

# **Experiences of the Subsequent Generations**

## ***A Salvadorian-American Conversation***

Adrienne Castellón, Program Associate, IWA  
Margaret Smith, Director of Trauma Healing and Community Resilience, IWA

### **I. Executive Summary**

This pilot project convened a group of subsequent generation Salvadorian-Americans (2<sup>nd</sup> generation and 1<sup>st</sup> generation who came over as children/adolescents) with strong ties to community work to discuss and better understand the experiences and needs of the Salvadorian-American and Salvadorian community in the DC Metropolitan area.

Needs identified by the discussion group sessions included: increase access to opportunity, destigmatize and promote mental health, and strengthen a sense of community and identity.

Participants shared a concern about the poverty narrative that dominates the portrayal of the Salvadorian community and functions as a self-fulfilling prophecy, reducing expectations of what is possible. They underlined the need for a different, positive narrative that highlights accomplishments and presents stories of success.

They also emphasized that the refugee history of the previous generation points to a legacy of inherited trauma that is still being negotiated.

The group brainstormed projects that could make a difference. All agreed that the idea of a cross-generational oral history and art project held particular promise since engaging in artistic endeavors can provide a socially acceptable way to express and process trauma.

The proposed follow-up project would consist of oral recordings, written accounts, or artistic renderings of personal stories from first and subsequent generation Salvadorians, particularly in the context of emigration/immigration, the civil war, and acculturation in American society.

This project will piece together a history of collective experiences and exhibit them as an attempt to help heal fragmentation, preserve history, foster shared identity and heritage, and create a more positive narrative for this community going forward.

## **II. Project Background**

The “Experiences of the Subsequent Generations - A Salvadorian-American Conversation” was conceived as a pilot project that would explore the sense of identity, the aspirations, and the needs of second-generation Salvadorian-Americans living in the metropolitan Washington, DC region. The pilot project was carried out in a discussion group format and endeavored to encourage honest dialogue about how participants viewed their

experiences, how they saw their current status and, as consequence, choices made about the future.

The project was supervised by Margaret Smith, Director of Trauma Healing and Community Resilience at the Institute of World Affairs (IWA). Adrienne Castellón, IWA Program Associate, served as the project manager and discussion facilitator.

### **III. Project Description**

#### **A. Goals**

The goals of the pilot project were to get a better understanding from second-generation Salvadorian-Americans of the concerns and needs of their community and to help increase the resilience of this group by raising confidence, developing personal relationships, and cultivating a sense of shared identity and community.

To identify the specific needs of the Salvadorian-American community, we first sought to understand how identity is constructed by them. Specifically, we were looking for indicators of the kinds of challenges they faced; for example, how the traumas experienced by the immigrant generation may have affected the lives of subsequent generations, how institutions like schools supported the development of young people, and what hopes and aspirations the Salvadorian diaspora has for the community.

## **B. Objectives**

Our hope was by the conclusion of the pilot project these discussions would:

1. Help to develop and grow a clearer sense of Salvadorian-American identity by creating an opportunity for participants to discuss their experiences.
2. Lead to an understanding of common challenges faced by participants.
3. Result in a preliminary exploration and evaluation of ways one might attempt to address these challenges; and
4. Inspire and cultivate a shared sense of heritage to help uplift and raise the confidence of Salvadorian-American individuals and communities.

## **C. Activities**

From March 24 to May 19, 2021, a group of Salvadorian-Americans participated in eight 1.5-hour sessions. Meetings were held from 6 to 8 PM on Wednesdays.

The weekly topic and corresponding discussion were determined session-by-session. The first meeting was largely introductory but did culminate in initial discussion

about the goals of the pilot project. Participants were encouraged to view themselves as thought partners and to provide continuous feedback on the content and direction of the discussion. Consensus was sought regarding more practical aspects of the project, such as scheduling. At the close of the project, participants committed to future active participation in subsequent phases of the project.

### **D.Preparation**

Project manager and a member of the Salvadorian-American community in the metropolitan Washington, DC area, IWA Program Associate Adrienne Castellón recruited participants for the discussion group. Although the project was initially intended to be in-person, due to constraints imposed by COVID-19, it was conducted remotely. Meetings were held via Zoom. Participants consented to being recorded with the understanding that the recordings would be confidential, internal, and eventually deleted. The challenge of managing multiple voices virtually led to a reduction in the originally intended “in-person” size of the group from 8 participants to 4 participants. This fostered greater intimacy and had a positive impact on group dynamics.

We recognize that this small discussion group cannot be considered a truly representative sample of the Salvadorian-American community. Participants who have strong ties to community work and community activism were intentionally recruited to gain a deeper understanding of grassroots level needs. The project manager also made every

effort to achieve demographic balance. Two participants were male, and two were female. Two belonged to a second generation (born in the United States to immigrant parents), and two to the “1.5 generation” (born in El Salvador and migrated to the United States as children). All of the participants were college educated, and most of them worked with youth in some capacity. Dialogue participants included a social worker/therapist, a law student, and two who work with at-risk youth – one with young fathers, the other with Latinx youth in Workforce GED Development & Instruction.

Participation was contingent on a commitment to confidentiality and to attendance at all sessions. While IWA personnel served as facilitators, with predetermined questions and prompts to generate discussion, the approach was deliberately designed to include open-ended questions that allowed organic and collaborative exploration. Baseline, midpoint, and final evaluations were conducted to chart the development of the project. The discussions were held almost entirely in English.

Weekly discussion topics were as follows:

- Week 1: Identity and Belonging
  - Introductions
  - Ground Rules
  - Icebreaker
  - What are things that set you apart from your Salvadorian family?

- How do you feel represented in American media? Has it impacted how you feel about your identity?
  - Do you feel awkward sharing that you are Salvadorian with non-Salvadorians? What are things you feel you have to constantly negotiate with Salvadorians and non-Salvadorians?
  - Reflection & discussion of future meeting topics [feedback]
- Week 2: Community and Belonging
    - Reflections/reactions around first meeting
    - How do you negotiate rootedness compared to other communities of color?
    - What do you think are key issue areas in the Salvadorian-American community?
    - What are ways you feel you were supported by your community? What are ways you feel you were not supported by your community?
    - Reflection
- Week 3: Visible and Invisible Barriers
    - Opening reflection
    - What has influenced your sense of possibility (negatively and positively)?
      - *e.g. hierarchies, beliefs, experiences, family, friends, authority figures, gender roles etc.*
    - How do you think we construct and maintain a sense of community? For example, if there was a program you could take part in - now or in the past, what would it consist of?

- Reflection
- Week 4: Lifespan Development
  - Guided meditation – personal timeline
    - \*I conceptualized a lifespan as comprised of infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age*
  - If you were to do a timeline of your life, what would you characterize as your significant life events?
  - Reflection
- Week 5: Indigeneity, Traditions, and History
  - Reading excerpt about Mayan history in El Salvador [introducing information that describes El Salvador as one of the birthplaces of the Mayan civilization]
  - Is this new information? What does hearing/reading this excerpt bring up for you more broadly about our indigenous roots?
  - Reflection
- Week 6: Sexuality, Gender, and Religion
  - Presenting concepts of ***machismo*** and ***marianismo***
    - ***Machismo***: *Strong or aggressive masculine pride*
    - ***Marianismo***: *A strong or exaggerated sense of traditional femininity, especially in some Latin American cultures, placing great value on forbearance, self-sacrifice, nurturance, and the*



*limiting of sex to marriage. Virgin & whore dichotomy.*

- What parameters and references [like *machismo/marianismo*] were your point of departures for constructing your gender identity? How has that impacted your identity? e.g. how you formulate personal relationships (platonic or romantic), choices, behaviors etc.
- Reflection
  
- Week 7: Race, Hierarchies and Power Structures
  - Discussion of the following concepts
    - **double consciousness vs. multiple consciousness**
    - ***entre mundos*** (in between worlds) vs. **world-traveling**
  - What do we look for in solidarity? How do we create solidarity amongst each other? And among other communities of color?
  - What kinds of power dynamics and hierarchies result in gatekeeping? What are they trying to prevent or protect?
  
- Week 8: Synthetizations and Possibilities
  - Overall goals moving forward
    - Improving access to different spaces
    - Strengthening a sense of community & identity
  - What media platform do you think would be most effective and/or accessible for connecting the

Salvadorian-American community and providing more positive visibility?

*\*e.g. Youtube channel, podcast, Instagram, Facebook page etc.*

- Do you think that an arts program would be beneficial to the Salvadorian-American community? What mediums come to mind? What other "non-art" components would you prioritize as peripheral programs?
- Final reflections

## **E. Confidentiality of Data**

The pilot project is evaluated and summarized in a more comprehensive document prepared for IWA personnel to inform planning for follow-on phases. This report is intended to provide an overview for a wider audience. Additionally, it describes in broad strokes similar projects IWA intends to conduct with other ethnic communities.

## **F. Data collection and methodology**

As previously noted, the small number of participants and common elements in their background means the group was not fully representative of the community. The resulting data is, therefore, anecdotal and does not make any claim to statistical significance. Nonetheless, the data collected will help to identify noteworthy individual and community needs that can inform thinking about the development of future projects.

Data was gathered from the storytelling and discussion that occurred during the weekly meetings. The storytelling served as a primary anchor in the exploration of presented topics. Participants shared their opinions and feedback throughout the eight sessions. Evaluations were conducted prior to the commencement of the project, at the midpoint, and after the project concluded.

#### **IV. Themes that emerged from the conversations**

- Feeling ostracized or othered due to higher levels of education - all of the participants are college-educated and many are the only, first, or one of few in their respective families and long-standing social circles to attend college.
- Homophobia - stemming greatly from religiosity and/or machismo/marianismo
- Acute awareness of colorism
  - Facilitators were a bit surprised by the lack of concrete linkages to colorism being directly associated with indigeneity, which facilitators believe highlights the level of cultural dissociation with indigenous identity that is endemic to Salvadorian culture.
- Feeling misrepresented, underrepresented, or not represented at all in the media and mainstream American/global consciousness - furthermore, feeling that the representations that do exist are

disproportionately negative (with a particular emphasis on MS-13; narratives of poverty/underdevelopment)

- Central America as a whole is often lumped in with Mexico or South America and many Americans do not have a clear sense of the cultural or geographic distinctions between them.
- Feelings of being in limbo, like double consciousness, *ni de aqui, ni de alla* (not being from here or there) and/or *entre mundos* (caught between two worlds)
  - Facilitators were surprised by how varied the expressions of limbo were and how little correlation these expressions had with being born in El Salvador or the United States. Half of the participants were born in El Salvador and would be considered members of the 1.5 generation, but of the two, the participant who spent the most time in El Salvador felt the least able to connect with life there largely due to his sexual orientation (though psychosocial development and adapting to life in the United States were also significant factors).
- Being thrust into the role of translator and cultural ambassador, often from a young age, and not always as a result of personal choice but instead out of necessity, sense of duty, or societal pressure
- The tensions created when coming from a community-oriented culture but growing up in a culture that values individualism
- Feeling ashamed of being Salvadorian as a child due to xenophobia and bullying, specifically when attending predominantly white schools

- Being told you are not Salvadorian enough in predominantly BIPOC settings when you did not fit the narrowly accepted definition of what being Salvadorian was
  - e.g. taking honors classes, having friends that are not Latino.
- Decolonizing the mind, especially around reclaiming, affirming and learning about indigenous roots and history
- Nuances between layers of membership in identity groups - specifically as Salvadorians, Central Americans, and Latinos
- Intersections of sexuality, gender, and religion within the Salvadorian cultural context
- The deemphasis on the refugee label and what the cultural implications are for how the community processes trauma as a collective
  - This raises the question of how this impacts formulation of identity and healing; there is an overemphasis on the narrative of migration motivated by the promise of financial prosperity and a deemphasis on migration propelled by violence [structural and physical] and war that stemmed from corruption. Economic issues are more a symptom than a cause, and if they are framed as a cause, the root cause to economic issues are those overarching corrupt structures that created, at different points in Salvadorian history, fragile and failed states.
- Mental health

- The group was unanimous in their emphasis that this was a key issue area, this was a recurring topic. The consensus was that there is great need for mental health education and resources, especially destigmatizing therapy and mental health conditions.
- Duties and expectations around positionality in the nuclear family (male/female; eldest/youngest)
- Not knowing parent's stories, or feeling able to discuss it with them because it can be re-traumatizing for them to recount it
  - Many do not know the particulars of their parents lived experiences. Most have received their stories in fragments, if at all. Certain accounts are recounted once, and never again. This creates an environment the effects of trauma are seen without always fully understanding the cause which makes it hard to heal and perpetuates or "inherits" trauma.
- Cycles of trauma and abuse - single parents, infidelity, multiple families, abuse
- Survival mode - overemphasis on practical matters like food and shelter, deemphasis on emotional support; more than one participant described a parent being unable to directly praise them but would affirm them by bragging about their child's accomplishments to others
- How a sense of identity and home is formulated; yearning and nostalgia for El Salvador

### **Unexpected Revelations**

- While facilitators anticipated that most of the participants would not prefer the term “Salvadoran,” (a label that is often presented as the sole and correct label for *salvadoreños* by non-members in spite of more common usage and preference for Salvadorian by community members) they were surprised that one participant had never even heard the term (vs. Salvadorian)
- Surprised by the variety of stances around the current president in El Salvador, and politics in El Salvador; this directly contrasted to very similar stances in American politics
- How galvanized the group was to see this evolve into actionable next steps and into community projects
- Creating community was a recurring topic. The collective yearning to connect with other Salvadorians in an explicitly cultural context, and how validated everyone felt by this experience

## **V. Participants’ ideas about project direction**

From the outset, participants questioned where this project would lead. There was a collective desire to see the project culminate in a program or project(s) that would benefit the Salvadorian community. IWA was asked, point blank, what the return on investment would be. This was somewhat surprising because facilitators did not expect to encounter such a pronounced need for an explicit outcome since the project had been framed as more of an exploration. Facilitators endeavored in their response to strike a balance

between not promising something they could not deliver while still honoring the group's intention to see the dialogue segue into an actionable next phase.

Several ideas were proposed throughout the course of the discussion. The initial idea proposed was to create a compendium of resources for the Salvadorian community that would facilitate accessing and navigating resources [e.g. *where is the Salvadorian consulate?*]. A participant raised questions such as, "What does a Salvadorian person need after immigration? What do I want as a Salvadorian-American?" Such questions again point to resource scarcity or lack of a centralized, accessible source for assistance when integrating into and navigating life in the United States. This came up again several times when personal experiences in schooling were discussed. There was not enough knowledge around school curricula, and there was a lack of knowledge around the preparatory steps needed in order to access higher education.

The group also discussed the importance of developing programming that supports communities back in El Salvador and creates sustainable income streams. Reducing the need for remittances would increase the ability of Salvadorians in the United States to succeed economically. This is an immediate obstacle to the building of generational wealth, and in turn to the overall flourishing of the Salvadorian community in the United States and El Salvador.

Other ideas discussed were:

- Legal support - immigration, notario fraud



- Spanish language education
- Youth mentorship - sense of possibility, preparing for life
- Access to childcare
- COVID-19 misinformation, lack of buy-in around vaccination
- Creating a podcast that features discussions around current events, community issues, identity and related topics.
- A YouTube channel with travel content that presents a positive and nuanced representation of the community
- Oral history art project
- Projects that support artists in the community and make art accessible to youth
- A center that offers access to the arts, legal aid, mental health resources, and indigenous cultural learning/workshops
- Social media to support any of the aforementioned in the form of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram accounts.

## **VI. Findings**

In the initial evaluation, it became clear that nearly all of the participants shared a desire to learn from one another and build community. The exploratory nature of the Salvadorian-American discussion group pilot project not only helped answer the inquiries raised in the goals and objectives, it

also helped identify shared experiences and points of departure that began to flesh out the facets of the spectrum that comprises the Salvadorian-American experience. Furthermore, we were able to construct shared goals and objectives for future projects within the community that can eventually be applied to communities outside of the Salvadorian-American community.

It was apparent early on that connection to Salvadorian culture is largely grounded in family ties. There are also prominent trends of negative associations with language usage due to shame that has been perpetuated by outside parties (non-Salvadorians) judging the Salvadorian Spanish dialect as improper. Not all of the participants speak Spanish fluently, many expressed that their language of choice is “Spanglish”. Given the inextricable link between language and culture, this may be a reflection of the merging of both cultures. There is certainly a need for strengthening fluency in formal and colloquial Spanish, as well as pride and ownership of the dialect. The majority of Spanish usage among Salvadorian-Americans is oral, as it is learned at home, and not in an academic setting. Oral fluency does not always line up with reading and writing skills. Programming around improving access to Spanish language education for the Salvadorian-American community would be pivotal in strengthening a secure sense of identity. More than one participant participated in collegiate level Spanish language, Latin-American culture and history coursework of their own volition, and found it to be healing and affirming.

As noted by a participant in one of our earlier meetings, “the more education Salvadorians access, the less they're seen as Salvadorian”. Due to socio-economic conditions, survival is naturally prioritized over education, and education is certainly prioritized over art as a form of self-expression. Often, education is only valued in relation to its ability to yield financial benefits. Access to a liberal education naturally creates a mentality that is distinct from family and community members, which can be isolating, and enforce “outsider status”. A common and recurring thread was feeling the need to prove their *latinidad*, and having their “Salvadorian-ness” questioned by family members. Diverging stances on polarizing issues like religion and politics (topics mentioned include but were not limited to homophobia, abortion, racism against the black community, colorism, and machismo + marianismo) create and augment this feeling. There is a feeling of fragmentation around community, particularly because membership is often affirmed and constructed around membership in family units and religious institutions. Over and over, participants expressed how validating and gratifying it was to connect to other subsequent generation Salvadorian-Americans who held similar viewpoints and shared similar experiences. This feeling of un-rootedness is further exasperated by the feeling of *ni de aqui, ni de alla* (not from here, not from there) – the double consciousness of existing in between worlds.

Scant and one-dimensional representations in the media and mainstream do little in the way of helping construct a healthy sense of identity and cultural pride. These representations are dominated by conflation with Mexico,

South America, and associations with MS-13 and criminality. There was a shared perception among participants that Salvadorians are not perceived as a flourishing people, both by members and non-members of the community. The focus on poverty, while relevant, dominates the portrayal of the Salvadorian community. It is limiting and dehumanizing. There is a desire for a positive narrative to emerge that highlights accomplishments, and presents stories of success. Salvadorian-Americans navigate a society that is often dismissive, and at times hostile; they are often placed in positions where they have to advocate for ourselves with scant knowledge and resources. This happens over and over, at home, at work, and at school. Additionally, they often find themselves playing cultural ambassador for both Salvadorians and Americans, this often involves being a resource for family members e.g. translation. This role is constantly thrust upon them, whether they welcome it or feel equipped to carry it out (often beginning at a young age). While there is a great deal of resilience, as with any immigrant community, there is a need for community programming that helps bolster this resilience, that provides support, hope, broadens a sense of possibility, disseminates knowledge, and creates access to opportunities.

These opportunities would contribute to personal and collective self-sufficiency. Due to a legacy of neo-colonialism and war, there is a strong and pervasive culture of remittances that impedes the Salvadorian-American community's ability to create personal and generational wealth. Programming that bolsters the economy in El

Salvador would bolster the well-being of Salvadorian-Americans, the symbiotic link that exists between the two should not be underestimated. Communities in El Salvador are willing to come together to work towards common needs, but there is a distinct lack of resources. Oftentimes, the resources provided by *los hermanos lejanos* (distant brothers and sisters, Salvadorians in the diaspora) are the only significant direct aid Salvadorians receive. One participant shared that his uncle brought internet to his family's village; while the community helped with installation, he ultimately provided the resources needed to bring this about.

Due to the lack of recognition around refugee status for Salvadorians, American aid has been limited. This has had resounding implications for financial well-being, immigration status, and social acceptance within the Salvadorian community.

There are many topics that were raised, but mental health was at the forefront, as was lack of financial and educational resources – particularly for youth. There is a great need for youth mentorship, middle school and high school were identified as critical times for establishing sense of possibility. Other issue areas that were identified are legal services e.g. notario fraud, misinformation, LGBTQIA rights, PTSD for war survivors, subsequent generations inheriting PTSD, and indigenous issues.

While access to education is certainly a key issue area, so is access to the arts. As a subsequent generation refugee community, trauma abounds, and the legacy of inherited trauma is still being negotiated. Art is a powerful vehicle for trauma healing and reconciliation, and there are certainly intersections between art and healing. Engaging in art can provide a socially acceptable way to express trauma, it also transcends barriers set in place by social divisions e.g. age, culture, sex, gender etc. During the course of our final meeting and brainstorming session, the idea of a cross-generational oral history art project emerged. The project would consist of written or oral recordings of personal stories from first and subsequent generation Salvadorians. The goal would be to piece together a history that traces the Salvadorian/Salvadorian-American experience. Salvadorian history is largely and traditionally oral, has not been consistently recorded, and in many ways is inaccessible due to fragmentation and dispersion caused by the war. If history is not recorded, ultimately it is lost. An exhibit, whether virtual or physical, that presents these stories, can trace diaspora and bridge divides between experiences unique to first or subsequent generation Salvadorians by exposing the shared threads of experiences. Participants felt there were little to no spaces where they could commune with one another and express shared feelings of isolation, abandonment, yearning, duality/multiplicity, and outsider status. There is certainly a legacy of survival and resilience, but this does not negate the deep-seated yearning to belong. Two of the participants had an exchange on the topic of belonging, one expressed feeling like a tourist when he went

back to El Salvador, the other participant who had never been back, felt that was not possible. He yearned for a homecoming. Neither is wrong, and both positions strike a different chord. The second participant poignantly asks, “where else are we going to go?”.

An art project is not the only way to foment community or support resilience. If we turn to the issue of mental health, for example, members of subsequent generations are uniquely positioned to have difficult conversations and introduce new ways of coping, emoting, and healing. These are conversations that members of the first generation would likely not engage in with outsiders. Therefore, it may be strategic to target the Salvadorian-American community when developing supportive programming.

Other potential next steps that emerged from collective brainstorming were having a cultural center, conducting social media outreach, forming partnerships with pre-existing organizations, creating community resources, and starting a podcast. As this generation comes of age, they find themselves living in the nascent stages of a collective movement as they negotiate identity and rootedness like so many other movements before them, perhaps the most similar being the Chicano movement, although there are too many to list. The movements are interlinked and inform, bolster, and build off of one another. In the not-so-distant past there were little to no dedicated spaces for this form of cultural expression in mainstream American consciousness and culture.

The erasure of indigenous history is also a vital component of the construction and reconstruction of shared culture and identity. A good starting point is making plain the existing linkages between indigenous legacies and culture (e.g. speech, food etc.). When some of the little-known Mayan history of El Salvador was shared with participants, there was sadness around the inaccessibility of their history, and a desire to impart this history to others. Simply put, there is a desire to combat the erasure of identity. To reclaim *indigenismo*. One participant aptly stated, “We need museums and archives, and as a generation we should band together to plant those seeds...we need to rebrand what Salvadorian is...”.

While someone might be interested in this information, the reality is that most are willing to consume it but not as willing to dedicate time to researching it or compiling it. A podcast was suggested as a viable solution, as it would provide an accessible platform that disseminates this type of information. A podcast would enable the creation of content that provides a more nuanced picture of El Salvador, not erasing the negative but rather fleshing out the positive, to create a nuanced and comprehensive narrative of Salvadorian and Salvadorian-American experiences and history.

Ultimately, whatever approach is employed, the goal is to capture what people have lived through and are living through. There is a need still for reconciliation and healing



post-trauma for the older generation of Salvadorians. Another participant suggested creating a group that would function as an informal network with therapeutic components without the label and structure of therapy, this might circumvent reticence to engaging in direct therapy. The importance of addressing trauma appropriately and ethically is present for everyone, not everyone will be willing to share, and the risk of re-triggering someone is very real. Keeping trauma close to the vest is engrained in the culture.

Overall, the collective desire, from the outset, to engage in direct action, and interest in eventually expanding and engaging in public service outside the immediate community was pleasantly surprising. The yearning for belonging and community was deeper than expected, and unanimously felt. The emphatic sharing of this desire surprised, validated, and saddened the facilitator.

In the final session, Margaret suggested holding more discussion groups in the future to further the Institute's learning (formatting can be tailored as needed). In the event of another discussion group project, the smaller group size would be preserved, regardless of in-person limitations. A smaller group is ideal for establishing bonds and the intimacy needed in order to facilitate sharing, storytelling, and information gathering. In future, it may be beneficial to replicate this discussion with a group of participants who are not directly engaged in community work and do not have

a clear commitment to public service, responses and needs may differ, although there would likely be shared motifs.

## VII. Conclusion

There was a strong and clear wish to see this pilot project culminate in actionable next steps. The overarching goals identified by participants for future engagement were to increase access to opportunity, to destigmatize and promote mental health, and strengthen a sense of community & identity. Out of the various actionable next steps delineated the most viable are a podcast that uplifts Salvadorian voices, and an oral history and art projects that helps capture and record Salvadorian stories.

**Adrienne Castellón** is a subsequent-generation Salvadorian-American with a background in Global Affairs and Conflict Resolution. She currently works as a consultant in the NGO sector and is committed to unpacking and furthering the understanding of identity in the Latino community, particularly around dual identity and indigeneity.

**Margaret Smith** has devoted her professional life to empowering individuals to make a difference in the world around them. After working some years in the NGO sector, she has taught history, political science and international peacemaking at the university level. She also has trained as a clinical mental health counsellor.