

Viendo La Migración Desde el Sur de La Frontera

Por Luis Melodelgado y Nora Haenn

Gracias a una beca Fulbright-García Robles, estamos desde agosto 2009 en el Ayuntamiento de Calakmul, estado de Campeche, estudiando el efecto de la migración a los Estados Unidos en México. En este municipio rural de 24.000 habitantes los turistas pueden apreciar las ruinas Maya y la estupenda Selva Tropical. Nosotros estamos entrevistando a los mexicanos que han viajado a los EE.UU., a aquellos que contemplan viajar, y a quienes no interesa la idea, pero cuyas vidas terminan siendo igualmente afectadas. Brevemente queremos comentar lo que pasa cuando este último grupo trata de entender y acomodarse al fenómeno de las remesas. Todo esto en un clima económico de perenne inseguridad financiera.

Esta inseguridad, caracterizada por la escasez de empleos y la desvalorización de la labor campesina, puede resultar familiar a los lectores.

Igualmente, en Calakmul, los empleos estatales son los más estables; el Ayuntamiento y el Ejercito Nacional son los mayores empleadores locales, ofreciendo en conjunto 600 plazas. La capital de Calakmul, Xpujil, es un pueblo mercantil. Sus pequeñas tiendas familiares aportan otros 300 empleos con un salario típico de US\$10/día. Así, el ayuntamiento y el comercio atienden la población campesina, 80% de la cual recibe asistencia social.

Así, no resulta sorprendente que la gente salga al



Oficina de Telegrafos en Xpujil lugar donde las familias cobran sus remesas

FOTO DE NORA HAENN

The Xpujil telegraph office where migrant families receive their money.

PHOTO BY NORA HAENN

exterior a trabajar. Aproximadamente el 1% de la población local vive en "el Norte." Estos emigrantes son por lo general hombres de 20-30 años de edad. Emigrar ha resultado particularmente atractivo para la población indígena, cuyo estatus social les garantiza aún menores posibilidades de conseguir empleos en el área.

Estos emigrantes envían anualmente de 2 a 5 millones de dólares, y al observar estos dineros fluir a manos de familias tradicionalmente marginadas,

quienes no desean emigrar opinan severamente sobre la forma cómo ese capital debería ser utilizado: comprar ganado, abrir una tienda o ahorrarlo. Aparte del asunto de si tales estrategias pueden—o no—serles viables a las familias de los emigrantes, notamos una característica sobresaliente en ellas: la inversión apropiada equivale a la independencia económica. Con la ganadería, el comercio al detal y el ahorro, las familias favorecidas vivirían modestamente y dejarían de depender de la inestable economía local. Por causa de este mismo ideal, sin embargo, cuando las familias favorecidas quieren darse algún gusto deben arriesgar la censura de sus vecinos, quienes consideran un despilfarro las ropas nuevas o las despensas repletas.

Una pareja de suegros llegó al punto de aconsejar a su yerno que no enviara dinero; ellos apoyarían a su esposa e hijos. Esta alternativa permitió al emigrante maximizar sus ahorros. Después de 2-1/2 años en el

Norte, compró un rancho ganadero, y diversificó adquiriendo un taxi. Esta solución, no obstante, es posible en muy pocos casos. La mayoría de familias dependen de las remesas internacionales para sobrevivir.

Luis y Nora son residentes de Chatham County. Los intereses de Luis son la escritura y el teatro. Nora enseña antropología con énfasis en asuntos mexicanos en NCSU.

MIGRATION

continued from page 1.

socially marginal families have strong ideas about how it should be spent. Migrant families should buy cattle, open a shop, or commit to savings. Setting aside whether these goals are achievable, we noticed the opinions of non-migrants share a common theme. People say the appropriate use of remittances is to establish economic independence.

Cattle ranching, shop keeping, and savings might allow a family to live modestly without having to depend on the unreliable local economy. Given this ideal, just when migrant families want to indulge a little, they risk the censure of neighbors who view clothes and full cupboards as wasteful spending.

One couple even instructed their migrant son-in-law not to send money home. His wife and children would be supported by the extended family. As a result, the migrant was able to maximize his savings.

After two-and-a-half years in the states, he bought a ranch, stocked it with cattle, and diversified by purchasing a taxi. Given how most families rely on remittances to make daily ends meet, however, this ideal is attainable for relatively few people.

Luis and Nora are Chatham residents. Luis is a translator with interests in theater and writing. Nora teaches the anthropology of Mexico at NCSU. Email: wordxchange@yahoo.com

CHATHAM COUNTY LINE RACK LOCATIONS

- BEAR CREEK Elois Restaurant ■ BONLEE Old Place Restaurant ■ CARRBORO IFC, Open Eye Café, Cliff's Meat Market, Weaver Street Market, Weaver Street Realty, Torrero's/Carrboro Plaza, Carrboro Family Medicine, Carrboro Family Pharmacy, Elmo's Diner, N.C. Crafts Gallery, Nested, Harris Teeter, Johnny's Sporting Goods, Akai Hana, Jade Palace, Carrboro Post Office, Food Lion Carrboro Plaza, Carrboro Plaza Veterinary Clinic, Looking Glass Cafe ■ CHAPEL HILL Chapel Hill Public Library, Whole Foods, Internationalist Books, Davis Library-UNC, Undergraduate Library-UNC, Wilson Library Southern Collection-UNC, Journalism School-UNC, Weaver Street Market-Southern Village, Harrington Bank-Southern Village, Chapel Hill Children's Clinic-Southern Village, Vita Dolce, UNC Endoscopy Clinic at Meadowmont ■ COLE PARK/CHATHAM CROSSING Lowes Foods, Harris Teeter at Chatham Downs, First Citizens Bank, Briar Chapel Information Center, Frosty's Trading Post (Hamlet Chapel/Jones Ferry), Janet Resnik Gallery ■ FEARRINGTON The Old Granary Café, McIntyre's Books, The Belted Goat, Galloway Ridge, Duke Center for Living ■ GOLDSTON Goldston Public Library ■ GULF J.R Moore and Sons Country Store ■ JORDAN LAKE Governor's Club (Owner's Building), Carolina Meadows Center, Food Lion Governor's Village, Bean and Barrel Governor's Village, Farrell's Store (Lystra/Fearrington), Jordan Lake Business Park, Lake Mart Mobile (U.S. 64, Wilsonville), Wilsonville General Store/Exxon (U.S. 64), Citgo Station (U.S 64/Mt. Gilead), The Preserve ■ MONCURE Jordan Dam Mini Mart (U.S. 1), Ray's Supermarket on (Old U.S. 1), Moncure Community Health Center, Moncure Post Office ■ PITTSBORO BB&T, Cooper Gas Station 15-501 North, Chatham Marketplace, General Store Café, Piggly Wiggly, Pittsboro Memorial Library, Piedmont Biofuels, Ronnie's Quick Stop, Central Carolina Community College, Virlie's Grill, Senior Center, S&T Soda Shoppe, Chatham Arts, Our Neighborhood School Pizzeria, Vespertine, Second Bloom, New Horizons Trading Company, Al's Diner, J. Henry Paint and Hardware, Angelina's Kitchen ■ SILER CITY Courtyard Coffee and Soda, Mina Beana, Central Carolina Community College, City Barber Shop, Sidewalk Cafe, El Vinculo Latino/Hispanic Liaison, Farmers' Alliance Store, Food Lion (U.S. 64 Siler Crossing), Sir Pizza, Best Foods Cafeteria, Piggly Wiggly, Tienda Diana, Wren Library, Paperbacks Plus, Chatham Hospital ■ SILK HOPE Silk Hope Service, Silk Hope Grill

OPINION

continued from page 11.

was granted in 1986, the U. S. murder rate has dropped by 37 percent; forcible rape is down 23 percent; drunk driving fatalities are off by more than a half. We're safer than before these "law breakers" arrived. In state prisons, illegal immigrants make up for less than 5 percent of all inmates. A 2007 report by the Immigration Policy Center indicated that the incarceration rate among young men of all ethnic groups was lower for immigrants, particularly those from Mexico, Salvador and Guatemala. Indeed, in an article in the American Conservative it is pointed out that in the five most heavily Hispanic cities in the U. S., violent crime is 10 percent lower and the homicide rate is 40 percent lower than the national urban average.

The obvious conclusion is that those making the sacrifice of leaving their homes to make a new life in a foreign land, like my grandfather, do not come to break our laws, but rather to make a new life for themselves and their family. The evidence from above indicates the immigrants are enhancing the quality of our lives by being more law abiding than the existing Americans.

Don Lein is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. A Chatham resident, he is involved in a variety of civic organizations.