

Conclusion

The Opposite of Banishment Is Care

Today, U.S. deportation has merged with ICE detention and prison. Together, they assault men's humanity. Consider Ángel Morales. U.S. police marked Ángel worthy of cages, like so many Latino men. He spent nearly two years in prison and ICE detention. The time behind bars left him "psychologically destroyed." When Ángel landed in Mexico, he struggled to live outside the walls of an institution, let alone build a new life. He fought for a place to call home.

While the U.S. government frames immigration detention and removal as administrative, this book shows how they punish men. As I underscore throughout, deportation is now a multi-institutional and multinational system. That system begins with policing and arrest, followed by ICE detention and sometimes prison. If deported men try to return to their families in the U.S., they are often caught by border patrol and punished again. In Mexico, cartels and police extend the brutality of the U.S. carceral state, especially near the border.¹

This kind of system is new. For most of the twentieth century, U.S. enforcement worked like South African apartheid, using legal exclusion and deportation to make migrant workers exploitable. Banishment is different. In addition to using immigration control to cheapen the labor of Mexican men, banishment aims to erase them. Its targets are not would-be workers so much as people the U.S. economy no longer needs. It has rendered a civil violation—undocumented migration—worthy of social death.

Banishment takes effect not just by beating men into submission (quite literally) but also by assaulting their relationships, self-confidence, and masculine pride. By eroding men's social ties, contemporary immigration enforcement breaks the association between hometown and "home," and thus the binary here-there relationships often (mis)attributed to Mexican migrants. Instead, it shunts men into "elsewheres" in Mexico's cities or northern border, where many of them live in limbo. There, they are haunted by isolation and the specter of violence and death.

On one thing, Ángel and our other 185 interviewees were insistently clear: banishment is *emotional*. Arrests, prison cells, removal, border apprehensions, and Mexican state violence take their toll through the ways they make people *feel*. Banishment *feels* like getting told, from childhood, that you are a criminal. It *feels* like getting ripped from your children at night with no chance to say goodbye. It *feels* like being locked up and beaten, like a dog. It *feels* like losing your sense of time and your place in the world. It *feels* like scraping by in Mexico, while all you've ever worked for is in the United States. For many, it *feels* like losing your emotional core and your place as a man, even after your body is "free." For some, it feels like ending up dead.²

I would not have seen these feelings so clearly without the 31 students who did interviews for this book. As sociologist Victor Rios points out in his 2015 essay "Decolonizing White Space in Ethnography," scholars often default to framing research on oppressed groups as a project of "normalizing" an unfamiliar "other."³ What Rios calls "white ethnography" depicts the subjects of research as strange—or somehow in need of "humanization." Here, in contrast, students spoke openly of their own grief. They drew our shared focus to respondents' trauma and loneliness. Often, participants felt to students like family. Sometimes they *were* family, as in the case of Camila and her brother Ever. As a result, students *already* saw men we spoke with as deeply human.

From this standpoint, students insisted that our work interrogate and *de-normalize* the brutality of U.S. policing, incarceration, and immigration enforcement. They reminded me that, as Rios puts it, "Ethnography should not be about making the strange familiar; it should be about making the familiar strange."⁴ I wish that students had been able to work on writing the book as well. By the time I started drafting its chapters, they had graduated, taken jobs, or gone on to their own dissertations. In putting together the research we gathered, I tried to honor their lead and unsettle a process that most Americans take for granted: the militarization and masculinization of deportation from the United States.

The stories men told us—and their examples of innovation—offer hints at how to advocate for deportees and change this inhumane system. Though carceral deportation is notably brutal, it also has variations. Men's ability to reclaim their masculinity, pride, and well-being differed depending on how badly their lives were eroded by U.S. prison and on where they resettled in Mexico. Getting stuck at the border often ensured more intense isolation, while moving to Mexico City opened options for building community and reframing the terms of exile.

Ángel, for instance, joined an innovative, binational organization in Mexico City, where he found purpose. Despite his disorientation, the group gave him community and a "place" in the world. Instead of punishment, it gave him care. Such care—like the compassion my students extended to Ángel and other men—offers a path beyond banishment.

BANISHMENT AS GLOBAL PROJECT

This book focused on Mexicans. What might the findings mean for other deported migrants and marginal men? On one hand, the people we interviewed are a tiny slice of humanity: Mexican-born men (and 15 women) who came to the U.S. in the 1990s and 2000s and endured a punitive deportation regime in the 2010s. One might argue that their stories overrepresent the experience and impacts of U.S. detention and prison. Yet, punishment and policing have grown increasingly integrated into migration control all over the world. Many rich countries now lock up and expel racialized, economically “redundant” migrants, especially men.

The removal of Mexican men from the United States is part of a global pattern. In addition to Mexicans, the U.S. detains, imprisons, and deportes hundreds of thousands of migrants from all over the world each year, with astonishing brutality. Using violence to wipe out Latino, Muslim, Asian, and Afro-descendent men is not an idiosyncrasy of the open white supremacy of Donald Trump or others like him. Rather, scapegoating immigrants, branding them as racialized “outsiders” or “criminals” and violently confining and excluding them is a core and long-standing tactic of Western nationhood.⁵ Barack Obama and Joe Biden, for instance, embraced similar caging to Trump, framing immigrant men as “felons” and deporting more people than any Republican president has to date.

Banishment also finds global precedent in the forced relocation of oppressed and racialized people to their ascribed homelands, as of Pakistanis after the partition of India, of Haitians from the Dominican Republic, or of the Irish from England after the border was drawn. Yet I argue that banishment has grown especially prominent in the present moment, as low-wage (masculine) jobs dwindle globally under late neoliberal capitalism. In recent years, not just the U.S. and European countries but also places like the Dominican Republic, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Mexico itself have expelled hundreds of thousands of migrants, including recognized refugees, long-term residents, and workers.⁶ Frequently, these countries lock people up and then send them back into contexts of violence and insecurity. For instance, Saudi Arabia’s crackdowns on Yemeni workers “return” them to a brutal civil war. Angola has forced hundreds of thousands of migrants back to the Democratic Republic of Congo, where they face extortion, arbitrary detention, and severe deprivation.⁷ Indeed, Mexico now has a vast, militarized immigration enforcement apparatus and a network of detention facilities, aimed primarily at Central Americans. While practices vary, most entail imprisonment and state violence.

Studying deportation can also shed light on the racial banishment occurring *inside* the United States and other rich nations. As scholars like Ananya Roy and Katherine Beckett and Steve Herbert reveal, the U.S. *also* “removes” its own citizens, zoning poor Black and Brown people out of public spaces, enhancing the power of police to monitor and arrest them, and thus “banishing” such people

from public life.⁸ While most scholars analyze deportation under the rubric of immigration enforcement, I consider it *part of* the system of mass incarceration and urban removal.⁹ In practice, these “regimes of disappearance” work in parallel *and* in tandem to target racialized men and expel them from public space. Both internal and external banishment intensify policing and punishment against people of color in the name of “security” and public safety. They use racial othering to mark people physically and morally inferior, often through notions of “criminality.”¹⁰ For the people they target, both systems trigger protracted psychological, social, and economic struggles.¹¹ Ultimately, both subordinate people of color to premature death.¹²

My analysis highlights how the mechanism of banishment—whether external (as in deportation) or internal (as in urban removal)—is emotional, psychological, and social. By integrating multiple institutions of state violence, carceral deportation—and other modes of banishment—subject people not only to premature *physical* death but also to *social* death. They eat at men’s ties to the world. Men return to their places of origin changed by the impacts of being locked up. One might assume that prisoners released in the United States face different hurdles. But this study reveals how incarceration undermines men’s relationships and sense of themselves. Under internal racial banishment, U.S. ex-prisoners are likely to feel alienated as well.

The impacts of punishment also extend beyond the borders of deporting nations.¹³ Today, the U.S. has converted much of Mexico into a “buffer” state, which aims to block people (and goods) from reaching the United States from the south and must absorb those forced to return from the north.¹⁴ As Mexican cities and border regions grapple with flows of internally displaced people, asylum seekers from Central America (and elsewhere), and deportees from the U.S., the Mexican government has increasingly used police and military violence to regulate migrants. Deportees are also convenient scapegoats for police to legitimate their own, ongoing role. At the same time, U.S. border militarization fuels cartel violence, creating profit motives for moving people and drugs. While Mexico is paradigmatic of this buffering, similar patterns are playing out in countries like Turkey, Greece, Poland, and Belarus, among others, that also lie “in between” the Global North and the Global South. In such places, transnational deportation regimes leave displaced and racialized people vulnerable to violence.

THE STATE AND EXCLUDED MEN

Banishment is not just racialized; it is also deeply gendered. U.S. deportation exemplifies a trend in which states shunt racialized *men*—already cast off by capitalism—to the margins of human dignity. Feminist scholars have long examined the gendered power of states over *women*, especially the marginalized.¹⁵ Likewise, studies of gender and migration have drawn attention to the feminization of

migrant labor and the disadvantages facing immigrant women.¹⁶ Yet, researchers and the public tend to presume that men benefit from capitalism, hegemonic masculinity, and state power.

A new wave of scholars has started to question the marginalization of men, especially in relation to capitalism. Following Raewyn Connell, most scholars define hegemonic masculinity as the normative, most honored way of being a man (currently conceived in most countries as a breadwinning family patriarch).¹⁷ Sociologists like Jordanna Matlon, Lynne Haney, and Raka Ray note that this version of masculinity clashes with the reality of mass unemployment in many parts of the world.¹⁸ As James Ferguson argues, full employment is no longer possible.¹⁹ Men cannot realize the breadwinner ideal. The result is a “crisis” of masculinity, especially for Black and Brown men.²⁰ Disconnected from productive labor in the formal economy and struggling to build families, these men must redefine and reclaim their manhood in relation to capitalism, women, and other men.²¹

In this book, I turn this lens to the state, to ask how governments *use* ideas about masculinity to control certain men. To legitimate state violence against migrants, institutions like police, ICE, prisons, and border enforcement leverage multiple, controlling images of masculinity. On one hand, these institutions hold men to an unattainable ideal of a breadwinning patriarch.²² On the other hand, states lean heavily on an opposing image for exculpation: the “Latino threat.” That is, they depict deportees—and other racially and economically marginalized men—as potential terrorists, gangsters, and violent criminal threats, worthy of spectacular state force.²³ U.S. politicians frame such men as “hardened criminals” and threats to the “good order,” who are too “lazy” to work in the formal economy and in need of swift, corrective control.²⁴ After deportation, the Mexican state and criminal organizations target the very same men, based on their supposedly “ingrained” criminal character.

Across nations, powerful men (and women) also frame Black, Brown, and other racialized men as threats. States scapegoat such men for social ills, lock them up, and throw them out. After the jobs are gone, the state comes to punish—indeed, erase—those who cannot find work. That is, as historian and feminist theorist Joan Scott argues, politics “gets enacted on the field of gender.” States manipulate public “common sense” about gender difference to construct and consolidate power and “to articulate the rules of social relationships or construct the meaning of experience.”²⁵

Scholars have also begun to consider how men *respond* to emasculation. Many studies show that they find novel ways to reassert masculinity.²⁶ For instance, exclusion can lead men to violence, weapons, sex, or sexual violence as markers of manhood (some of which echo here in this book).²⁷ In other cases, scholars argue, men become complicit in neoliberal capitalism. That is, they respond to the inaccessibility of the breadwinning ideal through consumption and entrepreneurial aspirations—though the latter may never fully be realized.²⁸ Here, to refuse

the emasculation of being deported, some respondents adopted business/worker identities, and others were drawn to hypermasculine drug cartels. At times, however, men also redefined masculinity as emotional and fraternal, defying the terms of the institutions that oppressed them.²⁹ Indeed, subordinated men have long valued expressing feelings and love in ways that defy the “macho” stereotypes cast upon them by academics and other elites.³⁰ For instance, men like the members of *Deportados Unidos en la Lucha* found new masculinities in mutual aid, humor, and solidarity toward one another. As one member put it, “organizing . . . is like healing a broken heart.”

For men, state violence is powerful partly *because* it degrades their manhood—their ability to be breadwinners and patriarchs, as well as (less visibly) their ability to give love and care. Banishment leaves men in a social vacuum. In the process, it renders them even more disposable.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF IMMIGRANT LIMBO

Contemporary deportation also challenges the frameworks that scholars typically use to understand immigrants. For one, this system is multi-institutional. It combines removal with incarceration and detention.³¹ Therefore, understanding deportation requires examining prisons and policing as fundamental parts of the U.S. immigration and border enforcement regimes.³²

Geographically, banishment also severs the dualism often ascribed to migration: between sending and receiving sites, home and away. For most deportees, one's birthplace is no longer “home.” Rather, returned migrants are often excluded from their places of origin or labeled “delinquents.” As scholars like Shahram Khosravi and Lisa Malkki point out, the assumption that returning to Mexico entails “reintegration” naturalizes the idea that deported men were “integrated” in rural Mexico to begin with—or can be again.³³ A focus on reintegration also individualizes the process of return, obscuring the painful impacts of U.S. institutions. By imposing trauma and severing relationships, contemporary deportation leaves men disconnected. Many are uncertain whether to risk death or arrest by crossing the U.S. border again. Thus, banishment extends the limbo of living without papers in the United States.³⁴ By leaving people existentially displaced, it makes reintegration almost impossible.

Instead, men tend to end up in places and among people they do not know. Unable to return to either the U.S. or their hometowns, deportees get stuck in liminal spaces, such as unfamiliar cities and/or border regions. At the border especially, the U.S. funds both its own enforcement and Mexican military violence against would-be crossers or criminals. The Mexican state and cartels extend the stigma and brutality of U.S. policing and prisons across the border, creating a transnational landscape of violent regulation.

Imprisonment also “sorts” men into different spaces in Mexico. Where they go varies with time and the tenor of their histories in the U.S. Those most debased by U.S. prison tend to feel most precarious back in Mexico. Upon release at the border, they often seem emotionally “broken.” They have fewer social contacts than other deportees. They may not know where else to go. Their histories in U.S. prisons and gangs makes them prime targets for both police and cartels. Some end up using drugs or just “disappear.” Others reclaim standing and manhood by joining in organized crime.

By contrast, men who endure less brutality in U.S. prison or detention emerge with more self-esteem and often more tools to seek out favorable urban locations (especially Mexico City). While they, too, are released at the border, they use English, personal contacts, and internet fluency to find jobs and peers in safer locales. There, they slowly build community and new senses of self—drawing on their binational experiences and bilingual skills. In big cities, they are more likely to forge transformative new groups and organizations that opt out of the damaging loop—indeed, the prison—of punishment and crime.

THE LEGACIES OF DEPORTATION

The geopolitical impacts of banishment do not end with removal. From a U.S. government standpoint, deportation allows the United States to wash its hands of “criminal” men. On the surface, they become “Mexico’s problem.” In practice, however, deportees do not disappear. Nor do their impacts on the United States.

On the contrary, U.S. policing, incarceration, deportation, and border militarization fuel the very crises they claim to be solving.³⁵ After spending time in U.S. prisons and detention facilities, deportees feel devastated. They grow accustomed to violence. They lose emotional support. Then, they get released in places where they are vulnerable to attacks by Mexican cartels and police—caught between the iron fists of Mexico and the United States.

For some, participating in organized crime can fill the financial gap left by exclusion from wage-earning jobs. Gangs and cartels can also assuage the emotional and psychological pain of family loss and U.S. and Mexican state abuse. Engaging in violence offers one way to claim power. Yet it also feeds the public stereotypes that legitimate such men’s imprisonment and deportation—the media and political stories about the “risks” of “violent Brown men.” In these stories, violence comes *from* Mexican men, instead of from U.S. (and Mexican) institutions. Blaming violence on Mexico or Mexicans obscures the role of the U.S. state and the ways it subjects men to abuses and leaves them at the border to join cartels—and sometimes to die.³⁶

U.S. imprisonment and deportation may also fuel more migration. For one, most deportees hope to return to their families north of the border. In addition,

the growth of Mexican cartels—partially spurred by the integration of deportees—is driving ever more people to flee Mexico and seek asylum in the U.S.³⁷ Most seek escape from organized crime. Echoing a process that has been occurring in Central America for more than two decades, the U.S. “war on drugs” has combined with deportation and the militarization of Mexico to drive Mexican refugees north.

In the U.S. today, both organized crime and migration are objects of moral panic: exaggerated fears that a person or group threatens the values and interests of the United States.³⁸ The more cartels expand, and the more desperate people seek to enter the U.S., the more intense the U.S. obsession with walls and border “security.”³⁹ In the name of suppressing “Latino male violence,” the U.S. and Mexico intensify the same policing, border enforcement, prison sentences, and violent repression that fuel insecurity in Mexico.

Deportation also harms family members who stay in the United States. Most deported men leave wives, children, parents, or siblings north of the border. Studies of immigrant families make clear that men’s removal imposes incredible costs on those who remain—including economic struggles, heartbreak, and fear. As detailed in chapter 1, the impacts can span generations, leaving deportees’ children vulnerable to policing and criminalization themselves. Deporting one “bad hombre” may thus be the start of a multigenerational cycle that leaves U.S. citizen children and loved ones vulnerable *inside* the U.S. as well.⁴⁰

STEPS TOWARD TRANSFORMATION

Policymakers often accept deportation as a necessary practice of governance. When criticized, they call for tweaks to U.S. enforcement. Some even suggest *harsher* treatment, as a tool to deter reentry or more migration. Others insist that *Mexico* must do better at reintegrating deportees. For instance, some advocates argue that the Mexican government should take more responsibility for protecting and providing aid to repatriated migrants—a role currently played primarily by NGOs and the Catholic Church.⁴¹ Rarely do policymakers consider how difficult reintegration can be when a person has been stripped of his family, home, manhood, and even his sense of self. Nor do they think about reforming the underlying, institutional causes of this sense of loss.

Scholars and journalists propose more immediate measures to lighten the pain of removal. These calls begin with disentangling, reforming, and even dismantling the five arms of carceral deportation: policing, detention, incarceration, border militarization, and Mexican state abuse. These are critical steps toward change. For instance, sensible reformers demand an end to the arbitrary and pretextual arrests of Latino men and boys, especially minors under 18. They also call for eliminating cooperation between police departments and ICE, which funnel men from arrest into deportation.⁴² They propose simple pathways to legalization, especially for

childhood arrivals to the U.S. Advocates have also fought for constraints on ICE detention, including time limits and greater sanctions against verbal and physical abuse. They push for universal legal representation for migrants—as has begun to take place in cities like Santa Ana, California—and judicial discretion to halt deportation.⁴³

Going further, reformers demand the U.S. end excessive sentencing, especially for drug crimes and reentry, and reduce the list of offenses that trigger a deportation. They argue that people who have served full sentences or completed community service should not be removed.⁴⁴ There are also proposals to extend sentencing reforms to immigration cases, end the time-bound bans on deportee visits to the U.S., and reduce the penalties for reentry, which disproportionately affect parents due to their high propensity for recrossing the border.⁴⁵

These proposals offer important, concrete alternatives. They would keep more men with their families and significantly lessen deportees' pain. But they are not enough. They leave intact much of the emotional debasement and dehumanization that are fundamental to banishment. Instead, as deported men insisted to me and my students, confinement itself must be brought to an end. It is time to eliminate immigration detention and overhaul U.S. imprisonment. Men's stories also hint at a much-needed shift in the terms of institutional change: not only must the U.S. end the violence of banishment, but also, the U.S. and Mexico must increasingly practice care. The case for abolition is both moral and geopolitical.

CARE IN A WORLD OF DISPLACEMENT

Migration is not going away. By all accounts, the twenty-first century will be an era of mass displacement. Climate devastation and the economic and political crises that follow portend the uprooting of unprecedented numbers of people. The concentration of refugees at the U.S.-Mexico border is a harbinger of the systemic destabilization and forced migration to come.

As economic insecurity, climate crisis, and conflict drive up migration, rich-country policymakers have used removals to cast out unwanted "others" whom they frame as threats.⁴⁶ Think of the anti-immigrant fervor and hypermilitarization happening in the United States. These trends suggest that the rich world is headed into a dystopian future, in which wealthy nations respond to the uncertainties of climate change and large-scale migration with racial animosity and state-sponsored violence. Indeed, the U.S. Department of Defense has been on the cutting edge of anticipating—and arming the United States against—widespread migration driven by climate disaster. To insulate rich countries from insecurity, it is plausible that governments like the United States will further scapegoat marginalized groups (especially men) and even seek their extermination. The U.S. may also export its punitive stance into other places, funding and orchestrating the expansion of U.S. techniques of control. "Buffer" countries like Mexico will play

a key role in this process—extending U.S. militarization to even more vulnerable people. As Achille Mbembe writes, it seems to be “a time when the sword, now again, resolves all.”⁴⁷

In the face of global displacement, state violence, and gestures toward outright erasure, how might one imagine flourishing for all people, especially men like Ángel? What might it mean to ground immigration policies in migrants’ lived experiences—including their strategies of agency and struggles to build community? The migrants we interviewed hint at profound transformations—through their feelings, their strivings, their nascent organizations, and, indeed, their words to me and my students.

The stories they told us make it clear that the U.S. must end imprisonment and removal for minor crimes. Laws that punish small violations—and tie them to deportation—strip otherwise regular people from their loved ones, their homes, their jobs, and their well-being. The system is also biased by the racial and gendered stereotypes the government uses to legitimate violence. Deportees are generally not the “bad hombres” they are made out to be. Ending criminalization is also key to halting abuses against communities (and men) of color more broadly.

Decarceration must also extend to immigrants. Calls to abolish ICE and prisons may appear to be leftist slogans. In the face of the open white supremacy of many people in the U.S., they can also feel hopeless. But these ends only sound radical because imprisonment and removal have been so naturalized. In fact, this system is new—just a few decades old, at most. Thirty years ago, crossing the U.S.-Mexico border was not a crime. There were many more legal ways to migrate, and policing, detention, and prison were almost entirely separate from deportation. The U.S. rarely repatriated people who already lived in the United States.

That recent memory offers a model to begin walking back the current dehumanization. So does the movement for decarceration. Already, thanks largely to abolitionist movements, the U.S. has moved to reform its system of mass incarceration. Yet, the country continues to *increase* the imprisonment and detention of immigrants.⁴⁸ As Angela Davis puts it, prisons are obsolete. So is their role in immigration control.⁴⁹

Decriminalization and decarceration must also go hand in hand with demilitarizing the U.S.-Mexico border and reforming policing in Mexico. Legalizing drugs and allowing freer cross-border movement would remove much of the incentive for intensifying criminal activity, especially trafficking. Meanwhile, the Mexican military and police—and their U.S. supporters—must stop adding to the abuses meted out against deportees. Given the part that Mexico plays in extending U.S. state violence, reintegration cannot succeed without demilitarization there.

Change requires the action of regular people as well. As long as the public refuses to see men’s heartbreak, as long as our silence sanctions violence against

them, it will go on. Those who suffer under this system cannot transform it alone. Citizens of the United States must speak out against their country's practices of banishment. Those in Mexico, too, must question police abuse. When we asked men what they'd like to tell readers, they implored people in the U.S. (and Mexico) to take a part in ending their suffering.

Abolition is not just about ending systems of violence; it is also about inventing alternatives and investing in real community and belonging. If the pain of banishment is emotional, so, too, are its solutions. Men heal when they feel included and find spaces of love. In this, their *own* actions signal the changes they need.

Migrants' *existing* practices, feelings, and strivings illustrate what they are seeking. Regardless of their level of isolation or their strategies for survival, men we spoke with sought to reclaim connection and care. Losing loved ones was a critical source of their pain. While their options were constrained in varying ways, their efforts at agency all grasped at belonging and home. Deportados Unidos en la Lucha and ODA offer powerful examples. Such deportee-led organizations redefined the meaning of home outside of—and against—the confines of nation-states. They created multivalent public spaces and “crossed borders” within and across countries and identities. They were creative. In the face of systems that tried to destroy their feelings and ties to the people they loved, they relentlessly sought out care.

Sometimes, as detailed in chapter 6, migrants also sought to reclaim their masculinity, breadwinner status, physical power, and even control over violence. Some did this by aspirational entrepreneurship. Others did it by refusing to follow laws, or by working under cartels. These *reactive* versions of masculinity can be twisted against deportees and even feed further abuse. Instead, it is important to heed men's reactions as calls for change. Even if “polite” publics find such projects unpalatable, they reveal men's need for belonging and dignity.

What would an immigration system that refuses banishment look like? As a first step, the U.S. government would end detention, imprisonment, and removal, building on the ongoing movement against mass incarceration. It would reduce deportation to (or below) 1980s levels. Above all, it would keep men with their families—their irreplaceable sources of love. The government would also invest in the projects deported men and women are already building—just as Mexico invested in Deportados Unidos en La Lucha, enabling migrants to claim community and a sense of themselves. Such a system would give marginalized men recognition and cultural space, including for gangs. Indeed, as David Brotherton notes, some countries in Europe have succeeded in legally recognizing gangs as cultural associations, in lieu of punishing them.⁵⁰ A transformed system would also let men retell the stories of their exclusion, on their own terms. In this book, in our own tiny way, my students and I hoped to give men such a space. They often responded with gratitude and with pride.

Ending banishment is a herculean task, but it is not impossible. A new system begins with replacing each institution of punishment with spaces of recognition and rights. In lieu of carceral deportation, both Mexico and the U.S. must invest in support for men. Governments must treat them as whole, emotional human beings. If we start from care instead of erasure, we might begin to see a triumph of love over social death.