



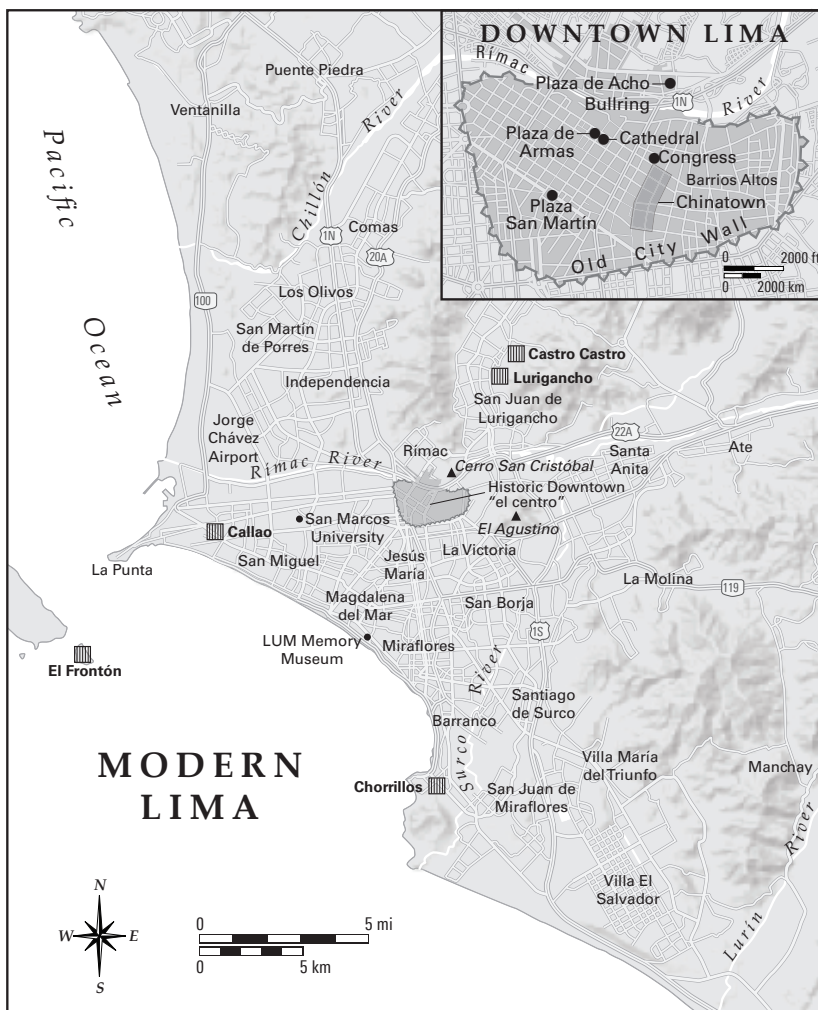
# **THE SURRENDERED** REFLECTIONS BY A SON OF SHINING PATH

**JOSÉ CARLOS AGÜERO**

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY Michael J. Lazzara and Charles F. Walker

## **THE SURRENDERED**

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**JOSÉ CARLOS AGÜERO**

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and Charles F. Walker

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**DUKE**

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS *Durham and London* 2021

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Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞

Designed by Matthew Tauch

Typeset in Warnock Pro by Copperline Book Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Agüero, José Carlos, author. | Lazzara, Michael J., [date]  
editor. | Walker, Charles F., [date] editor.

Title: The surrendered : reflections by a son of Shining Path / José  
Carlos Agüero; translated by Michael J. Lazzara and Charles F.  
Walker ; edited by Michael J. Lazzara and Charles F. Walker.

Other titles: Rendidos. English

Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2021. | Includes  
bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020021177 (print) | LCCN 2020021178 (ebook) |  
ISBN 9781478010517 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781478011651 (paperback) |  
ISBN 9781478021216 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Agüero, José Carlos. | Sendero Luminoso  
(Guerrilla group) | Political violence—Peru—History—20th  
century. | Human rights workers—Peru—Biography. | Peru—  
Politics and government—1980—

Classification: LCC F3448.7.A38 A313 2021 (print) |  
LCC F3448.7.A38 (ebook) | DDC 985.06/3—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020021177>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020021178>

Cover art: José Carlos Agüero visiting El Frontón. Photo  
by Virginia Rojas, 2018. Courtesy of the artist.

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**In memory of Silvia Solórzano Mendivil**

(1945–1992)

**and José Manuel Agüero Aguirre**

(1948–1986)

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*The silence that lives between two words  
Is not the same silence that envelops a head as it falls,  
Nor that which a tree's presence imprints  
When the wind's evening fire fades away.*

*Just as every voice has timbre and pitch,  
Every silence has a register and depth.  
One man's silence is different from another's,  
And not speaking one name isn't the same as not speaking another.*

*An alphabet of silence exists,  
But they haven't taught us to spell it out.  
Still, the reading of silence is all that lasts,  
Perhaps more so than the reader.*

**Roberto Juarroz**, "El silencio que queda  
entre dos palabras . . ."

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## GLOSSARY

**Arguedas, José María (1911–1969)** Distinguished Peruvian novelist, poet, and anthropologist. He wrote in both Spanish and Quechua, providing intimate portraits of Andean life and cultural conflict.

**ANFASEP** Asociación Nacional de Familiares de Secuestrados, Detenidos y Desaparecidos del Perú (National Association of Relatives of the Kidnapped, Detained, and Disappeared of Peru). Founded in 1983, ANFASEP has become an emblematic human rights organization. Its founder and honorary president, Angélica “Mamá Angélica” Mendoza de Escarza (1929–2017), endured threats and gained great prestige and respect for her courage.

**DIRCOTE/DINCOTE** Dirección Nacional contra el Terrorismo (National Directorate against Terrorism). A branch of the Peruvian National Police in charge of antiterrorism law enforcement, it played an important role in the battle against Shining Path.

**Gonzalo (Comrade Gonzalo or Presidente Gonzalo)** *See* Guzmán Reynoso, Abimael

**Guzmán Reynoso, Abimael (1934–)** The founder and absolute leader of Shining Path. A professor of philosophy at Ayacucho’s San Cristóbal of Huamanga University, he fostered a cultlike following. He was captured in Lima on September 14, 1992, and is currently serving a life sentence for terrorism and treason.

**HIJOS** Hijas e Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio (Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice against Oblivion and Silence). An organization of the children of those who disappeared in Argentina under the 1976–1983 military regime.

**LUM** Lugar de la Memoria, la Tolerancia y la inclusión social (Space for Memory, Tolerance, and Social Inclusion). Peru’s Memory Museum, opened in 2015.

**Mamá Angélica** *See* Mendoza de Escarza, Angélica

**Mendoza de Escarza, Angélica (Mamá Angélica) (1929–2017)** The founder and honorary president of ANFASEP. On July 12, 1983, her son Arquímedes was taken by the Peruvian military, and he was never seen again. She fought incessantly to find him and others who were detained and disappeared, becoming a national and international symbol of human rights.

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**MIR** Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Left Movement). Founded in 1962, it began guerrilla actions in 1965. After the death of its founder, Luis de la Puente Uceda, later that same year, it divided into three factions.

**MOVADef** Movimiento por Amnistía y Derechos Fundamentales (Movement for Amnesty and Fundamental Rights). A pro–Shining Path organization that seeks amnesty for Shining Path prisoners.

**MRTA** Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru (Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement). A more traditional guerrilla group that fought at the same time as Shining Path. The two groups had little respect for one another.

**National Coordinator of Human Rights (Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos)** A coalition of Peruvian human rights organizations created in 1985 that remains active today.

**NGO** Nongovernmental organization.

**the P / the Party** A nickname for the Peruvian Communist Party–Shining Path

**Shining Path** The common name for the Peruvian Communist Party–Sendero Luminoso, a subversive group that declared war on the Peruvian state in 1980. According to the TRC, Shining Path committed terrorist acts, was the primary cause of the internal war, perpetrated the most human rights crimes, and had a genocidal character.

**terruca/terruco (terrorist)** Derogatory slang for members of Shining Path or the MRTA and in some cases for anyone who defended them.

**TRC** Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, 2001–2003). Established in 2000 by interim President Valentín Paniagua and President Alejandro Toledo, the TRC presented its findings in a nine-volume *Informe final* (Final report) that is now available at <https://www.usip.org/publications/2001/07/truth-commission-peru-01>.

**Tupamaros** A guerrilla movement active in Uruguay in the late 1960s and early 1970s. José Mujica, president of the country (2010–2015), was one of the movement’s leaders and spent fifteen years in prison.

**Uchuraccay** A massacre of eight journalists, a guide, and a local indigenous man in the highlands of Ayacucho on January 26, 1983.

**UNI** Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería (National Engineering University, Peru).

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## TIMELINE

- 1945** ..... Silvia Solórzano Mendívil born in Lima
- 1948** ..... José Manuel Agüero Aguirre born in Tarma
- 1967** ..... José Manuel admitted to UNI; never graduates
- Late 1960s** ..... Silvia is a member of the Communist Party; José Manuel of Patria Roja (Red Homeland, a Maoist party)
- Early 1970s** ..... Parents belong to different subparties within the MIR
- 1970–1971** ..... Silvia and José Manuel meet, are involved in union work, and spend some time in Huancayo
- 1972** ..... Birth of José Carlos's sister
- 1975** ..... Birth of José Carlos
- 1976** ..... Birth of José Carlos's brother
- 1977** ..... National strike; José Manuel loses job and is blacklisted
- 1979–1981** ..... José Manuel is a union leader with Federación de Trabajadores de la Industria Metalúrgica del Perú (Peruvian Industrial Metalworkers Federation)
- 1980** ..... Launch of Shining Path insurgency
- 1982** ..... José Manuel and Silvia join Shining Path
- 1983** ..... Both parents arrested, released in 1984 after about one year for lack of evidence (José Manuel in Lurigancho prison; Silvia in the Chorrillos and Callao prisons)
- 1985** ..... José Manuel arrested after attack in which a police officer is killed
- 1986, June 20** ..... José Manuel killed in El Frontón prison uprising
- 1990** ..... Police come to the family house, make multiple threats
- 1992, May 26** ..... Silvia is executed by alleged state security agents on Lima beach

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<b>1992, September 12</b>	...	Abimael Guzmán, Shining Path leader, is captured
<b>2003</b>	.....	TRC releases its final report
<b>2015</b>	.....	<i>Los rendidos</i> published in Spanish
<b>2018</b>	.....	Agüero receives the Premio Nacional de Literatura (National Literary Prize), nonfiction category, for <i>Persona</i> (2017)

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## EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

MICHAEL J. LAZZARA & CHARLES F. WALKER

José Carlos Agüero was a child of Shining Path. Both of his parents fought in this Peruvian guerrilla group and paid with their lives. Frequent changes in residence, clandestine meetings, wounded comrades, furtive exchanges of information or weapons, secrets from his classmates, and the imprisonment and execution of his parents marked his childhood. A historian and anthropologist by training and also a gifted poet, José Carlos has spent much of his life exploring why his mother and father supported this hard-line Maoist party and how we are to understand or approach issues such as violence, guilt, forgiveness, and memory. He bluntly confronts the question of his own responsibility, if any, for Shining Path's acts of terrorism. The search to understand his family and his parents' motivations, as well as violence and its aftermath, lies at the heart of his book.

*Los rendidos* became an immediate best seller and media sensation when it was released in Peru in 2015. Reviewers lauded it for its fine prose, accessibility, and searing honesty. Many complimented Agüero for his courage and his willingness to share his life as the son of two members of Shining Path at a point when the country was still reeling from the effects of a brutal guerrilla war (1980–2000). According to the TRC's 2003 report, 69,280 people died in the conflict, more than half at the hands of Shining Path.<sup>1</sup> *Los rendidos* was published just three years after another brilliant and highly readable memoir, Lurgio Gavilán Sánchez's *Memorias de un soldado desconocido: Autobiografía y antropología de la violencia* (When rains became floods: A child soldier's story, 2012; 2015 in English). Gavilán's book tells his story as a child soldier in Shining Path.<sup>2</sup> Together, the two books prompted wide-ranging discussions about Shining Path, the role of children in the war, and much more. Among their many contributions, the memoirs punctured the myth that people did not want to talk or read about a very troubling period in Peru's history. To the contrary, public discussion and publications about Shining Path grew exponentially in Peru after the release of these two books,

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so much so that they became major catalysts for debates on memory and recent history.

Not everyone, however, received Agüero's book with sympathy or enthusiasm. He has frequently been called a terrorist in print and on television. Some conservative commentators have even asked whether his work violates Peru's "apology for terrorism" bans; they have demanded formal inquiries or, worse, have called for his arrest.<sup>3</sup> In May 2018, Congressman Edwin Donayre, a retired general, surreptitiously recorded a visit to LUM, where Agüero had been a consultant. Donayre claimed that his tapes showed that the museum presented a pro-Shining Path viewpoint and that it was brainwashing visitors. Conservatives demanded that the minister of culture, Patricia Balbuena, whose office oversees the museum, testify before Congress. One congressman, Segundo Tapia, asked her to confirm if "the son of two terrorists" (Agüero) was an employee of LUM. Another conservative congressman, Juan Carlos Gonzáles, associated Agüero with MOVADef.<sup>4</sup> These were notorious examples of a broader smear campaign spearheaded by conservatives, particularly by followers of former president Alberto Fujimori and his daughter, Keiko, to criticize Agüero, belittle his publications (he has other books of nonfiction as well as poetry), and delegitimize his voice. It is but one battlefield in a struggle between human rights activists such as Agüero who seek to debate and learn more about the Shining Path period, the atrocities of the guerrillas, *and* the crimes of the military and those who prefer to declare the 1980–2000 period a closed chapter in Peruvian history and move on.<sup>5</sup>

Agüero has not backed down from these controversies. When we interviewed him in September 2017 for the conversation that appears at this end of this book, he ducked away at lunchtime for a television interview. Without any warning, the TV crew sat him down alongside a woman whose family member had been killed by Shining Path, introducing him not as a historian or author but simply as "the son of terrorists." Agüero handled this sensationalist media trap well, with his characteristic calm and humor. As always, he expressed his opposition to Shining Path's violence, noting that he was sorry about the role the Party played in the conflict; he also stressed that dialogue is the best way to confront such a tumultuous period if Peru is ever to find any kind of solace or perhaps even reconciliation. His book, in short, has left Peruvians divided or has shed light on existing divisions. Thousands of readers have expressed their deep admiration while conservatives con-

tinue to cast him as a terrorist (by association) whose work should not be read under any circumstances. Supporters of Shining Path, for their part, have also been critical: they dislike Agüero's critique of the Party as well as his refusal to cast his parents as martyrs or revolutionary heroes, as many other children of Shining Path militants have done. One Shining Path author, Miguel Qorawa, for example, called *Los rendidos* part of a mission to "confirm the official story of the internal war . . . to corroborate the state's version."<sup>6</sup> The book, however, does just the opposite. Given the conflicting perspectives and controversies that surround Agüero, it's abundantly clear that what happened during the war and how those events should be remembered and interpreted are still hot-button issues in Peru.

Shining Path emerged in the 1970s out of the multiple divisions that existed within the Peruvian Left. Comprised of Maoists who defended China's Cultural Revolution, the group began its insurgency in 1980, at the very point when democracy was returning to Peru following twelve years of military rule under two radically different presidents: General Juan Velasco Alvarado and his "progressive" military dictatorship (1968–1975), which had advocated for agrarian reform and nationalized key industries, and the conservative Francisco Morales Bermúdez (1975–1980). Shining Path had no interest in reform. Based in the Andean region of Ayacucho, the group detonated change that was radical and fast and that sought to dismantle the entire Peruvian state to liberate the oppressed. To wage the "people's war," Shining Path treated brutally anyone who did not support its cause and attacked areas where the Peruvian state was weak. In fact, it even targeted union leaders, community organizers, and members of other leftist political parties whom it considered far less radical and more conciliatory toward the state.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to other Latin American guerrilla groups, Shining Path militants did not wear uniforms or respect civilians, and they rejected the Geneva Convention's terms of war and the very concept of human rights.<sup>8</sup> The Peruvian state paid little attention to them in the initial years, unconcerned about what was happening in the distant Andean communities in which they operated. But by late 1982, President Fernando Belaúnde (1963–1968, 1980–1985) recognized the danger Shining Path represented and sent in the military, declaring a state of emergency in seven provinces and suspending civil liberties. Frustrated by the mobility of Shining Path, which took full advantage of the mountainous Andes to wage

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its battles, the military unleashed a brutal campaign against anyone suspected of supporting the guerrillas. Hands were bloody on all sides.

Indigenous peasants found themselves caught between Shining Path and the military and began to migrate massively to Lima and other cities. Throughout the 1980s, Shining Path expanded, and as it did the body count increased. All the while, the Party developed a cultlike following for its leader, Abimael Guzmán, alias “Presidente Gonzalo,” a professor from the University of Ayacucho who ultimately became a mythical figure. Guzmán managed to radicalize his followers using intense Maoist rhetoric aimed at overthrowing the state and preying on people’s desire to undo centuries of inequality, racism, and discriminatory practices. Intelligence services ultimately understood that capturing Guzmán was the key to defeating Shining Path. After several near misses, on September 12, 1992, they cornered him and some of his inner circle in an ordinary house in an upper-middle-class Lima neighborhood. Shining Path continued the fight, but the loss of its leader and founder ultimately spelled defeat.

President Alberto Fujimori (1990–2000) ruled Peru at the time of Guzmán’s capture and took full credit for it—an interpretation that many in the intelligence services reject. Elected in 1990, Fujimori became increasingly authoritarian, shutting down Congress in 1992. In 2000, he resigned after videos surfaced showing his right-hand man, Vladimiro Montesinos, handing out large bribes to members of Congress and others. Fujimori was arrested in Chile in 2005 and extradited to Peru two years later. In 2009, he was sentenced to twenty-five years in jail for mass human rights abuses but was released in late 2017 due to his “failing health.” This proved to be part of a quid pro quo between Peru’s president at the time, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, and Fujimori’s son, Kenji, who was a member of Congress and promised to stop his party’s push to remove Kuczynski from office in exchange for his father’s release. In October 2018, however, the Supreme Court rescinded Fujimori’s release, ordering him back to jail.<sup>9</sup> Today, his daughter, Keiko, leads his movement; although she, too, faced charges for money laundering, she was released in November 2019 from pretrial detention. Fujimori’s supporters continue to claim that he “saved” Peru from terrorism and economic decline. His critics argue that he was a dictator who ruled over a brutal and corrupt regime. This division between the Fujimoristas and their adversaries strongly marks Peruvian politics today. Keiko has twice lost presidential elections by narrow margins in the second round, in 2011



and 2016. Moreover, the Fujimoristas stand at the forefront of those critical of Agüero, the TRC, LUM, and human rights groups.<sup>10</sup>

Beyond the controversies surrounding Agüero and his memoir, his abilities as a writer and the honesty with which he tells his life story explain the success of *Los rendidos*. He never lapses into melodrama and instead recounts the intensities of his life in an almost matter-of-fact way. He deemphasizes death, destruction, and car bombs—though these realities formed the backdrop of his childhood—and instead foregrounds the memory of his parents and the many challenges that he faced as an *hijo de Senderistas*, the child of Shining Path militants. He tackles head-on the issue of his own responsibility (if any) as a child who, on occasion, participated as an intermediary in his parents' militant activities. Throughout the book, he offers deep, pointed, and personal reflections on memory, impunity, guilt, and forgiveness, subjects that even today are difficult to broach publicly in Peru. All the while, his talents as a writer allow him to move seamlessly among personal memories, political and historical commentary, and philosophical and ethical reflection. The blending of such diverse registers, which bridge the individual and collective while placing Peru into dialogue with other cases of historical violence, makes *Los rendidos* a truly unique book.

Throughout the text, the reader senses Agüero searching for a language to comprehend and convey his own experience as well as the violence of the Shining Path period, one that remains so controversial that Peruvians still cannot agree on what to call it. Most analysts use the term *internal armed conflict*, which conservatives energetically oppose, claiming that it places the guerrillas on an equal moral footing with the military. Conservatives prefer the term *terrorism*; others use *civil war*. At the same time, Agüero takes issue with the language from and about the era, pointing out the limitations of dominant paradigms for thinking about and addressing complex scenarios of violence. For example, he distances himself from human rights discourse, questioning its impersonal, bureaucratic rhetoric and its deployment of overly cautious or even euphemistic language. Taking the entire academic field of memory studies to task with equal critical vehemence, he stated the following about *Los rendidos* in a 2017 interview: "I wanted to move away from the comfort that comes from speaking the language of memory studies. . . . In the end, [such language] tricks us by offering optimistic [ways out of] highly complex questions."<sup>11</sup>

Agüero knows that violent conflicts such as the one Peru lived for twenty years are rarely black and white, but rather full of gray areas, what he calls the “impurities” of war (see section 41). In that vein, he seeks to humanize *all* the victims, underlining that they were much more than statistics or collateral damage. He challenges those who would understand the era as a noble fight against “terrorism,” pointing out how such an interpretation only justifies horrendous human rights abuses and oversimplifies what was happening in different locales around the country.<sup>12</sup> In the same breath, he categorically rejects the rigidity or even heartlessness of Shining Path defenders who rationalize tens of thousands of dead in the name of a higher, ultimately defeated, greater good. His rejection of orthodox or Manichean views from *both* the Maoist Left and the Far Right emerges, for example, in the painful recollections he offers in the wake of his mother’s death. He describes the scorn he felt not only toward members of the security forces who threatened him, killed his mother, and abandoned her body on a Lima beach but also toward a representative of Shining Path who offered to provide him with the names of his mother’s executioners in case he wanted to seek revenge.

But Agüero doesn’t want revenge. Instead, he prefers to think about what forgiveness might mean in the face of so much hatred. He knows that his parents (and particularly his father) held important roles in Shining Path and could, in that capacity, be seen as perpetrators; yet he also knows they were victims of the Peruvian state that ordered their deaths. His parents, like him and so many others, are therefore inhabitants of a complex and fraught moral terrain.

Throughout the text, Agüero probes and polemicizes the definition of who is “innocent” and who is not, scrutinizing the distinction between perpetrator and victim. Some readers believe that he is criticizing the human rights community for not assuming the defense of Shining Path. He denies this, stressing instead his interest in illuminating gray areas and silenced topics. The relationship between Shining Path and human rights organizations was certainly adversarial and tense. Shining Path disdained the concept of human rights, casting organizations such as Amnesty International as defenders of the bourgeois order.<sup>13</sup> Members of Shining Path executed civilians, set off car bombs, and relied on other forms of violence; they never used uniforms to distinguish themselves from civilians. Furthermore, they counted on their own cadre of lawyers and ridiculed and even threatened human rights activists. Through-

out the conflict, Peruvian human rights organizations such as the Asociación pro Derechos Humanos (Association for Human Rights) and the Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos (National Coordinator for Human Rights) criticized both the armed forces and Shining Path, underlining their disregard for international norms and bringing to light mass killings and other atrocities. These organizations received threats from both sides.<sup>14</sup>

*The Surrendered* is not an epic tale but the story of everyday Peruvians who played roles large and small in a brutally painful chapter in their country's history. In *Persona* (Person, 2017), which won Agüero the Peruvian Premio Nacional de Literatura (National Literary Prize) for nonfiction, he clearly rejects epic narratives that would seek to redeem complicated historical actors: "Poor us if we [those with links to Shining Path] need an epic poem [*epopeya*] to contest the violence of those who deny what happened. Is it a matter of swapping civilian heroes for military heroes? . . . Instead, isn't it a matter of overcoming all heroic discourse?"<sup>15</sup> To get beyond heroes and villains, Agüero gives readers an on-the-ground, nuanced view of life in the 1980s and 1990s. His story offers no easy solutions, leaving the reader standing on uncertain ground, far removed from the binary of *us* and *them* that so often fuels discussions of political violence.

### Silvia and José Manuel

Much of *The Surrendered* revolves around Agüero's parents, Silvia Solórzano Mendivil (1945–1992) and José Manuel Agüero Aguirre (1948–1986), to whom he dedicates the book. *The Surrendered*, however, does not aim to tell the story of their lives. It gives the reader glimpses of those lives, snippets that remain emblazoned on the memory of a child (now an adult) who lost his parents prematurely. It is therefore a long meditation composed of anecdotes, flashes of memory, philosophical musings, and notes from Agüero's personal diaries kept over many long and painful years. In these pages, a son who has lost his parents struggles to make sense of it all.

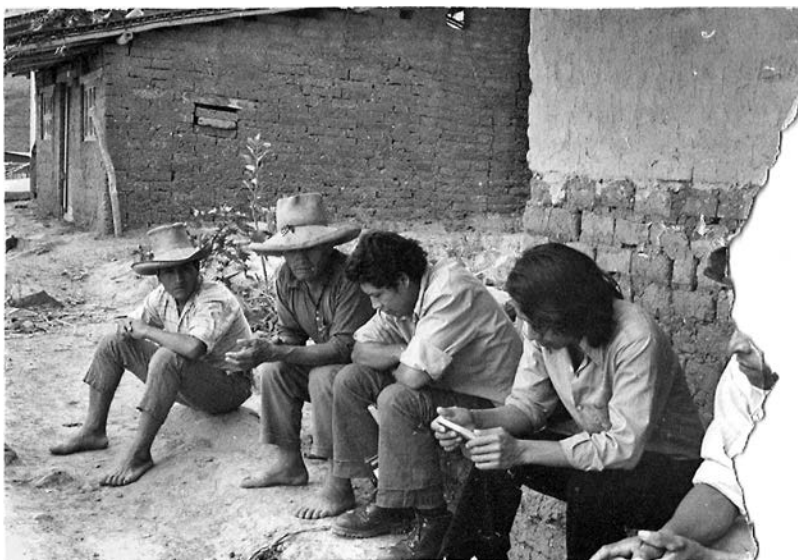
Agüero's parents were part of the 1960s generation that sought radical change through leftist politics. His mother began in the "orthodox" Communist Party and then moved around from the Trotskyists to the



José Manuel Agüero Aguirre, Silvia Solórzano Mendivil, and their oldest child. Tinajones, Lambayeque, October 1973. From Agüero Solórzano family photo album. Used by permission of José Carlos Agüero.

MIR, which had in its earlier incarnation fought an unsuccessful guerilla war in central Peru in the mid-1960s. Agüero recalls his mother's political dedication but also her beautiful voice, wistfully noting that she could have been a singer. He seems puzzled as to how she ultimately landed in Shining Path after passing through multiple parties and movements of a much different ilk. Her free spirit, broad culture, and generosity seemed a mismatch with Shining Path's dogmatism and demand for absolute loyalty. In fact, throughout the text, Agüero notes his mother's disagreements with the Party ("the P," as he sometimes calls it), such as when she organized a jail riot in allegiance with common prisoners in Chorrillos, prompting the ire of Shining Path leaders. At times, he questions whether his mother ever wanted to be in Shining Path at all, calling her, ironically, a "second-rate terrorist." For her disobedience, she was ultimately punished severely by both the brutal prison system and Shining Path.

When things got bad, Silvia Solórzano's family and friends urged her to leave the Party and seek safe haven in exile. She was tempted to follow



José Manuel Agüero Aguirre (*third from left*), comunidad campesina Penachí, La Ramada, Lambayeque, April 1974. From Agüero Solórzano family photo album. Used by permission of José Carlos Agüero.

their advice. Why she never chose to flee, even when she knew she was being watched and hunted, mystifies and bedevils Agüero. He hints that his mother's loyalty to his dead father and to her children, as well as to other comrades whom she felt compelled to support, kept her from leaving; she understood that she was trapped in a sinking ship but believed she had ethical obligations to her comrades if not to the Party itself. There is also a sense of inevitability to Silvia Solórzano's fate. After her release from prison in 1984, security forces kept close tabs on her and her husband. Had she decided to get out of Shining Path, both the Party and those who opposed it would have looked upon her as guilty. She was indeed a marked woman and presumably thought there was no going back.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, we find Silvia Solórzano running a small store at San Marcos University in Lima, typing theses and selling photocopies, books, and other materials to students. The security forces kept an eye on her and visited the store often. On May 26, 1992, just four months before the capture of Shining Path leader Abimael Guzmán, an event that detonated the guerrilla organization's rapid decline, under-

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cover military officers picked Solórzano up at San Marcos University and took her to a beach south of Lima, shooting her three times. Once she was dead, they pinned a sign on her that read, “This is how traitors die,” a clumsy attempt to blame Shining Path for her murder—a story that no one believed. More than an effort to weaken Shining Path, Solórzano’s execution was an act of revenge, a message from state security forces that all those who supported the movement would be punished. Agüero portrays his mother with deep love and painful remorse about why she never abandoned Shining Path. He discusses the terrible combination of relief and guilt he felt in the days immediately following her execution. He thanks her profoundly for many things, including making sure that he and his siblings did not join Shining Path.

Like Solórzano, José Carlos Agüero’s father, José Agüero Aguirre, joined various leftist organizations. In the early 1970s, he met Silvia while doing political work in the Huancayo area, located in the Andes east of Lima. He abandoned his studies at UNI to become a union leader in Lima in the late 1970s. He was imprisoned in July 1977 for participating in and instigating a mass national strike against the Morales Bermúdez military regime.

At that point, the family’s economic situation worsened suddenly and drastically: Agüero Aguirre was blacklisted from jobs because people knew he was a union organizer. José Carlos suspects that his father joined Shining Path around 1982, when the Maoist movement was making inroads into Peru’s embattled unions. In 1983, Agüero Aguirre was imprisoned again, this time for his affiliation with Shining Path, but was released due to lack of evidence. Soon thereafter he went underground, and José Carlos saw less of him. His father would appear only occasionally at the family home.

The definitive episode came in 1984 when Agüero Aguirre and four comrades attacked a police station to steal arms but were rebuffed. José Carlos’s father fled but was captured. At least one policeman died in the altercation, an event that torments José Carlos, who recognizes that his father presumably was responsible for killing at least one person and was therefore the “perpetrator” of a crime. From there Agüero Aguirre was taken to the prison island known as El Frontón, the site of the infamous 1986 massacre in which he lost his life. José Carlos remembers that during his last visit to see his father at El Frontón, Agüero Aguirre warned



# HORIZONTE ★ OBRERO

PERIODICO del SINDICATO  
de OBREROS de INRESA



RESPONSABLE: Sindicato de  
Obreros de INRESA.  
DIRECCION: Av. Hipólito  
Unánué 314 Urb. La Colonial  
Ciudad Obregón.

Nº 19  
7 años al ser  
fundado.

NUMERO DEL: 26 de Julio 1977  
Mimeografía 14 C 6027  
Resolución Prefectural 1990-73  
PRECIO: Un Sol

## HUELGA NACIONAL UNITARIA ! DESPEDIDOS ! REPOSICION ! ! ABAJO el D.S. 040-77 ! ESTABILIDAD LABORAL !

Los trabajadores peruanos hemos demostrado, el día 19 de Julio, una poderosa fuerza resultado de la UNIDAD.

No aceptamos ningún amonesta y resueltamente la Clase Obrera y los diversos sectores explotados paralizó en forma masiva las labores, oponiéndose de este modo a las diversas medidas del Gobierno y los Capitalistas contra el obrero, la estabilidad, nuestros derechos y Conquistas Sindicales.

La mejor prueba de que dicha Paralización fue un éxito rotundo de parte de los trabajadores, está en el hecho de que el Gobierno ha dado el D.S. 040-77 que ORDENA despidir en el plazo máximo de 15 días a TODOS LOS DIRIGENTES RESPONSABLES de la Paralización. Lo que significa aproximadamente 150 despidos más de los diferentes Organizaciones Sindicales que eteco hoy fieramente el Gobierno un apoyo abierto a los Capitalistas. Hay que tener en cuenta además que dicho Decreto Supremo ordena incluso el despido de los considerados "Instigadores" u "Organizadores" escogidos por la empresa.

La empresa INRESA, representante de la más negra capa de los capitalistas, no se ha quedado atrás e implementa inmediatamente la despidida de prácticamente toda la Directiva de nuestra combativa Organización Sindical. El día 23 se ha despedido a nuestro compañero JESUS COCHA ZAVALETA, Sec. General; a FERNANDO REBATA NAZA, Sub.Sec.General;

AMERICO MURILLO U., Sec. de Defensa; VICTOR NIQUE RAMOS, Sub. Sec. de Defensa; MAXIMO PUELLES U., Sec. de Organización; FREDY ALFARO J., Sub.Sec. Prensa y Prop.; JOSE AGUIERO A., Sec. de Técnica y Est.; LUIS LOPEZ BARCENAS, Sub.Sec. Técnico y Est.; MARCELINO RIGSE, Sec. de Seguridad Social; JUAN MERINO, Sec. de Disciplina y a nuestro compañero ANTONIO BARRIGA GAMARRA Ex.Sec. General y Dirigente de la FETIMP.

Al igual que en nuestra base, y al amparo del mismo D.S. 040-77, se ha despedido a Dirigentes, Ex.Dirigentes, Delegados de Sección, compañeros activistas de BATA RIMAC (42), EPSA (14), CAMENA 28, VALE AUSACO (12), TEXTIL LA NERA 12, MORAVECO...y siguen, esclareciendo por nuestra parte, que ésta es una pequeña comparación con la cantidad de Certas Materiales de Despido que se han juntado en las Oficinas y que se están repartiendo.

QUE INTENTA EL GOBIERNO Y LOS CAPITALISTAS CONTRA LA CLASE OBRERA Y LOS SECTORES EXPLOTADOS ? ...

Está bien definido, lo que buscan es DESTRUIR nuestras Organizaciones Sindicales, DESTRUIR todo lo que significa conciencia clasista, someter a los trabajadores al miedo, a que no nos defendamos y que no nos movilizamos bajo la amenaza de perder la estabilidad...y no arrogan ningún punto planteado en la plataforma común de lucha por la que nos fuimos unificadamente el Pero el 19.

sigue

Horizonte Obrero (INRESA Workers Union newsletter), July 26, 1977.

José Manuel Agüero Aguirre, José Carlos's father, is listed in the fifth line of the second column as one of the union leaders unjustly fired by the company for organizing a strike. Personal copy owned by Charles F. Walker.

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his son that he could sense something was amiss and that the family should remain vigilant. He was right.

On June 19, 1986, Shining Path members rioted in three Lima prisons—Lurigancho, San Juan Bautista (El Frontón), and Santa Bárbara—just as the Socialist International was meeting in Lima, at the invitation of Peru's young and dashing president, Alan García (1985–1990, 2006–2011). Hoping to gain worldwide attention and discredit García, the rioters took prison guards and a few journalists hostage and demanded better conditions and freedom for five hundred prisoners. Negotiations led nowhere, and government forces attacked. Shining Path controlled El Frontón, but the navy used grenades and automatic weapons to stop the resistance. Hundreds were killed during the uprising, hundreds more executed in the following days. Agüero Aguirre was part of one of the final groups to surrender. According to one account, a Shining Path prisoner fingered Agüero Aguirre as a leader of the uprising. The navy officers took him aside, tortured him, and then executed him.<sup>16</sup>

José Carlos Agüero had a more difficult relationship with his father than with his mother. He remembers the good times and the bad with mixed emotions. He recalls with great affection, for example, their chess games and how his father taught him the basics of soccer, an important survival skill for getting by in public school. He lovingly recalls his large, dark-skinned father (whom many called El Negro Agüero) dashing off on his motorcycle or failing miserably when trying to start a business to alleviate the family's constant economic woes. He mentions, with pride, that his father would talk to him about politics and answer his questions about the political pamphlets he'd find lying around the house. Because his father was a politicized man through and through, José Carlos has less trouble understanding his father's participation in Shining Path, though he never justifies the actions he took as a member of the Party. The son recalls his father's stubbornness, the fact that he was a man of action, and his father's impatience with many leftists who shied away from their revolutionary ideals and called for participation in elections. All of these characteristics cohere with the image of the resolute, unwavering Shining Path guerrilla.

*The Surrendered* describes a family hard-pressed for money, always anxious about the threat of arrest, and balancing numerous commitments, both familial and political. Agüero's parents had to steal time



away from the Party to spend it with him and his two siblings. When they did, Shining Path members looked askance at his mother for giving attention to her children instead of to the cause. The family, always under threat of being discovered, had to change residences often, which was devastating for young José Carlos and his siblings. While his parents were in jail, José Carlos had to deal with the stigma of being labeled at school as the son of terrorists. He faced ridicule and disdain not only from his friends and the school director but also from extended family members who wanted to distance themselves from their “terrorist” relatives.

But the many pressures of the guerrilla war were not the only challenges on the domestic front. Agüero’s mother confronted his father about a lover he had taken, and his father tearfully moved out. José Carlos and his siblings later met “the other woman” while visiting their father at El Frontón prison. His father’s mistress was ultimately arrested and dealt a long jail sentence for her participation in Shining Path. Agüero suspects that she may have joined Shining Path at his father’s urging.

The experience of the Agüero-Solórzano family reveals that only two possibilities existed within the world of Shining Path: you were either with the Party or against it. The absolute commitment of belonging to Shining Path—a loyalty that, according to Party codes, was supposed to supersede “petty bourgeois sentimentalism” and all domestic bonds—marked the family indelibly in every aspect of their lives, from their daily routines to their time for one another. Throughout the book, Agüero makes these enormous tensions seem mundane, painfully ordinary, which reveals something about how a cataclysmic period in Peruvian history was lived by real people on the ground. The domestic melds with the political in passages that show how history reverberates in the lives of spouses, parents, children, comrades, and neighbors, changing those lives forever. Agüero grew up understanding that at any moment his parents could be arrested, imprisoned, and executed. In the end, they were. Those events marked his life and serve as the foundation for his memories.

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## Agüero the Author

Since the publication of *Los rendidos*, Agüero has continued to work as an activist, scholar, and editor and to flourish as a multifaceted writer. He has developed the critical views expressed here on human rights language and practices, questioning the search for objectivity and safe discourse. He also criticizes academics for their distance from Peru's intense battles over memory and politics. Agüero relentlessly demands that Peru reassess the period of Shining Path violence rather than simply pass over it as a period of national trauma that needs to be overcome. Nonetheless, he is much more than a critic, a gadfly, or a maverick who operates from the margins. To the contrary, he enthusiastically participates in public debates, collaborates with numerous communities, and has become a respected public intellectual. His empathy and willingness to dialogue have appeased some of his critics, although for many on the right, he will always remain a *terrorista* (by inheritance) who does not deserve a public voice.

Agüero works with numerous social organizations and movements, including those that aid the victims of Shining Path's violence. As he mentions in our interview with him, numerous children of people killed by Shining Path have approached him for help with their own traumas and with coming to terms with their pasts. Among his many activities, Agüero leads a workshop for "victims" (a term he questions) and oversees a project producing podcasts that feature testimonies from the period of Internal Armed Conflict. In these and other activities, he builds on the call by the late historian Carlos Iván Degregori, his mentor and friend, to "humanize" the conflict, to probe its multiple meanings, and to understand its ghastly consequences on a personal and societal level.

Agüero has published several books of poetry, including *Enemigo* (Enemy, 2016). In the award-winning *Persona*, he uses essays, poems, sketches, collages, maps, and photographs to probe his memories and perceptions of the past and present, developing many of the themes and topics he began to raise in *Los rendidos*. With Pablo Sandoval, he has published an oral biography of the historian Carlos Iván Degregori, *Apren- diendo a vivir se va la vida* (Learning to live, life goes by, 2015). Sandoval and Agüero interviewed their mentor in the final months of his struggle with cancer, producing a remarkable portrait; Agüero also helped edit the fourteen-volume *Obras escogidas de Carlos Iván Degregori* (Selected

works of Carlos Iván Degregori, 2011–2016). With the distinguished historian Ponciano del Pino, he has published *Cada uno un lugar de memoria: Fundamentos conceptuales del Lugar de Memoria, la tolerancia y la inclusión social* (Everyone is a place of memory: conceptual foundations of the place of memory, tolerance, and social inclusion, 2014), an examination of LUM. He is also the author of the children's book *Cuentos heridos* (Wounded stories, 2017), which—not surprisingly—breaks with tradition and addresses issues of violence and memory, topics rarely seen in children's literature. In addition, he has coedited two anthologies on memory and education.<sup>17</sup> In short, José Carlos Agüero has become an important and inspiring figure who challenges the status quo in a variety of fields, including history, memory studies, poetry, and human rights and activism. All of these strands contribute to *The Surrendered*.

Translating Agüero's book was no easy task. *Los rendidos* is deeply rooted in Peru's social and historical fabric, though it contains many universal themes—guilt, shame, forgiveness—that speak to the experiences of other societies around the world that struggle to mend deep divides after violence and atrocity. Given the complexity of its subject matter, the book does not provide easy answers. Instead, it deploys the rhetorical question as a key feature of its composition and maintains a constant poetic air. Neither essay nor memoir nor testimony nor autobiography nor academic study, Agüero's book contains elements of all of these genres, blending them beautifully into an intimate, self-reflective poetic key. The author intentionally speaks in a fragmented way, fueled by doubt more than certainty. Sixty-seven vignettes, some of which were originally part of a blog that the author maintained, give shape to a book that Agüero says contains no “finished proposals.”

Working closely with the textures of Agüero's voice has taught us that the shame that comes from being the son of two people whom Peruvian society calls “terrorists” can manifest even on a linguistic and syntactical level. Throughout *Los rendidos*, we find an *I* who constantly hides and reveals himself in a painful process of self-discovery. In that vein, the book contains an abundant use of the passive voice and of the word *but*, which Agüero deploys to start sentences or introduce questions whose purpose is to tease out additional shades of gray for his readers' consideration. The register of his voice shifts constantly: he speaks at once as a historian, as a human rights activist, as someone who worked for the truth commission, and as a child who played a role in some of Shining

Path's operations. Through it all, the *I* struggles to appear on the page, to know itself, to write an identity.

In one of the book's most moving sections (part II, section 12), Agüero narrates his mother's wake in the family home after her body was found on a Lima beach. To recount this painful scene, he positions himself almost as an external observer rather than as a direct participant. He watches his relatives and their behavior as if he were a fly on the wall. From his removed position, he takes his relatives to task for their false demeanor: they extend condolences and say pleasant things about José Carlos's mother when, he knows, they really thought she was a "terrorist." Throughout the scene, Agüero searches for his mother but never finds her. Her persona eludes him. He cannot articulate who she was, what motivated her, why she abandoned her children for the "cause," or what her final breaths might have been like as she lay dying on the beach. Like his mother at the moment of her death (and in life), Agüero longs for peace. This search is perhaps his book's most salient feature.

The idea of surrender that inspires Agüero's title functions as a leit-motif and acquires various connotations in the text. It alludes to the injustice of his parents' deaths, who died at the hands of state agents in a condition of surrender (but not capitulation). It speaks, as well, to his parents' total commitment, or surrender, to the cause of Shining Path and, conversely, to this group's absolute rejection of ceding ground or accepting the viewpoint of others. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it speaks to José Carlos's own need to surrender, to make himself vulnerable so that he can ask for and grant forgiveness.

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## Notes

- 1 Comisión de la Verdad, *Informe final*. The full report is available only in Spanish, although there is a summary in English. Most analysts now consider 69,280 an underestimate and argue that the death toll actually approached 100,000.
- 2 For a fascinating dialogue between Agüero and Gavilán, see University of California, Davis, "Shining Path 2016 HIA Agüero Gavilán." For another poignant memoir, see Llamajha Mitma and Heilman, *Now Peru*.

- 3 Peru has implemented a series of laws that prohibit “apologies for terrorism”—that is, justification or proselytism in favor of Shining Path. See, for example, Article 316 of the Penal Code (2017), legislation enacted by prominent Fujimoristas.
- 4 Álvarez Rodrich, “Apología.”
- 5 On debates about memory in Peru, see del Pino and Yezer, *Las formas*; González, *Unveiling Secrets*; Milton, *Art from a Fractured Past*; Milton, *Conflicted Memory*; Theidon, *Intimate Enemies*; Uccelli et al., *Atravesar el silencio*; Vich, *Poéticas del duelo*. For a recent overview of Shining Path, see Starn and La Serna, *Shining Path*. Other key analyses include Degregori, *How Difficult*; Gorriti, *Shining Path*; Stern, *Shining and Other Paths*. On rape, see Boesten, *Sexual Violence*.
- 6 Qorawa, “Prólogo,” 11.
- 7 Degregori, *How Difficult*, 169–70; Comisión de la Verdad, *Informe final*, 8:355–358.
- 8 On Shining Path’s dismissal of the Geneva Convention and, in general, the notion of human rights, see Comisión de la Verdad, *Informe final*, 3:293–318, 8:357.
- 9 On Fujimori, see Burt, *Political Violence*; Conaghan, *Fujimori’s Peru*. On the detention and trials against Fujimori, see Burt, “Guilty as Charged”; Méndez, “Significance”; Ulfe and Ilizarbe, “El indulto.” For the global wave of human rights prosecutions, see Sikkink, *Justice Cascade*.
- 10 For an excellent collection on Peruvian politics after Shining Path, see Soifer and Vergara, *Politics after Violence*.
- 11 Agüero, “La épica.” On the use of the term *terrorist* or *terrucos* and stigmatization, see part II, section 4.
- 12 On the official discourse of Shining Path members as robotic terrorists and the military as heroes, see Milton, *Conflicted Memory*.
- 13 See, for example, a 1991 Shining Path internal document that asserts, “It has been proven historically that human rights only serve the oppressing and exploiting classes that oversee imperialist and large landowner-bureaucratic states.” PCP–Sendero Luminoso. “Sobre las dos colinas,” 32. For more quotes, see Comisión de la Verdad, *Informe final*, 3:311.
- 14 The story of the human rights community in this period is still to be written. A valuable source is Youngers, *Peru’s Coordinadora Nacional*. For an overview, see Comisión de la Verdad, *Informe final*, 3:293–318.

- 15 Agüero, *Persona*, 135.
- 16 Most analysts believe that President García ordered the executions. In April 2019, García died by suicide just as he was about to be detained on corruption charges. For more on El Frontón, see Aguirre, “Punishment and Extermination”; Rénique, *La voluntad encarcelada*; Feinstein, “Competing Visions”; Ames et al., *Informe al Congreso*; Congreso de la República, *La barbarie*.
- 17 Uccelli et al., *Atravesar el silencio*; Uccelli et al., *Secretos a voces*.

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