Begging as a Path to Progress

INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND THE STRUGGLE FOR ECUADOR’S URBAN SPACES

KATE SWANSON
Begging as a Path to Progress
GEOGRAPHIES OF JUSTICE AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Series editors
Nik Heynen, University of Georgia
Andrew Herod, University of Georgia
Melissa W. Wright, Pennsylvania State University

Advisory board
Sharad Chari, London School of Economics
Bradon Ellem, University of Sydney
Gillian Hart, University of California, Berkeley
Jennifer Hyndman, Simon Fraser University
Larry Knopp, University of Washington, Tacoma
Heidi Nast, Depaul University
Jamie Peck, University of British Columbia
Frances Fox Piven, City University of New York
Laura Pulido, University of Southern California
Paul Routledge, University of Glasgow
Neil Smith, City University of New York
Bobby Wilson, University of Alabama

© 2010 by the University of Georgia Press
Athens, Georgia 30602
www.ugapress.org
All rights reserved
Set in Minion Pro by BookComp, Inc.

Printed digitally in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Swanson, Kate, 1973–
   Begging as a path to progress: indigenous women and children and the struggle for Ecuador’s urban spaces / Kate Swanson.
   p. cm. — (Geographies of justice and social transformation)
   Includes bibliographical references and index.

F3721.1.Q55S93 2010
307.2’41608998086613—dc22   2009030039

British Library Cataloging-in-Publication Data available

*ISBN for this digital edition: 978-0-8203-3703-6*
To Sandy Luzmila
CONTENTS

ix List of Illustrations

xi Acknowledgments

1 Introduction: Unraveling Myths

12 ONE. Ecuador: Economic Crisis, Poverty, and Indigenous Identities

29 TWO. Indigenous Childhoods: Gender, Work, Education, and Migration in the Andes

50 THREE. Migrant Childhoods: Street Work and Youth Identities

74 FOUR. Antibegging Rhetoric: Gendered Beggars, Child Beggars, and “Disguised” Beggars

92 FIVE. Race, Space, and the City: Whitening the Streets of Quito and Guayaquil

111 Conclusion: Begging as a Path to Progress

119 Notes

123 References

137 Index
This page intentionally left blank
ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURES

1. Selling gum in Quito / 2
2. Map of Ecuador / 3
3. Community members from the village of Calhuasí / 19
4. Looking south from Calhuasí Grande / 20
5. Looking northwest from Calhuasí Grande / 20
6. Map of north Quito / 27
7. Hours worked per day by age and gender / 34
8. Percentage of children engaged in domestic activities / 35
9. Percentage of children engaged in agricultural activities / 35
10. Percentage of children engaged in shepherding and collecting activities / 36
11. Children gathered at a broken classroom window / 38
12. A mother and three of her children / 56
13. Percentage of children who contribute to household income / 59
14. Straddling the concrete divider / 61
15. Cartwheel kids / 64
16. Reformulating identities / 70
17. Thirteen-year-old boy selling gum / 79
18. Boys and their new bikes / 87
19. A new concrete block house / 88
20. Inside the kitchen of a concrete block house / 89

TABLES

1. Calhuasí Grande student aspirations / 39
2. Calhuasi Chico student aspirations / 39
3. Working children’s family structures / 60
4. Ethnic-racial self-identification / 73
Acknowledgments

A twelve-year-old indigenous girl inspired the research for this book. During my first visit to Ecuador in March 2002, I encountered her often while exploring Quito’s main tourist districts. This girl was clever, and she quickly deduced that my husband was an easy mark. Whenever we approached, she would grab the nearest child, rush across the street, and extend her hand while making pleading gestures. It worked every time, and she frequently walked away with a slight grin on her face. This girl, whom I later came to know, intrigued me; I wanted to learn more about her life. Not surprisingly, my initial assumptions about her were wrong. Like many, I believed that she was homeless and slept on the streets. Because I never saw any adult males with her, I wrongly believed that she and her siblings had been abandoned by their father. This image of the poor, single-parent, female-headed family fit into the preconceived notions I had developed surrounding Latin American street children. Then I began asking questions. As noted by Doolittle (2001), there is a big difference between looking and seeing.

There were many people who helped me learn how to “see,” likely too many to acknowledge here. While I have done my best to be thorough, I suspect it is inevitable that I have overlooked someone in my efforts to offer thanks to all. Please accept my apologies for all those I may miss. Know that I deeply appreciate the support, encouragement, and assistance that I have received over the last several years.

To begin, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the community members of Calhuasi for graciously sharing their lives and stories with me. These stories have moved me in so many ways, and I hope this book helps motivate people to challenge some of the injustices Calhuaseños endure. Mercedes, Antonio, Elsa, Maribel, Victor, and Miriam taught me so much about life in the community. Agustín and Manuela were especially helpful and I thank them, along with Silvia, Beatriz, Marcia, Cenaida, Sandy, and Jefferson, for welcoming me into their family. Much appreciation also goes to Segundo Manuel Poaquiza Poalasin and to José Antonio Pombosa Lasluiza for supporting my research in their village.

Janeth Gavilanez from the Fundación Don Bosco was a key facilitator for this research. I thank her for the tremendous assistance she gave me, but most of all for her friendship. The staff and volunteers at the Fundación Don Bosco were very kind and helpful throughout my field research. Padre Pio Baschirrotto, Patricia Wattel, Susana Proaño, Rosa Chiza, Ximena Castillo, Francisco Carrión, Enrico Ferrati, Rosa Arias, and Simón Zimmer merit special mention.
José Maldonado Córdova was also instrumental in furthering my understanding of Quichua culture and language. I thank him for being both my teacher and my friend.

Of course, I owe tremendous thanks to both Sue Ruddick and Amrita Daniere at the University of Toronto for guiding me through this project, which began as a PhD dissertation. I feel honored to have worked with both of these exceptional women. Katharine Rankin and Gunter Gad often offered thought-provoking comments, for which I am deeply appreciative. Joe Hermer deserves many thanks for sharing his brilliant insights over coffee. I am very happy to have had Maureen Hays-Mitchell and Minelle Mahtani involved in the final stages of my dissertation, both of whom pushed me to develop key ideas. Virginia Maclaren also merits particular gratitude for supporting my decision to move my focus beyond Asia and into Latin America in the first place.

My friends at the University of Toronto and beyond provided much intellectual stimulation and after-hours diversion. Some of these individuals include Deborah Cowen, Stephanie Hart, Zoë Meletis, Sharlene Mollett, Yogendra Shakya, Tom Slater, Luisa Veronis, Alan Walks, and Anne Wu. Alana Boland and Scott Prudham provided direction and support during the early stages of my dissertation work. Grant Hudolin deserves special mention for his tremendous assistance with maps. I also owe many thanks to John Vigna, Elisabeth de Mariaffi, and Jennifer Kohm for advice on how to get my fingers moving on the keyboard. Jennifer merits particular gratitude for always providing me with a place to call home when I was in Toronto.

My fellow Ecuatorianistas must be thanked for their friendship, support, and insight into all things Ecuadorian (and more). These include Marc Becker, Chad Black, Ernesto Capello, Joe Eisenberg, Chris Garcés, Esben Leifsen, Kenny Kincaid, Chris Krupa, Elizabeth Roberts, Brian Selmeski, and Emily Walmsley. I am deeply indebted to Marc Becker, in particular, for always answering my many questions and for providing such wonderful feedback on my work. At FLACSO-Ecuador, I would like to thank Adrián Bonilla, Carlos de la Torre, Fernando García, Gioconda Herrera, Marcia Maluf, Carmen Martínez, Alicia Torres, and Alison Vásconez. Thanks also go to Liisa North for first networking me with FLACSO.

I was very fortunate to receive much financial assistance throughout the length of this research project. I gratefully acknowledge support from the International Development Research Council of Canada, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Ontario Graduate Scholarship, the Sir Val Duncan Travel Award, the Frank M. Waddell Scholarship, the Connaught Scholarship, the John Robertson Bequest at the University of Glasgow, and the Department of Geography at the University of Toronto.
Acknowledgments

After finishing my degree at the University of Toronto, I spent two and a half years as a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Glasgow in Scotland. This gave me a wonderful opportunity to really work through some of the ideas in this book. At the University of Glasgow, I’d like to thank John Briggs, Sophie Bond, Andy Cumbers, Simon Drew, Gesa Helms, Leah Gibbs, John Jansen, Jennifer Lea, Hayden Lorimer, Stella Lowder, Geraldine McDonald, Kim McKee, Jo Norcup, Ulrich Oslender, Ronan Paddison, Geraldine Perriam, Chris Philo, Paul Routledge, Jo Sharp, Rhian Thomas, and Susan Waldron—all of whom either contributed to my work or helped me maintain my sanity during Glasgow’s dark, dreary winters. A special word of thanks goes to Chris Philo for being such an inspirational mentor and an all-around wonderful human being. Additional thanks to Leah Gibbs and Jo Norcup for being fabulous. Mike Shand and Olive Pearson graciously helped me with all things cartographic. During my time in Britain, I also benefited from the advice of numerous brilliant scholars, too many to name here. However, I would like to send out a special word of thanks to Noel Castree and Deborah Dixon, both of whom skillfully guided me through my early forays into the world of publication. Whether he knows it or not, Erik Swyngedouw also helped shape this work for the better by asking me a series of challenging questions at a talk at the University of Manchester.

The final stages of this book took place at San Diego State University. Here, I’d like to thank all of my new colleagues for giving me the time, space, and support to finish this manuscript, which was certainly challenging as a new faculty member—additionally so because I showed up for my new job six-months pregnant. Throughout this, Stuart Aitken, the departmental chair, has been so supportive and welcoming that I cannot thank him enough. I’d also like to extend my gratitude to Samuel Cortez and Denise Goerisch for helping me get the manuscript into final submission shape.

At the University of Georgia Press everyone has been a delight to work with. Foremost, I’d like to thank Nik Heynen for inviting me to submit this manuscript to the Geographies of Justice and Social Transformation series. I’m very happy to be a part of it. Nik is an inspirational scholar who does fabulous work, and I hope I can follow in his footsteps. Many thanks also to Andrew Herod and Melissa Wright for coediting the series. Derek Kristoff has been an excellent editor; I thank him for his advice and patience and for his timely yet gentle nudging as deadlines approached. Susan Silver has been a wonderful and meticulous copyeditor; this book is better because of her. As a reviewer, Craig Jeffrey provided superb feedback. Thanks also to Jon Davies and John McLeod and to everyone else behind the scenes for helping with the production of this book.

My parents, Keith and Nancy Swanson, have been so supportive throughout the length of this project, even though I suspect they wish I had chosen a
project closer to home. Both have read almost everything I have written on this subject and have provided excellent critical feedback. My big brother, Andrew Swanson, and my sister-in-law, Tiffany Islip, provided much advice on how to navigate the world of academia. They, along with my niece Gabriella, also provided a loving home for the Ecuadorian street dog we brought back to North America. My in-laws, Bev, Tim, Megan, and Peyton Jones have also been very supportive and understanding, especially since I always seem to be out of the country during family functions. My grandparents, John and Mary Van Nest and Wilfred and Margery Swanson, have always encouraged me and expressed genuine interest in my work, for which I am very grateful. Unfortunately, three of my grandparents passed away during this project and I miss them dearly. Only my grandma Mary Van Nest survives; at ninety-four years of age, she remains a great inspiration to me.

Finally, I would like to thank my most immediate family. My dog, Kiva, traveled to Ecuador with me and ended up becoming a fantastic research assistant; I could not have found a better one. Her companionship has been a tremendous comfort throughout the last decade. I’d like to thank my son, Dimitri, for providing a compelling incentive to get my manuscript finished. It was a tight deadline but I somehow managed to finish it a few weeks before his birth. Since then, I cannot exactly thank him for helping me complete this project, but I can thank him for helping me work on my time management skills. Lastly, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my best friend and husband, Greg Jones. Greg has lived with me through this project since its beginnings and knows its intricacies better than anyone. His keenly critical mind constantly challenges me to rethink and refine my arguments—something that has only made this work stronger. I cannot thank Greg enough for his tremendous support.