too. He is the father of the nation because he was the first president. And here we are in the state of Washington that honors George Washington.



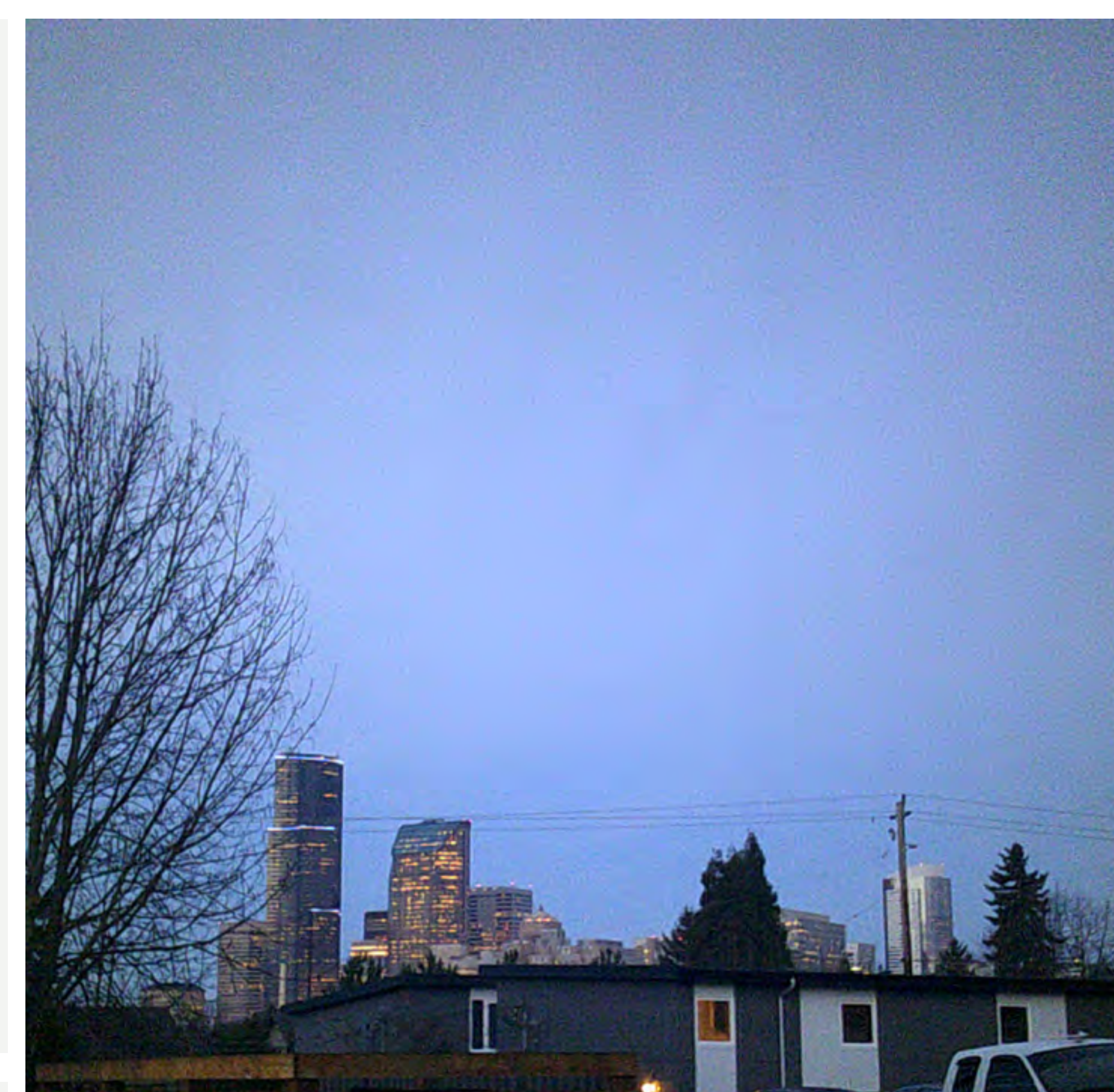
Juan

That is a soldier. He is dressed in his uniform and he represents the training he has received. It makes me think of my training I received when I was in Guatemala. I feel that I was well-trained in my country. I could join the army here if they told me to go. I hear how the US army is fighting in Iraq and Iran and I ask myself, will I go and fight in that war?



Pedro

When will I do the floor of my own home? To have your own home, you have to work a lot. You have to work and work and know how to save. If you're lucky and if you get a stable job and you know how to do it well, you can do it.



Lourdes

This is Seattle's sunset. I like it when it's getting dark, and when it's getting light in the morning. It makes me feel all the things that we have accomplished in this country. It shows what we have reached since we come from a place where unfortunately, there is not an opportunity to prosper. I thank life because it's a new night before the sun comes out and there is still light in the clouds and sky. This means that I am alive.



IDENTITY: SENSE OF BELONGING



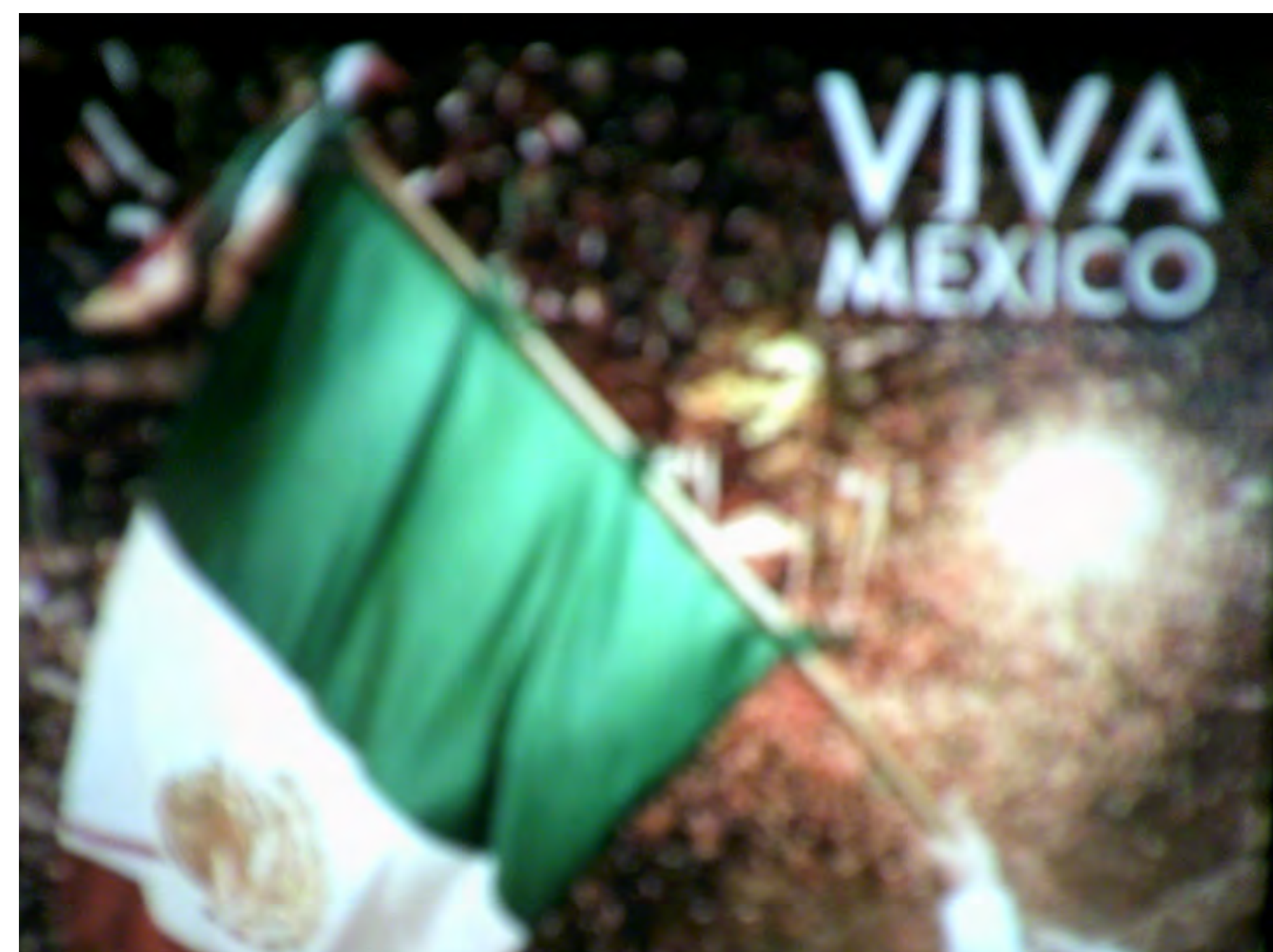
Beatriz

I went to the beach looking for something new. I saw a seagull that pulled a crab and started to eat it, and another seagull arrived and they started to fight for the food. I realized that human are like animals, that when they have suffered for their survival, they will fight to maintain it.



Maria

When I saw that place, I imagined myself in my village, on the farm, when you go out to the open fields to prepare the earth for work. This is here, over by Tukwila somewhere, you always remember, it feels like where the stream ran by my home. I miss that place a lot. Everything from over there in Mexico, being with my family. But oh well, we have to be here...



Lourdes

This is a picture of the flag of my country of origin. I carry my flag wherever I go. It has millions of people who are around it. It contains all the people from Mexico who live in Seattle. For me, it is a combination of being proud where you made it, and also remembering where your roots are from, remember where you come from so you never deny the soil that saw your birth.



Gilda

I identify myself with all this water because I feel that it's a lake that transports me back home. I come from Livingston, Guatemala, which has a river that is connected to the sea, like here there is a sea connected to the lake. The connection between the fresh water and the salt water make this place similar to the place where I come from. So when I see water, waves or the sea, it makes me feel like I am on this side, but I want to get to the other side.



Salomón

When I took this picture I was just standing, waiting for the bus, in the tunnel in Seattle. I was there thinking about the plan of my life, knowing where are you going, being present in the moment that you're in, not being blocked by obstacles.




Jorge

Seattle, the city of the Seahawks, is not only the one that has given me more opportunities, but also the city that has taught me the most. Here you have more opportunities to learn English, or the simple fact that you can get a driver's license, or an ID. It's a very big advantage. It's also very fun to be here, there are many things can be done. I think that people here are more generous. I see it when you go out for a job from here. They take you to their homes and they trust you.


CAST OF CHARACTERS

Participants in Nogales


Anonymous migrants at El Comedor who shared their stories:




"Chavalo"




"Chapin"



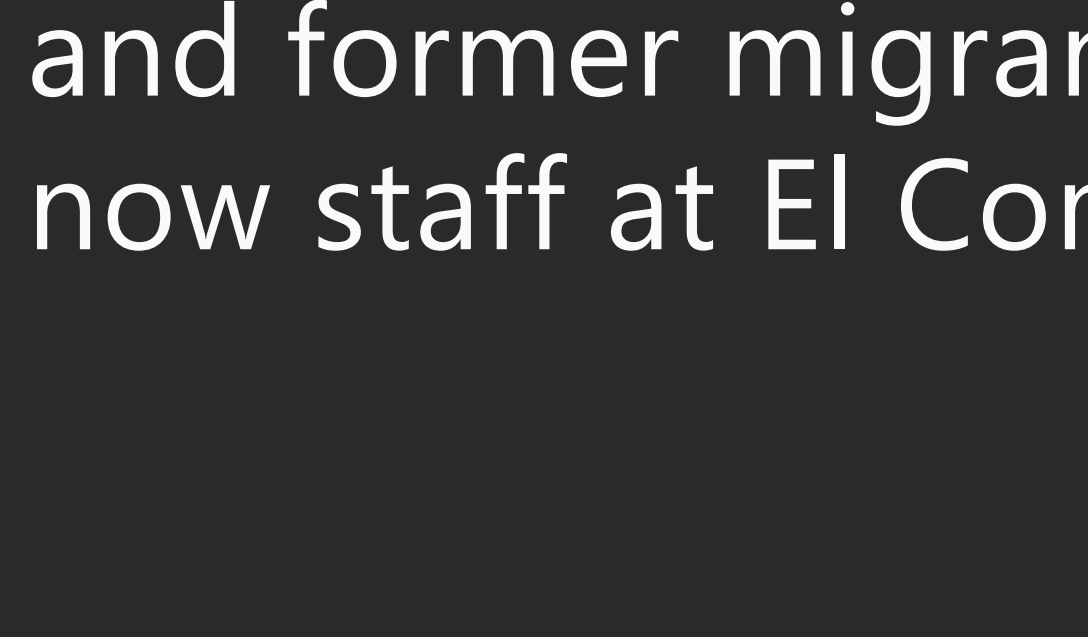
"Chino"



"Lupe"




"Chiapas"



"Catracho"

and former migrants,
now staff at El Comedor:



Mariana & Armando

Team in UW

Ricardo Gomez with contributions by:

- Sara Vannini
- Verónica Guajardo

Research Assistants:

- Bryce Newell
- Cherry Wang
- Chris Setzer
- Hadiza Ismaila
- Juan Carlos Rodríguez
- Katya Yefimova
- Korissa McGlocklin
- Mantra Roy
- Philip Reed
- Staci Fox

Participants in Seattle

Day laborers members of Casa Latina:



"Pedro Infante"



Beatriz



Blas



Carlos



Escher



Gilda



Jimmy



Jorge



Juan



Lourdes



María



Pedro



Ramón



Salomón



Servando



Ventura

Collaborators in Nogales, Mexico

- El Comedor
- Kino Border Initiative



Collaborators in Seattle, WA

- Casa Latina



Participants in Cali-Buenaventura

Consejo Comunitario La Plata, Bahía Málaga



Hoover



Ferney



Porfirio



Fanny y Francisca

Siloé, Cali



David

Comunidad Nasa de Buena Vista, Buitrera



Juan Carlos



Marco Antonio



Luis Alberto



Yolima



Luz Marina



Jorge

Collaborators in Cali, Colombia

- Universidad Icesi
- Consejo Comunitario La Plata – Bahía Málaga
- Comunidad Indígena Nasa de Buena Vista - Buitrera
- Fundación Nueva Luz, Siloé - Cali
- Luis Miguel Carvajal
- Luis Fernando Baron
- Mauricio Beltrán
- Natalia Escobar
- Oscar Ivan Trejos