

Walking with the Caravan: Central American Exodus of 2018

Livia Radwanski. Photographer and Filmmaker

In November 2018, alongside EUI Marie Curie Fellow Luigi Achilli, photographer Livia Radwanski arrived in Guadalajara to join the organised caravan of migrants fleeing from systemic violence, poverty and economic instability in the region known as the northern triangle in Central America: Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala.

Migrating to the United States became a constant necessity after the civil wars that ravished the region in the 1980s, leaving a legacy of violence and weak institutions, and making space for armed paramilitary forces and cartels. The migrant caravan that left San Pedro Sula, Honduras on 10 October 2018 sought to find a safe way out. It was a call to everyone that once considered seeking refuge or an opportunity to break out of the cycle of violence and poverty. Similar to other large social mobilisations around the world, it was possible only thanks to personal messages and technology.

The journey presented in this exhibition showcases daily scenes of a group of 1,500 - 2,000 migrants travelling together towards Tijuana. The photographer joined a small LGBTI part of the group of around 50 people. At each stop, they welcomed new members: children, single mothers, pregnant women, underage children travelling alone and anyone that felt vulnerable and wanted to walk along. Compared to the rest, this group moved at a slower pace because of the children, and those that felt a leadership role coordinated it.

This was the second part of the migrants' route — from Guadalajara in the central semi-arid lands of Jalisco state, to Navojoa in the northern hot and dry state of Sonora, crossing through Nayarit and Sinaloa, and it was barely reported on by the media. The photographer traveled with the caravan for three days. When she left, it took the migrants another full week of bus rides and walking to reach Tijuana. On 25 November, she met them again in Tijuana to document the group's arrival and their process of seeking asylum. From information she has gathered, currently the women with children have left the migration facilities in the United States, but all the young men are still in detention camps, waiting for their documents to be processed.

Livia Radwanski is a Brazilian photographer and filmmaker based in Mexico City since 2007. She received a BFA in film at Rhode Island School of Design in the United States in 2006. Her documentary project Mérida90 was published as a book in 2012 by Tumbona Ediciones and it was exhibited in the collective show 'Gentrification is not a Lady's Name' in the Modern Art Museum in Mexico City in 2013. Her long-term work with the sound system community called Sonideros has been exhibited in Mexico, Spain and the UK and has been published in an e-book: Sonideros en las Aceras, Véngase la Gozadera. Her portraits of the Palo Alto community were exhibited in the Mexico Pavillion in the XV Architecture Biennale in Venice 2016: Reporting from the Front.

Her work has been exhibited and published internationally in venues including the Welcome Foundation (UK), Modern Art Museum (Mex), Centro Cultural de España (Mex) and in publications such as: Il Reportage (ITL), Il Internazionale (IT), Piauí Magazine (BRA), Vice Magazine (MEX), Gatopardo Magazine (MEX), Travesías Magazine (MX), Horizontal MX (MEX), Tierra Adentro (MEX).