

**Of Migration and Other Short Stories...**

***or I Come from the Global South #3***

*Live Performance Text*

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“...the bridge between the self and the other  
does not mean similarity, but difference.  
What connects us is not a bridge, but an abyss.  
The human being is plural: human beings...”

— Octavio Paz



I come from the Global South, where everything is green and humans and animals live together. At least, that's how it was when I still lived there. It's a place where you can hear the sounds of the marimba and the noises of the jungle wake you in the morning. It's a place where the lightning from heavy rain startles you at night.

Red, green, yellow, white, blue and brown.

I was surrounded by tropical and exotic flora and fauna, colourful landscapes between ocean and volcanoes, and sometimes kitsch scenery. This is the place where my ancestors came from.

Chiapas is a state in the south of the country that once belonged to Guatemala. More than 200 years ago, the region chose Mexico. It's the final stop: Mexico.

The dynamics of border migration between Guatemala and Chiapas are the result of a long socio-historical relationship whose origins lie in the creation of the Mexico–Guatemala border, the colonisation of the border region and the expansion of the coffee economy.

Red, green, yellow, white, blue, brown.

However, it has always been a gateway, a corridor for migration and trade. Many different ethnic groups have passed through here, and continue to do so today. Every year, thousands of migrants from all over Central America, as well as people from Cuba, Haiti, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Syria, Afghanistan and Cameroon, cross this border. The journey is very long and dangerous. Along the way, people are robbed, humiliated, abused and subjected to violence by criminal gangs and migration authorities. Women are forced into all kinds of situations, including sexual violence and rape.

In an attempt to survive, migrants unknowingly choose an even more dangerous route through the Darién jungle, located at the border between Colombia and Panama. According to Panamanian authorities, of the roughly half a million people who crossed the Darién last year, more than 300,000 were Venezuelan. Other nationalities frequently seen at these crossings include Haitians, Ecuadorians and

Colombians. Many do not even make it as far as Mexico. Entire families with children embark on this perilous journey.

Red, green, yellow, white, blue, brown.

Those who make it to the border in Chiapas, Mexico, settle there, while others continue on their way. Here, they pause before continuing north to the United States. They are all seeking a better life, fleeing criminal gangs and hardship in their home countries. They want to reach the United States and build a better future for their families.



Migrants – especially women, but also young men – come from countries such as Honduras and El Salvador in Central America, as well as the Caribbean, Ecuador, Venezuela and Colombia. Many arrive alone or with children, fleeing violence and poverty in search of a better life. In doing so, they face all kinds of humiliation and receive little support from

migration authorities. There is also violence from organised crime when crossing Mexico's southern border and within Mexico itself.

Tapachula, the border city where I grew up, has become a brothel where young girls and older women are forced into prostitution.

I grew up surrounded by people from many different cultural backgrounds, including Chinese, Mexican, Lebanese, German and Japanese people, as well as Guatemalans, who all lived together and contributed to the diversity of our society. This has been a great enrichment for me, shaping my identity and fostering an awareness of acceptance and difference.

The face of Chiapas has changed; people from a wide range of ethnicities have made, and continue to make, this place their home. This makes society diverse in every sense.

It smells, sounds and tastes of different colours, aromas and nuances – that is where I come from.

Red, green, yellow, white, blue, brown.

Why shouldn't the 'new' members of society do the same? Why shouldn't they have the right to a better life? Why can we not accept diversity as it is?

This is a humanitarian crisis that does not only concern the Global South, even though I am referring to Mexico's southern border. It is an interplay of factors that also affects the Global North.

I advocate a global, humane migration policy free from fear, discrimination and prejudice.

“Sexual violence in the Darién is becoming increasingly brutal and dehumanizing.” –  
Doctors Without Borders

“...The journey took them through a jungle of corpses and was filled with dangers that terrified the parents, including an obstacle course of corrupt police, smugglers, and immigration checkpoints, which they crossed on foot and by bus. Along the way, they had to beg on the streets, sell lollipops, and take on odd jobs... Yet their dream was simple: ‘I just want to play ball in the park with my children.’”



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