Visibility and the Disappeared: Exploring War, Memory and Family during El Salvador’s Civil War

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Do you remember me? What do you remember? How do you remember? This image is indicative of my affective results and reflections from my graduate research. My research focuses on Salvadorans and their disappeared family members during the country’s civil war. Throughout my research, I investigated values and meanings of family, material and/or oral representations of disappeared family members, and the temporal connections to memory and history. Throughout my research in El Salvador, I visited many sites of collective and historic memory, sites where the victims of the disappeared exemplified their connections to remembrance and the body. For this image, the heteronormative family was iconic: it was significant to have the mother, the father, and the two children – for they were confirmations of a world, memory, family, and relationship as complete. Not only was the presence of family essential, but the accompanying regard of faith or a “holy being” was consistent as well. To consider the situation as heavenly or miraculous created an influential visibility onto the many narratives that were forcibly erased. It was the combination of hope and togetherness that pushed for a societal resistance of keeping the disappeared, alive.