

Ana will be 54 this August. In the more than two decades that she has lived in Canada, she has strongly advocated for increased access and inclusive services in Waterloo Region. Yet she has done so without recognition for her commitment to social justice and her dedication to helping those in need. Ana remarked:

*I figure I am in [social justice work] for life. This is not something that I chose. This is my life purpose and I cannot get away. Believe me I tried [laughter]. I love it. I would have loved to go to school and obtain some sort of formal education for this, maybe then I would have more credibility.... But I did not have money to pay for university or college. I had to feed my family.*

Ana's close connection and commitment to her country of birth continued throughout the years, from a distance. She has maintained her relationships with close family members through telephone calls on a monthly basis. She has not visited her native land since that early morning in mid-August 1981. Ana stated that although El Salvador's political upheaval has decreased, "fear for my life has kept me away from my homeland for about 29 years."

### Conclusion

It is important to draw attention to the fact that in her narrative, Ana did not use language that denoted trauma or victimhood. Ana thinks of herself as a strong woman who had to endure many life adversities as a result of oppressive circumstances and exclusion. However, fear has been an active force in her life, and it has been a key principle in the decisions she made in organizing her life. Most importantly, it has kept her away from her homeland. Her ethnic pride and her faith have been sources of strength and resilience during her moments of vulnerability.

This narrative describes the lifelong efforts of a woman whose work as a community advocate and organizer has remained largely invisible. Ana's story also illuminates the struggles that immigrant women continue to face because of discrimination. Overt and covert racism continue to heavily influence the settlement process of women of colour and to cheat them of equal opportunities. Ana's story is one of remarkable strength and resilience in oppressive circumstances. Thousands of Salvadorian women in Canada have faced many such challenges in their search for a safe haven.

*Mirna Carranza is an Assistant Professor at the School of Social Work, McMaster University. Mirna's research interests include immigrant and refugee families and their process of inclusion/exclusion in Canadian society.*

### References

Cienfuegos, Eduardo Sancho. "El Conflicto Armado en

El Salvador." *El Salvador: Historia General*. Ed. Oscar Martínez Peñate. San Salvador: Nuevo Enfoque, 2002. 153-64.

Da, Wei Wei. *Salvadorians in Canada: Contexts of Departure and Arrival*. Toronto: Latin American Research Group, 2002.

Diez, Miguel Cavada. *Romero: "Cese la Represión!" 1977-1980*. San Salvador: Equipo Maíz, 2006.

García, María-Cristina. "Canada: A Northern Refuge for Central Americans." *Migration Information Sources* 4 (2006): 22-34.

Martín-Baró, Ignacio. *Writings for a Liberation Psychology*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.

## SUSAN MCCASLIN

### Demeter, Drowning, Remembers a Lover of her youth

Demeter flails desperately,  
having lost sight of the beach

with its small breathing holes for crabs,  
the figure eights of the tides,

and dance of kelp-drawn lines.  
Breath folds, arms are weakening  
tentacles.

She sees in her mind black earth,  
new beans listing in their pods.

Soon she will relive  
the blue-black flanks of Poseidon

who sought her once,  
became half-stallion for her skin.

Now she is a single spar,  
dragged to his Sargasso eye,

lone witness of her self-abandonment  
sinking to his element, the sea.

*Susan McCaslin has published 12 volumes of poetry and taught English at Douglas College in New Westminster, B.C. for 23 years. Her most recent volume is *Lifting the Stone* (Seraphim Editions). She is currently working on a book on the poetics of mystical experience. More information: [www.susanmccaslin.ca](http://www.susanmccaslin.ca).*