

Desde la Lejanía – Jasmin on behalf of Florecemos Together comments.

First of all, I want to offer a massive congratulations to Glenda and Tania for bringing this project to life. The way you've compiled these stories shows so much authenticity, heart, and respect. Each of the ten interviewees shares a narrative that is powerful, honest, and deeply rooted in lived experience, Salvadoran stories we don't often get to see or hear.

One of the things I loved most about this e-book is how it captures the authentic language of how Salvadorans speak. The bilingual interviews, the unedited expressions, the natural way people told their stories- at times, it felt like being right there with them. It reminded me of listening to my abuelitos or my parents. That rawness was beautiful, and it finally gives Salvadorans a voice, a story that deserves to be heard.

A moment that really stayed with me was when many of the interviewees described what they felt before leaving El Salvador-the fear, the uncertainty, the immigration interviews, and the heartbreak of leaving behind their families, their homes, and even their professions. Their perceptions of Australia were mixed: some received posters, videos, even images of Skippy, while others received nothing at all. Ultimately, they left because they needed safety.

The stories of leaving entire families behind, with some relatives taking up to 19 years to reunite, were deeply moving. The illustration on page 96 of Salvadorians on the plane hit close to home. That fear of the unknown reminded me of my parents' stories, my siblings being terrified on the plane, and even José Luis trying to stay strong for his children. As a parent now, that moment really touched me.

The hardships in these stories are undeniable. Luis' interview carried so much emotion-the pain of leaving home, the struggle with language, and the reality of starting from nothing. Those that arrived with qualifications, teachers, tradespeople, skilled workers-yet had to rebuild their lives completely. The discrimination they faced, from workplace racism to the remnants of the White Australia Policy, shaped their early years here.

And yet, despite everything, their resilience shines. They worked physically demanding jobs, delivered parcels for cents (underpaid), lived in shared hostels, and still held onto culture through phone cards, cassette tapes, and handwritten letters. It reminded me of my own abuelos making me write letters back home-the same letters that helped me learn Spanish.

What makes this e-book so special is that it's both an easy read and a profoundly powerful one. It captures our voice, our history, and our truth. For Florecemos Together-an organisation mainly made up of second and third-generation Salvadorans-this book resonates deeply. It reminds us why language, identity, and pride matter. It reminds us that their sacrifices were not in vain. The mix of Spanish and English, the illustrations,

the raw voices, it gave me laughter, tears, and above all, an immense sense of pride for that first wave of Salvadorans who came to Australia and everything they sacrificed.