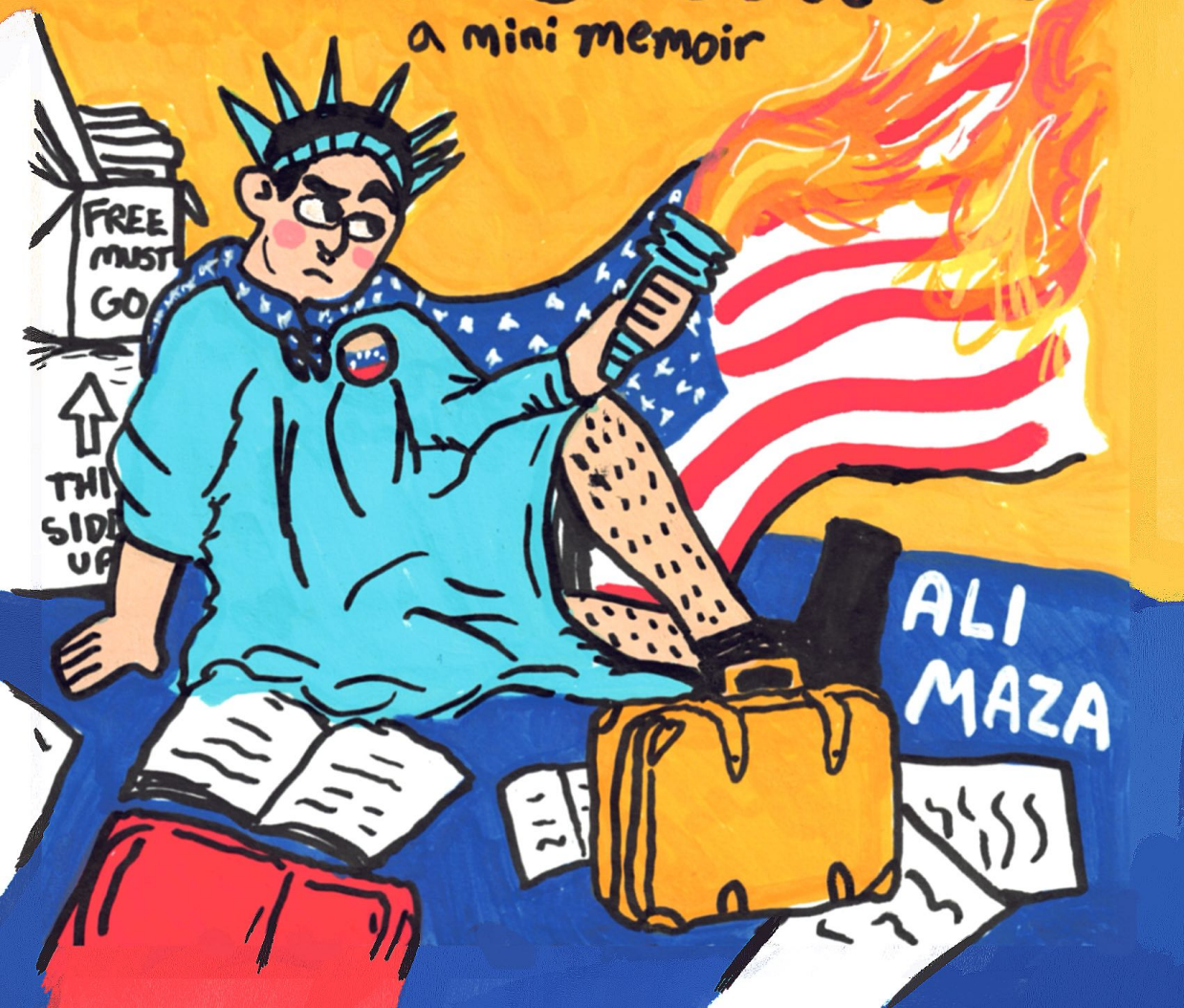


SECOND CHANCE IMMIGRANT

a mini memoir



A BRIEF SUMMARY OF MY JOURNEY



1999

born in Venezuela to
a Venezuelan family



2000

was brought
to the USA
as a baby
(suburban
Tennessee)



2009

we self
depart from
the USA
and return
to Venezuela



2025

i self-depart from the U.S
(again), return to Venezuela,
then immigrate to Spain



2023

i immigrate
to NYC on
a 2 year
"parole
status"





one of my biggest pet peeves is being called a

GRINGA*

*NOUN: Foreigner to Latin America, particularly from the U.S.A

my U.S American accent and the quirks and cultural details of having grown up in suburban Tennessee leads people to call me this.

you're
basically

AMERICAN

that's so funny, I didn't
FEEL very "American"
when I was a 10 year
old kid fleeing the
risk of deportation.

guess we should have just
called YOU to say that to ICE.

but to be fair,
back then—

I pledge allegiance...
...to the FLAG...

— the FIRST time I self deported...

I just felt like a confused kid who
didn't know WHY my home, or what I
THOUGHT was my home, was suddenly
being RIPPED away from me.



...to go back to a country
I didn't really know.

I didn't even know
what the word

UNDOCUMENTED

meant.



I didn't even register "VENEZUELA"
as a real place until we moved
back. Until then my home country
was just a fun fact to drop...



(I was really into Guinness World Records at the time.)

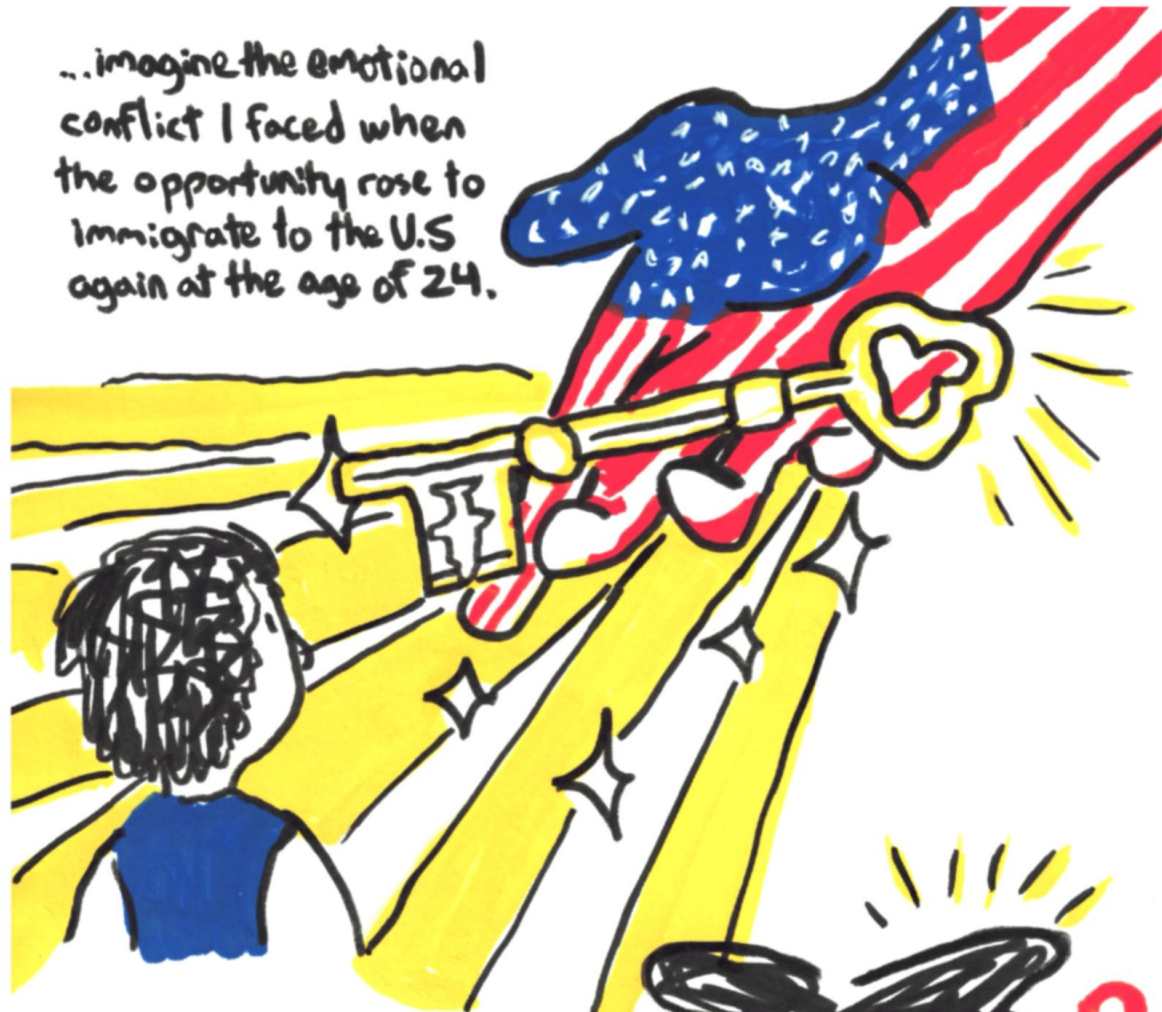
Plucked from the only country I knew, it took me years to realize the U.S was never my home. I feel bad for the child clung to it so hard at first, confused, grieving, angry.



It's not easy to explain how it feels, not in one little zine. One day you're a middle class Suburban Tennessee kid and the next, you're suddenly flown to a crumbling country where you're not accepted by your peers, where the culture shock turns into long term psych damage, where you're forced to suffer through, for over a decade, the consequences of one of the most severe humanitarian crisis in modern times.

Then, after all those years, much after eventually growing to love my country despite the trauma I went through in it...

...imagine the emotional
conflict I faced when
the opportunity rose to
immigrate to the U.S
again at the age of 24.



Under something called
HUMANITARIAN
"PAROLE"

already labeling
Venezuelan
migrants like we're
criminals, ha!



as much RESENTMENT as I had built
towards America and
understanding of its
FUCKED UP society
and systems...

... it was where opportunity lied
for me. I'd have been an idiot to
say no because I was bitter they
Kicked me out when I was a kid.

USCIS

U up?

It's just
two years...
I won't
grow TOO
ATTACHED
this time.

OPTIONAL
BAGGAGE



My first step into repeated heart
break was that I wasn't going
back to the suburbs I grew
up in. This time around,

i was in:

NEW YORK
CITY, BABY!

And New York, that's
a whole other beast...
Maybe I didn't have to
like the U.S., but god,
did I love NYC.



Ironically, the first job I got in the U.S – after a 4 month wait for my work permit – was working at a shelter for incoming migrants.

These nuanced representations of privilege were right in my face every day.



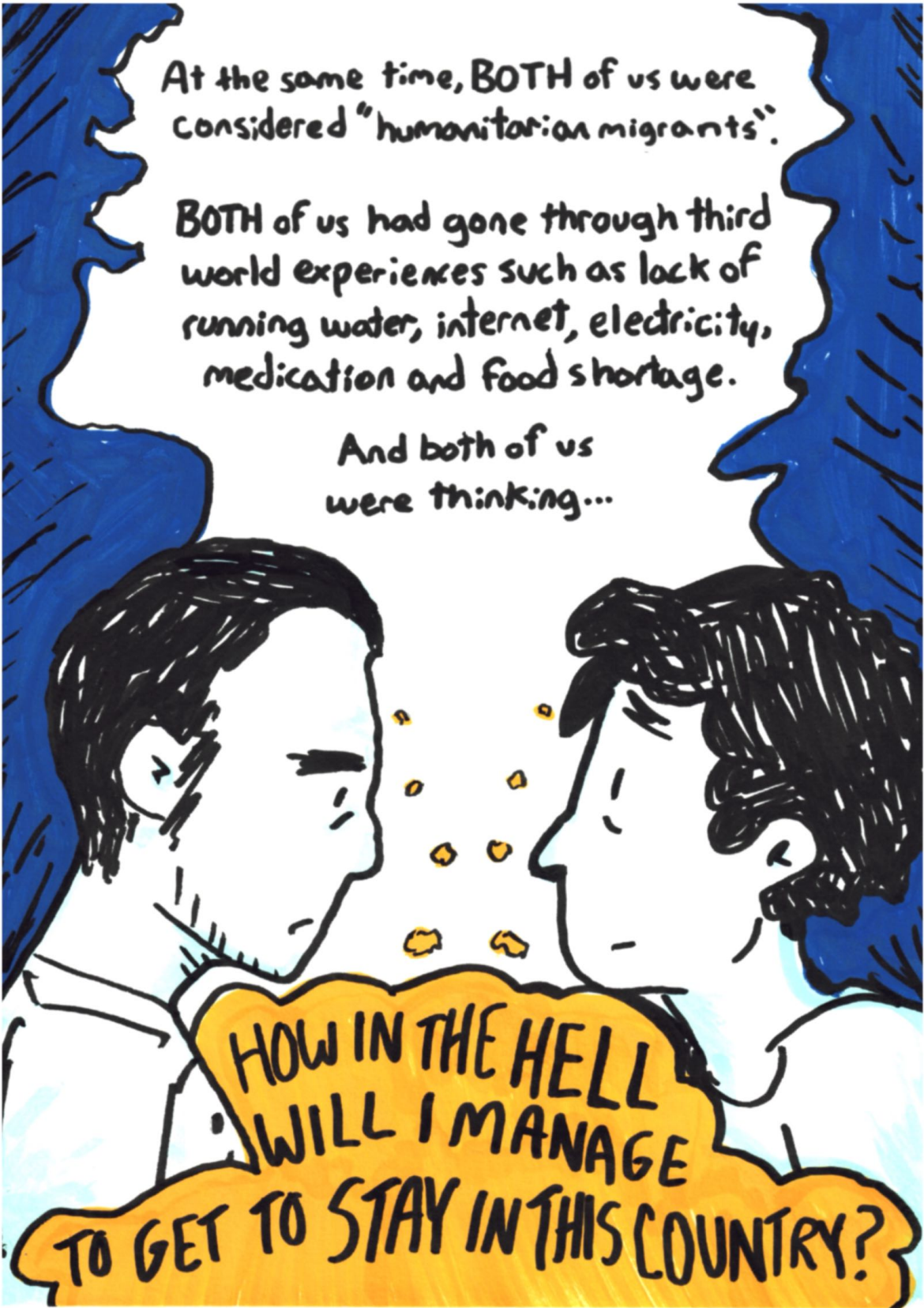
I was a Venezuelan migrant working with Venezuelan migrants...

...but one of us crossed the DARIEN GAP carrying only a trash bag that got confiscated upon arrival, and the other was living a pretty cushy life, in part thanks to financial support.

At the same time, BOTH of us were considered "humanitarian migrants".

BOTH of us had gone through third world experiences such as lack of running water, internet, electricity, medication and food shortage.

And both of us were thinking...



HOW IN THE HELL
WILL I MANAGE
TO GET TO STAY IN THIS COUNTRY?

I wish I knew what happened to all of those migrants I worked with. Around a year after I left the job, Donald Trump's second presidency began. Soon enough, ICE raids would begin to show up all over the news, pounding fear inside the heads of immigrants like me.



And I had
a choice
to make.

Because
my "porole"
was coming
to an end.

They had abandoned the program, and were striking down other avenues for Venezuelan migrants. I desperately searched for options, but there were none...



... except of course, the illegal, and the obvious...



Another case of forced self-deportation. Another case of building a home, and having it taken away from me.

Privilege would have it that I managed to secure a third immigration opportunity to Barcelona, Spain with my new family.



Life feels safer here...



...especially as we watch the news of the political situation in the US unfolding.

I feel grateful and relieved.
I feel so guilty. And, again...
I feel GRIEF.



Because I'm not sure any city will ever make me feel
so at home and part of a community, so natural
and comfortable, as living in NYC felt.



A home for
people like me.

Queers.

Immigrants.

Weirdos.

Artists.

I felt free.

I felt like I belonged.

it wasn't the first home I'd
lost, but it was my favorite.



When I knew I'd be leaving,
I checked some things off my list,
one of them being traveling
to Ellis Island by ferry...

...passing the Statue
of Liberty...



...and visiting the
immigration museum
to read the stories of
waves of immigrants
from a century ago.

I had no interest in taking the tourist-sounding trip before.. I wanted to be a New Yorker: an IMMIGRANT, not a TOURIST.

But once I finally went, on my last opportunity, it was a deeply meaningful experience.



I walked through the exhibitions soaking in the parallels, the irony. How America once treated European Jews and Italians, they now treated Venezuelans and other global south immigrants.

Of course, ICE wasn't even a thing back then. It was created in 2002 following 9/11, barely two years after my family first arrived in the U.S when I was a baby.

And today, it continues to murder and imprison helpless people. I've made this zine available with the goal of encouraging donations towards grassroots efforts that fight ICE and support immigrants. My heart aches daily for the people still going through this.

Going through what I could have gone through,
as a little kid, as an older immigrant,
if I hadn't been lucky enough to escape.





Yet it was also a place painted with **ECONOMIC** and creative **OPPORTUNITY**. It was a place where millions dreamt of going to - with good reason - while many Americans inside disparaged it - again, with good reason.



As this "inbetween", I held both sentiments in my heart.



Being an immigrant in the U.S often felt dehumanizing and humiliating. It was like America was the shackles masquerading as the remedy.

After a lifetime of this sentiment, I've grown sick of handing over so much of my emotional stability to a country that just doesn't want me.

As much as I miss and grieve my life in NYC, if one day things could improve, if I ever had the chance to move back for good... I can't imagine putting myself through that crap a third time.

This zine is my goodbye. It's my closure, after decades of my life trajectory being defined by the U.S rejecting me.

I no longer want to be beaten down by it. I'm just done.

And there's a newfound sense of self-worth in that.
Because the me that survived wants to believe
that any country would be lucky to have me.

The adult me recognizes that modern day border
enforcement is powered by prejudice and inequity.

Today, sometimes, I must still comfort
the traumatized undocumented child in
me who was blindsided by this.

But I also let them know that their
sense of deep loss, from where we
now stand, is shadowed by a
sense of relief and confidence.

Because now I know I
didn't lose my second
chance with America.

America lost its second
chance with me.



A BRIEF VISUAL COLLECTION OF MY EMOTIONAL JOURNEY AS A MIGRANT

My name is Natalie. I am 14 years old. I have one brother and four sisters. I was born in Venezuela, to Venezuelan parents. When I was a young toddler, my family moved to Tennessee. I lived there for almost ten years, before moving back to Venezuela on November 12th, 2009, a Wednesday, at the age of ten. I have now lived here for three years, four months, eighteen days and approximately sixteen hours.

self-deporting during the toughest part of puberty with emerging mental health issues (in part worsened if not caused by the move) led me to obsess over the U.S, or "my real home" as a kid.

new journal intro, 2011

new journal, 2013

by this point I still felt "trapped" — interestingly though, since we left in the middle of the night, I actually got the wrong day of the week written here!

The Basics? I'm Natalie De Los Angeles Maza Guio. I'm 11 years old, 10 on March 22nd. I'm Venezuelan, born there, but I moved to the United States (Hendersonville, Tennessee) when I was 1. I was actually pretty happy until we moved back to Venezuela when I was 10 (November 12th, 2009). Now my life goals are: Get out of Venezuela, go back to Tennessee, and revive my life. I felt sort of died when I moved. Another one of my goals is to back up code..

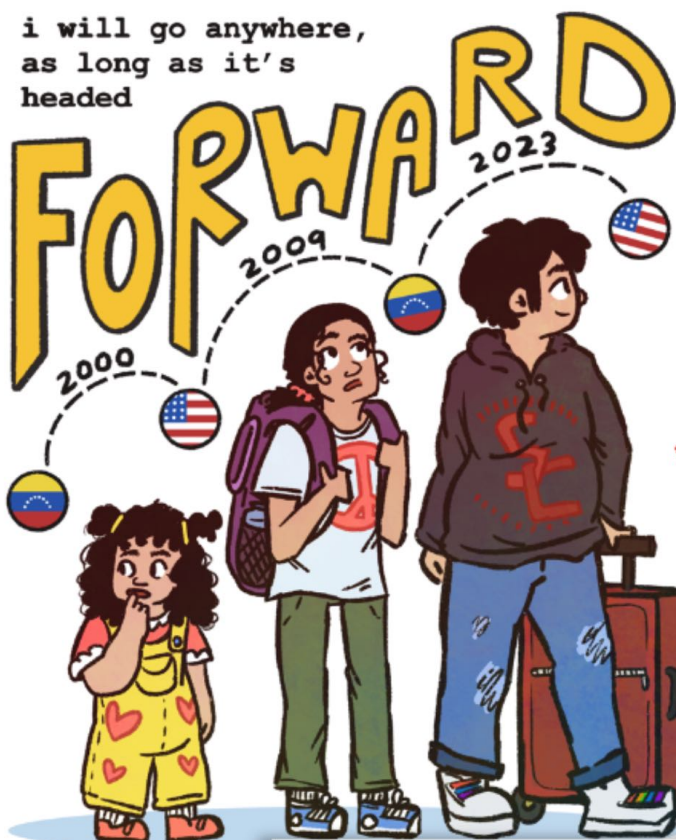
I'm going to the
USA!



sketchbook doodles
late 2022, age 23

my terrified excitement by now was not fueled by the mourning kid in me, as I had long since stopped considering the U.S my "home to return to". it was now simply a foreign country for adult me to discover and get to know

i will go anywhere,
as long as it's
headed



i made this
illustration in
2023 when i
arrived to the
U.S and shared
it with my small
following.

i wanted to
express the
nuance in my
feelings about
this move and
the U.S. itself.
at the same
time, i was
quite hopeful
and grateful.



alidoesitall a few weeks ago I moved (back) to the U.S after living in Venezuela most of my life and it's been an adjustment that i haven't had the chance to announce yet on here. I'm very grateful, excited and still slightly terrified even after almost a month here!

For years now I've considered this to be a country that originally failed me, with a flawed system that scares me in a lot of aspects. At the same time I'm running from a country I grew to love (with much difficulty) in many aspects, and yet i knew I could never thrive there, no opportunity for growth, stability or the quality of life i dreamt for.

i will admit having gone so long living a grim reality where i lacked reliable access to basic resources changed me, but i know seemingly more simple (for some) changes like living in a different place from my mom for the first time, could be just as hard at times.

no place is perfect, but my dream life is not a destination, it is a feeling of contentedness, of hope, stability, and an open future, and i am finally getting the chance to truly chase that on my own terms. thank you for following the silly art I've



it took four months to get my work permit approved. i made this comic when it finally did.

i had settled into a comfortable living situation. i was both healing from things, and overjoyed to be in what was, overall, a much better place than where i came.



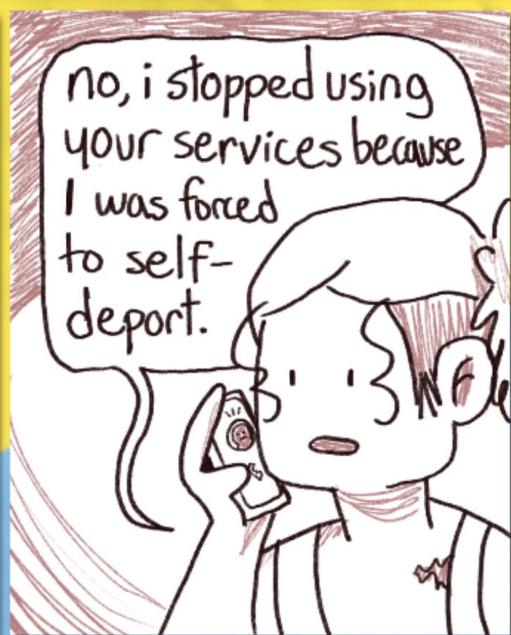




alidoesitall a little inside look to what things are like for this recent U.S immigrant 💖 i am a very sleepy borl who for my first 4 months in this country was legally unable to work not knowing when I'd be able to. It was honestly really stressful and this is a semi accurate depiction of how it went between my friend and I when my work permit approval finally came through recently!

life of an immigrant is very uncertain but things seem to be progressing and i am heading to the next steps in line and feeling great about it. it of course really helps to have people around you who support you in every way they can and I'm very grateful for that 🙏

posted on instagram on june 26, 2023



posted on instagram
on june 11, 2025



posted on instagram
on june 11, 2025

Thank you for reading. This zine is being made available for free digitally and I purposely will make zero profits off it. Whether you've found this through a free digital download or acquired a physical copy, if this is a topic you care about, I gently request you **consider donating towards fighting ICE and protecting immigrants rights.**

I've included a few options below, but you can also look into local grassroots and mutual aid efforts in your city or hometown. Don't underestimate the power of donating even one dollar, or the offer to volunteer or otherwise contribute to the cause non-monetarily, such as by spreading the word amongst your social circles.

Tennessee Immigrant & Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRCC) is a legislative advocacy-based coalition fighting for immigrant rights in the Southeast. They offer direct services and resource referrals for immigrants and refugees and work to advance proactive legislation at the local, state and federal level.

Immigrant Defense Project (IDP) focuses on ending the vilification and mass deportation of immigrants in New York. IDP's work includes supporting directly-impacted communities by providing legal support and strategizing towards expanding rights and transforming the criminal and immigration systems. Through campaigns like ICE Out! NYC, they fight to pass bills that protect immigrant rights.

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant & Refugee Rights (ICIRR) was created in 1986 to promote the rights of immigrants and refugees to full and equal participation in society. They've passed legislation that provided tuition for undocumented students, enabled undocumented drivers to obtain licenses, helped 534,000 people gain access to citizenship, successfully fought the opening of seven for-profit detention centers, and more.

This zine is free to reprint and distribute, but only for the use of raising awareness and fundraising for ICE resistance and immigrant defense movements — never for personal or business profit.

- Ali Maza

Ali Maza (she/they/he) is a queer Venezuelan artist and writer in his late 20s. After spending most of their life in their native country — and self-deporting from the U.S.A twice — she currently lives in Barcelona, Spain with her queer chosen family.



Any profit I get from this zine goes towards supporting immigrants. If read for free, please donate to local anti-ICE efforts if you're able to.

www.alimaza.com