

## Poverty and Migration in Tanivet

I photographed for several years in the village of San Francisco de Tanivet, Oaxaca, Mexico. The village of Tanivet is situated on a former hacienda, where the grandparents of my subjects worked as landless peasants until the land reform measures of 1934-40. Tanivet's major source of income is subsistence farming of chickpeas, maize, and numerous smaller crops of squash and peppers. A few families raise small herds of cattle and goats.

At an early age, the youth of Tanivet dream of migrating illegally to the United States to earn money, as did their fathers, uncles, and older brothers and sisters. In the past, these elders were able to cross the border with coyotes and return to the village often to visit their families. Strict U.S. policies now make it too risky for the migrants in the U.S. to return home. They fear losing a reliable source of income, and are certain they that if they left, they would never be able to return. Such policies rupture families and the social fabric of the village, where houses in many family compounds are empty and the youngest residents are over 60 years old.

My subjects have experienced the many sides of migration—

- The desperate poverty that drives the young to leave;
- the fear for their safety;
- the loneliness and suffering of those left behind;
- the loss of children and unmet grandchildren, often forever;
- the infusion of hope that comes from remittances sent back from abroad;
- the occasional investment of remittances in homes and businesses;
- the reunions, often belated;
- the readjustments of relationships, often difficult.

Each of the families shown here has experienced some aspect of migration.

Generously, they shared their stories and their feelings with me.

**Cynthia Roderick**