

**IMMIGRATION, from page 4**

She makes good money with the wreaths – \$4,000 a month – but pays a third in taxes and goes without work in January and February.

“It’s tough, but hope is what I lean on,” Reyes Pacheco said in Spanish. “A lot of families are in this kind of situation. Everything gets resolved in time.”

She has her own plot at a community garden that reflects her roots in a small Mexican pueblo named San Esteban Atlatluha, two hours from Oaxaca, Mexico, the place where cacao (chocolate) beans originated.

During the latest season, she planted so many chilies she lost track of which were which. That’s no small matter when some are spicy chocolate habañeros.

“I had to start tasting them to find out if they were spicy or not,” she recalled, laughing.

Once a week, Reyes Pacheco said she takes her three kids to a restaurant so they can eat their fill. Their favorite is Juan Colorado. Her own dream is to someday start a Oaxacan bakery.

The work making coronas, is “very painful,” Reyes Pacheco said. Now 30, she’s done it annually since she was 18 or 19. Smaller ones pay \$1.30 each; more elaborate ones

pay \$3 each. She can do 75 of the larger ones in a day, or 105 smaller ones.

“We work from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., or sometimes 6 a.m. to 5 p.m.,” Reyes Pacheco said. “It’s hard on the hands. *Los Mexicanos* work all the time.”

This is hardly news to Rebeca Velazquez, who leads Mujeres Luchadoras Progresistas, a Woodburn nonprofit that supports women with health care and self-esteem building. Velazquez said the politics around immigration often overlook women.

“A woman works in the fields like a man does, and often a man is better paid,” Velazquez said. “We’re hard-working people. The majority of the women are working, too. It’s not just the men who are working.”

Every year since 1992, Velazquez’s group has made Christmas wreaths, to be sold in to Portland, Eugene and Seattle. This year, a portion of their 1,200 coronas will be sold at Grand Central Bakery on Southeast Hawthorne Boulevard in Portland.

Among the 170 women who made the wreaths are documented and undocumented workers, field workers, housewives, domestic violence survivors and sexual assault survivors, she said.

“There’s no work in the fields (in winter),” Velazquez said, “so all we can do is this, and this is what we do.”

Imagine a trip to see your father for the first time – a man you know only through a computer screen.

“When we went back to Mexico, (José Manuel) was a little afraid (of his dad), but the second day, he hugged him,” Reyes Pacheco said of her 3-year-old son. “He knows who his dad is, but he couldn’t hug him, so in his mind, to see him, to be able to hug him, it was a little hard for him at first. But then he was hugging him and



PHOTO BY ARKADY BROWN

Margarita Reyes Pacheco is a single mother of three. She is married, but her husband was deported to Mexico. She has considered moving back to Mexico to be with her husband once her children, who are U.S. citizens, are grown.

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RAMÓN RAMÍREZ,  
PCUN PRESIDENT

hugging him.”

PCUN’s Ramírez became emotional when told of José Manuel’s daily video chats with his dad. It struck a personal chord.

“In my case, that’s my son-in-law. That’s the father of our grandkids,” Ramírez said.

Ramírez said ICE raids and deportations don’t just affect an estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants, but ripple out to 58 million Latinos in the U.S.

“These are kids,” he said. “We haven’t even talked about the psychological effect this is having on a whole generation of Latino children who are going to grow up hating America, because it’s separating them from their parents.”

Reyes Pacheco and José Manuel visit Alejandro as often as possible, but the trips are expensive. The pair are working with an attorney and the Mexican Embassy here “but are now thinking that he’s not eligible to come back,” Reyes Pacheco said. Alejandro was deported in 2010 and has considered crossing the Sonoran Desert illegally to come back, Reyes Pacheco said.

Reyes Pacheco also has to pay for her own documents, she said. Each new application for legal residency, whether DACA or a U visa, costs several hundred to more than a thousand dollars, not including attorney’s fees. It’s a lot for a single mother of three. Alejandro doesn’t make enough growing avocados to contribute.

If not for the health problems of her eldest child, Michael, Reyes Pacheco might still be in Mexico herself. She went back to Oaxaca in 2007, she said, intending to stay. But when Michael got sick, they went to a Mexican hospital, and his situation didn’t improve after two weeks, so she sent him back – on a plane, because Michael is a U.S. citizen.

She then spent three days walking across the Sonoran Desert because she didn’t have legal documentation. She and other migrants were robbed by masked men.

Lately, she’s started thinking about a day when her children are grown and whether she’d move back to Mexico to be with Alejandro.

Research suggests this relocation has become commonplace in recent years. More Mexicans now move back to Mexico than come to the United States.

Velazquez, of Mujeres Luchadoras Progresistas, said some immigrants are experiencing the ending of *la ilusión* – the illusion.

The illusion, Velazquez said, is the belief that our immigration problems will someday end. It’s possible *la ilusión* grows from what Ronald Reagan did in 1986. The Immigration Reform and Control Act granted green cards to 2.7 million undocumented immigrants.

Now, under another Republican, the pendulum has swung the other way.

“If my husband isn’t going to be able to be with me, I don’t know,” Reyes Pacheco said. “I think I’m going to have to go be with him.”

If Reyes Pacheco were to return to Mexico, who would take care of the couple’s three children? Who would pick the cranberries or make the coronas?

Ann Marie Moss, spokesperson for the Oregon Farm Bureau, said a “shrinking labor pool” lately has affected fruit orchards, nurseries and greenhouses across the state. “A lot of farmers (in those industries) have had a hard time finding enough labor to harvest everything,” Moss said.

The state agency supports “comprehensive” immigration reform, she said. It has invited ICE officials to forums on fixing “America’s broken immigration system.”

The U.S. government has long been involved, on behalf of big agricultural interests, in bringing Mexican farmworkers to this country.

In 1821, when Mexico gained independence from Spain, it included all of California and even parts of modern-day Oregon. Decades later, the bracero program, supported by the State Department, began busing agricultural

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