



*University of Utah*

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH JOURNAL

## **AQUÍ Y ALLÁ: AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**Ivonne Paredes Romero (Dr. Annie Fukushima)**  
**Division of Ethnic Studies**

There are approximately 11.3 million undocumented immigrants in the United States, and it is estimated that 6 million of those are Mexican citizens. As of the 2018 fiscal year, Immigration and Custom Enforcement has deported a total of 141,045 Mexican individuals in comparison to the 128,765 deported in 2017. For many, repatriating as many Mexicans is in the individuals' best interest since they can now better their country of origin. Yet, for the undocumented Mexican that has lived in the United States for a significant number of years 'repatriation' is not the accurate term to use to describe their experiences. Returning, or facing the possibility of returning, to a land that is supposed to recognize them as fully contributing members of society is overshadowed by the realization that it does a superficial job at facilitating their reintegration. By not accepting their foreign education and social capital these individuals are left feeling just as limited and invisible as they did when residing in the United States. Yet, society is barely aware of this continued struggle for recognition because they do not think about the deported or returned individual after the fact.

This oral history project has set out to correct that and ensure that as many voices within this community were heard, for it is just as important to know about those that are no longer present as it is to know the stories of those that still reside within the United States. Therefore, the purpose of this project was to create a bilingual audiovisual installation that would honor the stories and resilience of our Mexican undocumented, DACAmented, and returned/deported communities as they fight for recognition as transnational citizens on both sides of the U.S-Mexico border. The installation materialized into an unapologetically bilingual website that reflects the bicultural identity of the community. The site houses the Aquí y Allá Project a place where the interviews conducted can be heard and read in their original format. Spanish-English translations are also made available for the community to choose the language they wish to interact with the interviews in. However, it is important to note that translations can never be perfect. My hope is that I did them justice and replicated the raw emotions as powerfully in the target language as in the original language.

The individuals interviewed were recruited from both Mexico City and Utah and they all fall on different parts of the immigration spectrum. Yet, their stories are equally powerful as they reflect on the way their immigration statuses as an undocumented young man with a work permit, a DACAmented student, and deported mother shape their sense of visibility in society. All three share the same dream of one day being able to have the mobility and freedom of reuniting with their families and being able to call both the United States and Mexico their homes. They are the reason this project is possible and I very much hope their stories touch the hearts of many. They are the beginning of what I hope becomes an ongoing project to give voice to those that are not fully heard either because they are living in the shadows or no longer present on this side of the border.