



**femme
frontera**



I.

I always sweat.
I sweat a lot.
Not because I can't, but because
none of it was intended for me.
I wasn't meant to be here, they didn't
expect us. Survival of the fittest
didn't include me. It still doesn't.

I sweat all the time, I sweat a lot.
What becomes when it's all sweat..

femme frontera

Adriana Monsalve





II.

A river begins as a small stream, and grows the farther it flows. The water in a river is called fresh water. It begins in the high grounds of hills and mountains and flows down to the lowlands of valleys and plains. A river flows this way because of gravity.

Because of its weight, it is not free.







III.

Elizabeth Zandate: La Mama que cruza y sus hijxs.

Laredo, TX

x

San Luis Potosí, Mexico

Cuando tenía 17 años mi esposo cruzó el río. Yo crucé el río, pero yo no hablo de eso, pues porque es muy delicado.

Vino el [marido] primero, entonces vine yo con mi niña. Llegamos a vivir con una cuñada, con otra cuñada, hasta que ya, seis meses con una, seis con la otra, hasta que ya encontramos una casa chiquita para los tres.

Tenemos dos sobrinas de la misma edad de Cindy (15 años). Una de mis cuñadas nos dió los papeles de una primita y ya la pasaron. Solo dijeron, ¿quién es ella? Es Kimberly, dijimos que era otra niña. Y Cindy, durmiendo y ya, de cuatro años.

Un domingo por la tarde yo me vine para acá. Crucé caminando por el río. El agua por poco me lleva, me arrastra.

Y yo le agradezco tanto a dios que me ha traído tan bien. En media hora estábamos aquí en la casa de mi cuñado, todo en media hora. Desde eso no he regresado.



Michelob
GRAVITY
Michelob
GRAVITY
Michelob
GRAVITY





IV.

“Todas las cosas feas que te puedes
imaginar, ahí están en ese río.”

- de mi primer entrevista en la frontera, con
un señor cruzando el puente en Laredo, TX.



V.

I wonder if you forget that you live within a border. If you are here they don't want you. We are neither part of this nor that, ni de aqui, ni de alla.. de todo un poco..

We are the margins [outside].

We claim one or none, or both, reclaim it all. The border gives you that. Those who end up here, those who do not seem to fit the part of the quintessential migrant, they cross for different reasons, but they are still part of the story.

Fronteras cover my anatomy. I'm many things, and I'm barely there. They slightly touch, but run all over. They walk with me, and eventually through me. That's something we can do... be, become, blend with you and your surroundings. Soy nepantlera.

No matter where I am, I will always be a border.





VI.

The characteristics of
a river
change
during the journey
from the source
to
the
sea.







VII.

Marcos Ruiz

Laredo, TX
x
Nuevo Laredo, Mexico

In 08' things started getting bad in Nuevo Laredo. My uncles were in the businesses, not good businesses. In 08' they disappeared. Pues, I got scared and I wanted to be with my family.

My tios disappeared and when my dad had a chance of asking someone who might know about them, he would ask. So we thought that that's the reason why he was taken, because of the asking. When something like that happens you're not supposed to ask. It happened, and you have to live with it.

In 09' he [Dad] got kidnapped and since then we never heard from him. So a few months after he was kidnapped we came to Laredo to find a better future. Deep inside I knew he wasn't gonna return. My uncles never came back and there was no ransom. Those type of businesses, they don't have happy endings. My dad, my tios, we are never gonna see them again. You just have to move on and live with it. So I knew, we had to make a future for my siblings.











VIII.

I drip with sweat when intensely in
thought.

I sweat a lot.





IX.

Adriana Monsalve

Entre Orillas, Migrando
x
Beltsville Heights, MD

I keep going back to these rivers
so vast, I need assistance crossing.
I wade but get nowhere; I need
connection. But what about these
aimless deceptions called walls.
they've been erected far and wide,
all over creation.. since i can
remember.. but more so as of late.
unnecessary walls, pointless really..
walls in vain, walls in excess, walls
of redundancy. They have separated
us. they've broken me into various
partitions of the pieces i was. What
if i build some in my mind? A futile
space.. so when the season arises,
they (silly things) will stop me from
thinking all together. I may forget
the vast river, I may neglect my
need for connection, I may wake up
to wade and wonder why I crossed
at all.





X.

río comienza
río fluye
río lleva
río transporta
río erosiona
río y valle
río continúa

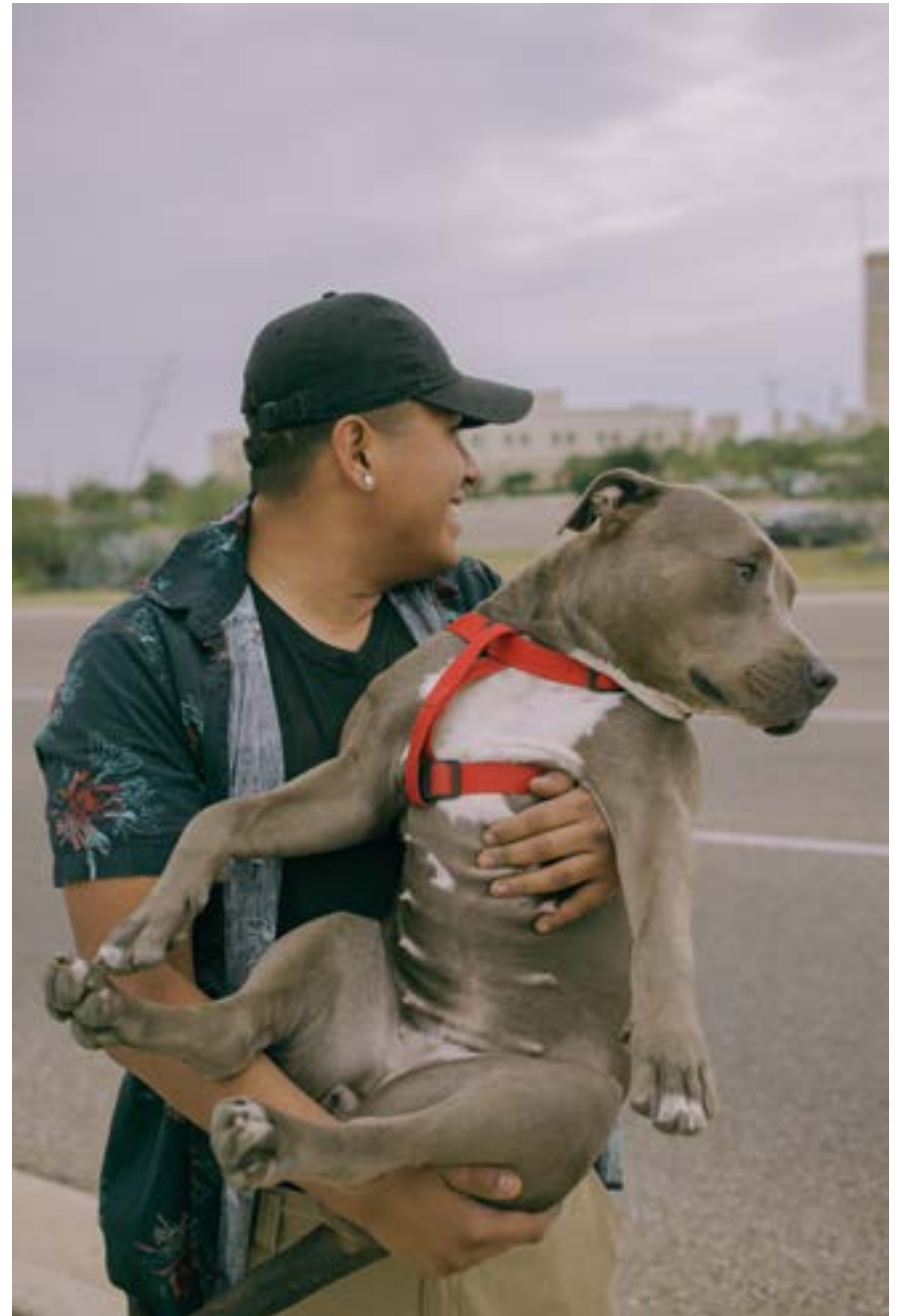
XI.

Franko



Laredo, TX
x
Nuevo Laredo, Mexico

'It's a border town, you're not meant to stay here, you're supposed to go through it'



LA RANCHERITA



**La Rancherita, La Mejor
La Mas Buena 1550 a.m.
Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas**

XII.

Mando

Laredo, TX

x

Mexico before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, 1848

So when they asked my great-great grandparents, “Se quieren ir pa’ Mexico”, dijeron, “NO - I got my 10 acre ranch here, why would I wanna leave? Because dumb Americans, se creen mucho.” So I tell them, “I’m also American. You’re American too - American-German, American-Canadian, American... somos migrantes.”

So I tell these gringos, “I didn’t come to the U.S., the U.S. came to us, man.” Cuz’ this stupid border patrol, when I used to work at the oil fields, he pulled me over, and he told me, “Show me your greencard”, and I told him, “Show me your motherfucking greencard, or your mother’s greencard.” He backed up from my driver’s side door and went the other way, and I told him, “Don’t ever do that to me again.” I’m more American than most gringos. Ellos nacieron aquí, sus papás nacieron aquí, pero sus grandparents nacieron en Italia. My family has been right here for centuries.

XIII.

Albita

Laurel, MD

x

San Salvador, El Salvador

This is not the American Dream, this
is the American Nightmare.
Go to sleep late, wake up early,
go to work.
From work to home, home to work.
That's your life: live to work.

The American Dream is idealistic,
like a Cinderella story.
You meet the prince and everything
is going to be right and colorful.
But it's not that way. When you come
here you find different barriers.
First of all, the language is the most
powerful barrier. The barriers are
different for everyone. You come
here and you don't have friends. You
have to look for what you believe,
look for your principles. The first
thing I did when I came here is I
came to the church. I believe in God
and myself, and nobody else.





VIII.

Clarissa Astudillo

Laredo, TX
x
Acapulco, Mexico

When I was young I used to go every year to Acapulco. But because of the violence nobody in my family crosses. They don't cross, and we don't either. I haven't seen them since I was 14.

My backyard is technically the river. It's awesome that you can see across the border. Like that's Mexico, this is Laredo [Texas], and literally two cultures are just hanging out doing the same things. Hanging out by the parks, and fishing at the same river. Downtown has a bad reputation already. The wall would ruin it. I feel like it would look like a prison. Especially with our growing downtown area and the parks, the parks probably wouldn't exist anymore.









XVI.

Manuel Lasoya x Ms Jasmine Knight

Laredo, TX
x
Houston, TX

The hardest thing about being a drag queen is to pass the four steps to being a true queen, a man with way too much fashion sense for one gender!

I have always noticed we are very competitive individuals. Some make it a career or like me, I like the connection with my audience. I use it as therapy: pick the song, channel my outfit, and tell my story.

It's hard finding a partner, a boyfriend, to accept you being a man that dresses up in women's clothes. I am currently choosing happiness, hoping on a future with my new boyfriend. He is okay with me and knows my past with drag and the kids and community, but he doesn't want me to shave my beard.

Guys like me cause of the way I look and my character as a women is passable, and then they only want me as a woman.

I think with everything, both good and dark, in my life drag has taught me to survive. Many queens before me have taught us. So it's my turn to teach my drag children: The Haus of Knight.





XV.

Mario Gonzales x Margo Landro

Edinburgh, TX

x

Mission, TX

I guess growing up in the era that I did, the 70's, I was already used to being made fun of because I was, and still am, a sissy boy.

You may not be pretty enough, your costumes aren't good enough. I worked for free for years just for tips and trying to get up on stage. And let's be honest: the money. It is a very expensive hobby. Only the elite will be able to make it a job. You have to find a way to buy wigs, makeup, and costumes. The most expensive gown I've paid for was \$1,000, and that is real cheap for a gown made for me. Oh, and one more thing, people love to watch the shows, but sometimes there is prejudice in our own community. And back then nobody wanted to date a drag queen, so we were usually by ourselves. It's a little different now. Guys don't mind as much.

My mom passed away four years ago and it's still painful. But, I'm proud to say that I took her to one of my shows in McAllen. It was one of my proudest moments. She said I was beautiful.

My older sister asked me why I have drag pictures on Facebook. I said, "Margo is part of who I am." I couldn't be her for many years, but I'm proud of who I am. I am an unconventional beauty Queen.

I'm here to tell you that at 55 you can still live the dream. I am the reigning "Miss Gay Taboo at Large" for 2017.... how 'bout that!





XVI.



I still hunger for things i cannot have.
I am no longer split in two, but I am
still living between things.
I am drenched in all this sweat.

Warning.

This body is a departure from traditional femininity. It moves in ways that hold space in places where tender and strong come together in collective duality. This body persists with as much resolution as grace. To hold this much space is an act of defiance in protection of community, yet we are overlooked. I am removing words that have disoriented me; words like - soft, weak, and quiet. I am picking up words of the resilience my ancestors have left me in their wake; words like - wild, loud, and confident.

This is radical softness; this is radical softness as a boundless form of resistance. You can't contain this body, don't try.

I bloom in the peripheries.

I multiply in shadows, where few focus.

I glow when nurtured by the weary hands of mothers, aunties and abuelas, women who stroke my back with all the gentleness of millenniums past.

I hold space for my community in tenderness, love, and celebration.

I shine with femme friends, that are femme family, that become their own planets that entire galaxies birth forth.

Femme is ancient.

Femme is feared.

Femme is queer.

Femme is frontera.



Photography and Text

Arlene Mejorado
amejorado.com

Adriana Monsalve
adrianastories.com

Editing and Art Direction
Homie House Press

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Caterina Ragg

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homiehousepress@gmail.com
@homiehousepress

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and everyone that shared their story with us.



Nepantla- a Nahuatl word meaning land in between

In a world where I'm always growing, I am in constant transition. Soy nepantlera. Ni de aqui ni de alla, con pie en cada lado. I exist between places and sometimes between truths. I am a vessel of conflicts and also a storyteller, like my abuelita. In each story I piece together a little more of myself.

An inheritance of discomfort can be traced to ancestral displacement. My breathing lungs are a disruption to empire's structure. Fronteras are everywhere, not exclusive to la linea. My body was born queer but I was distanced from my indigo womb. The first words I uttered in English were "leave me alone." I was four years old and already tired of the world.

What did you have to do to get here? Because we weren't meant to survive. "Erasure is violence," a friend once told me. I hear how you have been muted. Shadows of our abuelas whisper ciphers that undermine barriers. A soft survival is written on our bleached callous hands, lines that map our crossings.

To me, femme is fiery courage chipping away at its oppressor. It fights to be tender. It is warm words that cut with conviction. Queering is healing. In chronicling femme voices I mend my own silencing, my hardened existence. Be unapologetic about your subversive ways, be proud of your quiet revolution, be relentless in your liberation. Femme is the future and borders are not.



Mi vida loca

Jenni Rivera

Hoy en el show de carolina
jóvenes mujeres señoras
que no se resignan a ser
lo que ellas llaman MB
mujeres basicas
el tema de hoy mujeres
que viven la vida loca.

Que vivo una vida
soy hembra muy diferente
que vivo mi vida recia
quien sabe que hay en mi mente
que ya esta bien del desorden
que eh vivido desde siempre.

Porque tanto les molesta
que me quiera divertir
que goze de todo a todo
mis verdades no fingir
quiero contar mis parrandas
antes que vaya a morir.

Que de parranda en parranda
verguenza tengo muy poca
que a lo grande me divierto
corro de una fiesta a otra
que sepan que es muy mi gusto
el vivir mi vida loca.

Y es muy mi gusto ajaaa...
arriva culiacan sinaloa señores.

Para que quieren que este
encerradita en mi casa
yo no soy una santita
les rompo mas que una taza
si no sirvo pátortear
pá que me compren la masa
no naci para sirvienta
de ni un perro soy la gata
desde niña fui muy revelde
y no soy ama de casa
en eso me saco un cero
ya dejen de darme lata.

Yo seguire mis parrandas
pidiendo un puño de tierra
que me entierren con la banda
y me canten los rivera
yo vivo imi vida loca
aunque as nadie me quiera.







Barbara

Highland Park, CA
x
Progreso, Honduras

La que más me identifico es Jenni Rivera. Me dicen que me parezco. Hago vestuarios a mano. Cuando yo fui a verla en persona dije “Jenni es una muñeca.”

Ya sabes como son los latinos. Me decían “mira ay va el jotito, el gay.” Y pues yo explotaba. No quería que nadie me dijera nada y fui expulsada de la escuela tres veces por pegarle a los compañeros pero hice que me respeten.

Tienen derecho a vivir. También sienten en su corazoncito. Yo también soy una de ellas. Soy una chica trans.

Mi país es muy cruel para una chica de nosotros.

Mi vida siempre la he enfrentado a lo que venga. Y te acostumbras.









What exists in the periphery?
Those quiet places aren't so quiet.



Lucy

Tijuana, México
x
Gonaïves, Haiti

Una solo dueña, solo yo y dios. Luchando.
Aquí no molesto a nadie, solo luchar. Mi plan es México.
Me quiero quedar aquí siempre.



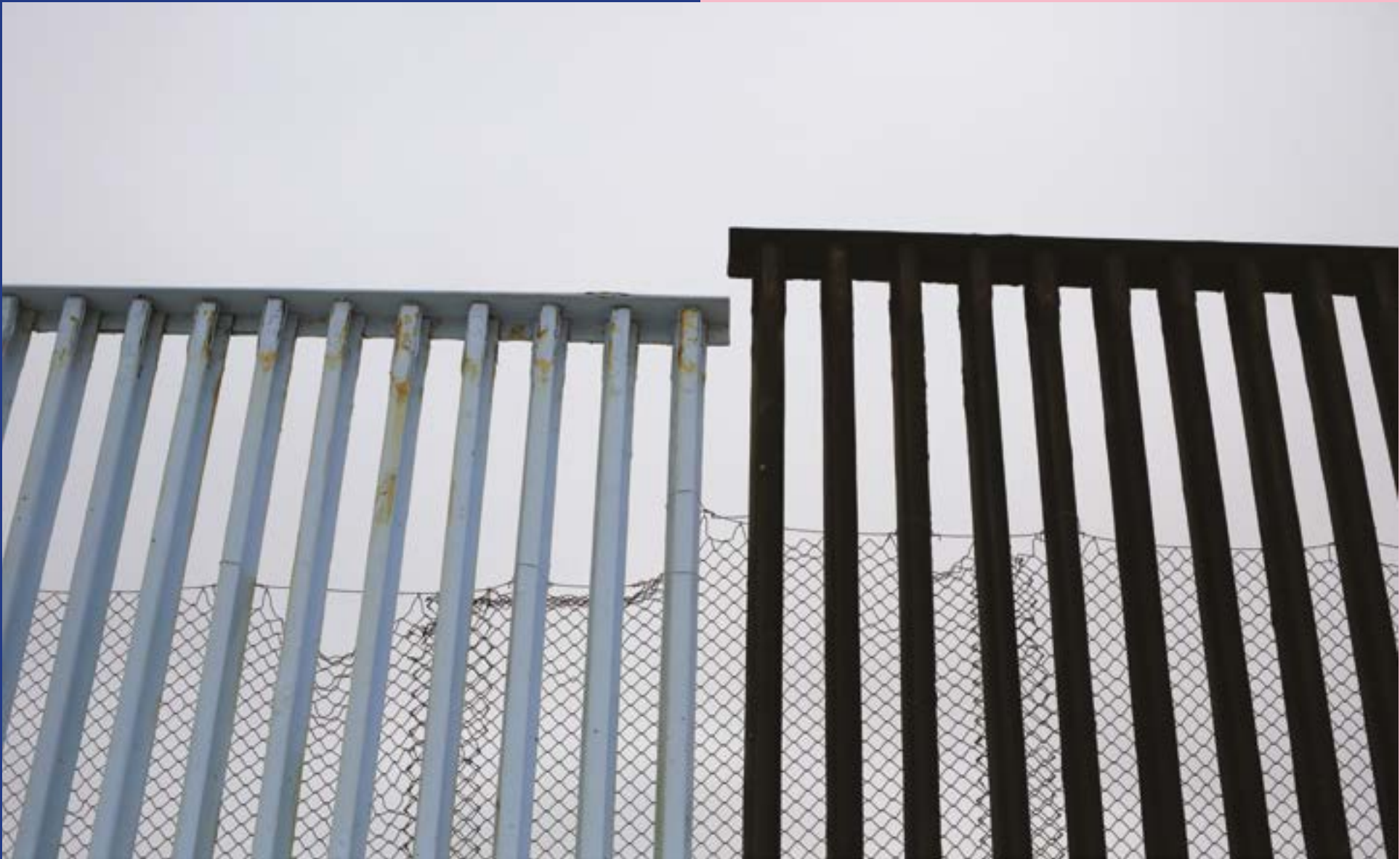


Laura

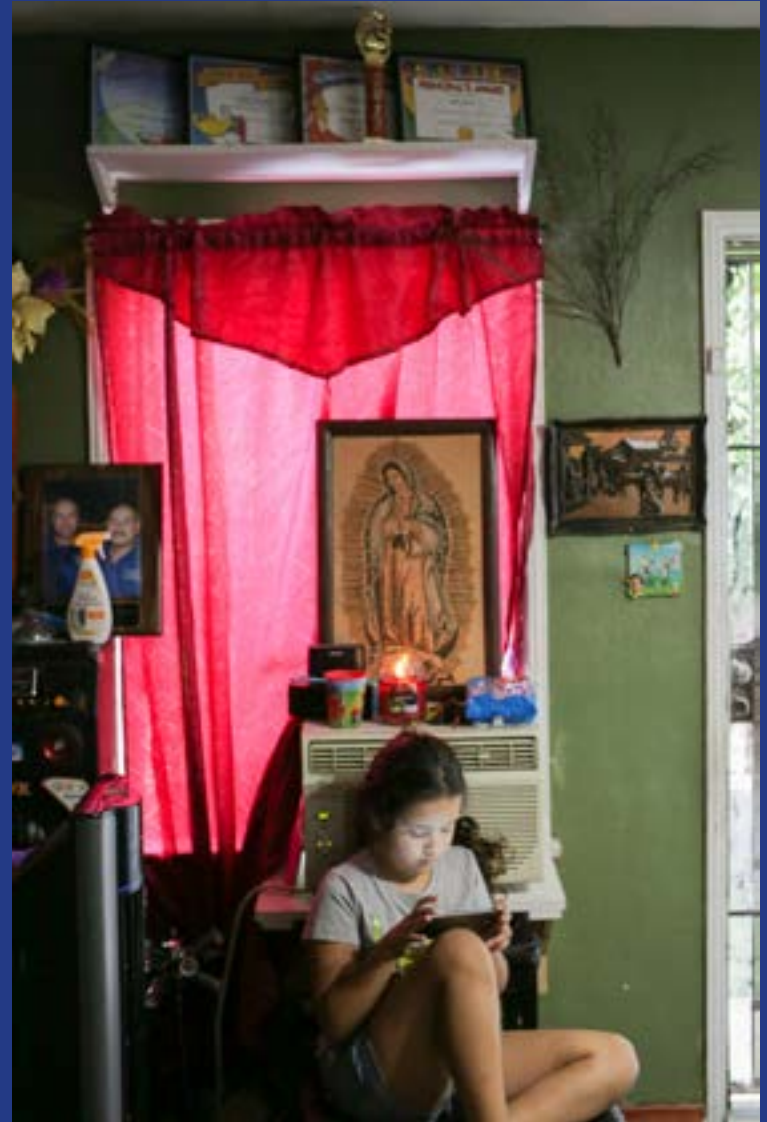
Los Angeles, CA
x
Guadalajara, Mexico

De día corto pelo, tengo mis clientes. En la tarde trabajo en el puesto de comida. A veces me voy directo de un trabajo al otro.

In the daytime I cut hair. I have my clients. In the evening I work at the food stand. Sometimes I go directly from one job to the other.









Gris

Lynwood, CA

x

Santa Ana, El Salvador

El sueño americano. Es mentira.
Aquí uno vive en un apartamento
bien chiquito y todo bien caro.

The american dream is a lie. Here
you live in a small apartment and
everything is very expensive.

Se acostumbra.

You get used to it.

Yo quiero ser visible para
sentirme mas agusto.

I want to be visible to
feel better.

El trabajo que uno hace no lo
valoran. No se tiene que dejar
uno de nadie.

The work that I do isn't
valued. You can't let anyone
take advantage of you.

ANDRE WILLIAMS

El Estero de la Cruz

DAVID J. WALLACE

OSCAR SANCHEZ

HECTOR LOPEZ

PRINCE BONAH

WAS LOPEZ

WILLIAM SANCHEZ

WILLIAM SANCHEZ

+



Se escuchaba muchos disparos.

Cuando yo me iba
levantar entró el hombre
me apuntó y me soltó
dos disparos. Metí el
brazo.

Me tuve que venir.

I heard several gunshots.

When I was about to get
up, the man pointed at
me and shot me twice.
I blocked with my arm.

I had to come here.

Rosita

Los Angeles, CA
x
Chihuahua, Mexico

Mi forma de
vestir aquí,
nada que ver.
Yo nunca
usaba tenis.
Siempre
tacón.

Los tacones los tengo
guardados. Yo no me
maquillo, siempre
tengo chongo. Esa
vida la dejé atrás.

The way I
dress here,
totally
different. I
never used
sneakers.

Always heels.
My heles are put
away. I don't wear
makeup, I always
have my hair in a
bun. I left that life in
the past.

Me gusta mucho la
música pero trato de no
escucharla por que me
trae muchas memorias.
Jenni Rivera me fascina.
Cuando salen los
conciertos me muero,
yo lloro. Me trae mucha
nostalgia.

Yo estoy pensando en
mis hijas. Ellas me dicen
"Yo se que es difícil pero
tienes que superarlo."

I like music a lot but
I try not to listen to it
because it brings back
memories. Jenni Rivera
fascinates me. When her
concerts come on I die, I
cry. It brings me so much
nostalgia.

I am thinking of my
daughters. They tell me
that its difficult but I need
to overcome this.







Josue

Koreatown, Los Angeles, CA
x
Santa Ana, El Salvador

Yo empecé a vestirme de Juan Gabriel hace dos años. Con este traje puedes hacer seis.

Puedes ser lo mas niña que quieras pero nunca dejes de ser elegante.

Hay cosas que la gente quiere que expliques y hay cosas que yo no quiero explicar.

Yo me sentaba todas las noches a llorar y llorar por qué yo me miraba en el. Y yo sobresalí.

I started to dress like Juan Gabriel two years ago. With this one suit you can make six.

You can be as child-like as you want but never stop being elegant.

There are things people want you to explain and ther are things I don't want to explain.

I would sit every night and cry and cry because I saw myself in him. I have overcome.





**“Te pareces tanto a mi.” –
Juan Gabriel**

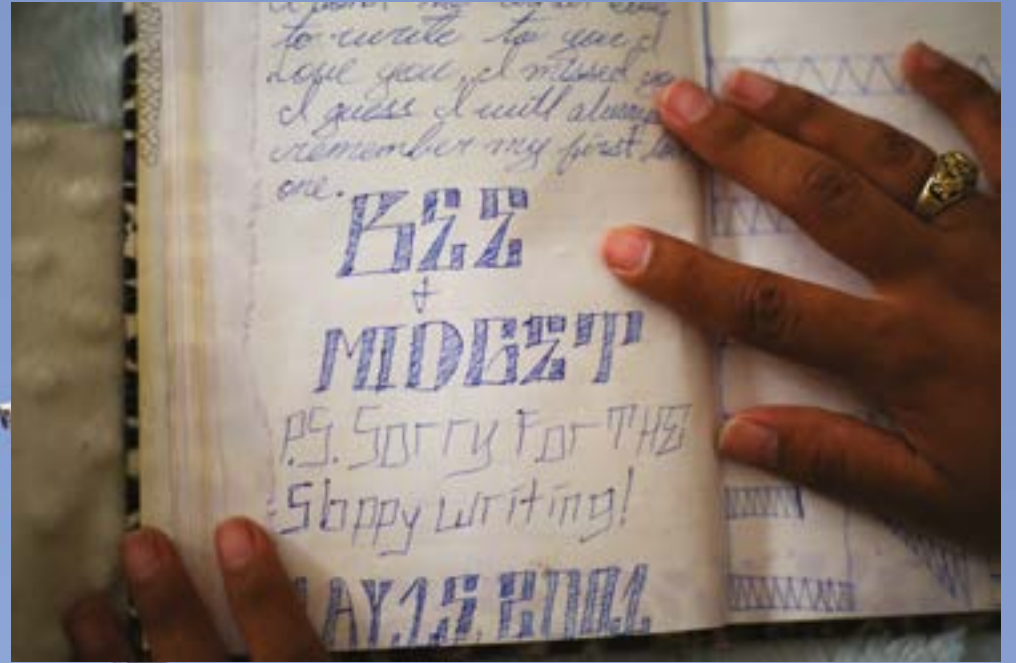
Si la vida
te da limones



haz



Limónada



Maggie

Whittier, CA
x
Compton, CA

When I was growing up I was a little gangster girl. My boyfriend was from a gang called barrio 13. He got killed in a driveby. I was in school when it happened. I always had that fear, everyone in the hood has that fear that you will be at the wrong place at the wrong time. Just because certain people live a certain lifestyle doesn't mean your child will live that same lifestyle. I've always been a "C" student but I don't give up. I keep it pushing. Putting yourself on a pedestal. I think that gives me confidence. I don't have a filter, I speak my mind. I've never let no one, especially guys mistreat me or put me down. When I was in elementary some boy tried to kiss me. I got mad and banged his head on the monkey bars.



INK MIDGET



MIB

this journal
belongs to:

Maggie Arciniega
AKA "Midget"
Don't be Noob!
yes you,

W

XXXXXX

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Always & forever 73





femme frontera

Arlene Mejorado





**"Femme is a queer
identity. Femme is
not synonym for
femininity. Femme
breaks binaries.
Femme is intentional.
Femme is political.
Femme is queer."
– brownmija**

A large, multi-stemmed cholla cactus (Cylindropuntia) dominates the foreground and middle ground of the image. The cactus has numerous vertical, segmented stems that are light brown and textured. The background shows a vast, open desert landscape under a pale, overcast sky. The overall scene is captured in a soft, slightly desaturated light, giving it a serene and somewhat ethereal quality. The text 'femme frontera' is centered over the cactus in a bold, orange, gothic-style font.

**femme
frontera**