In the summer of 1921, Francisco Mendes left his home in the parish of São Sebastião (Loulé) to work as a seasonal laborer. It was the first of several harvest seasons in which he worked as a reaper in the Alentejo and in the fields near Huelva, in Spain. The oldest of seven siblings, Francisco worked during the rest of the year with his father on their own land and tending the plots they rented in the morgado of Quarteira. Farming provided the family with sustenance and even yielded an occasional surplus that could be sold in the markets of nearby towns, but seasonal labor gave them access to much-needed extra income in cash. Francisco also wanted to save some money to form a family of his own. In 1928, after seven harvesting seasons, he invested his savings in a ticket to Argentina, where he had relatives. He was 25 years old, recently married, and soon to become a father. In Argentina, Francisco worked as a vegetable and flower gardener in the suburbs between Buenos Aires and La Plata; first as a wage laborer, then on his own land. His wife and son joined him seven years later, and his siblings followed the same path over the next decades.

In the nearby parish of São Brás de Alportel, António Pires had also seen how friends, neighbors, and family members had left to work during the summer months or for longer periods. His own father had migrated several times to work in Morocco, the United States, and Argentina. In 1929, when he was 16, he decided to join his father and brother in Morocco. They were all masons and the bustling towns of French Morocco provided ample opportunities for construction work. Since António had not been called to military service yet, and getting the proper departure documentation was both a costly and unpredictable process, he did like many others and made the crossing clandestinely. A guide conducted António and two other migrants along one of the familiar routes for undocumented migrants—first to Seville, from there to the port of Algeciras, and then across the Gibraltar Strait to Tangier. In Morocco, António worked in construction in Rabat and Fez. Upon returning to the village and completing his military service, António
got married. At 25, after a season of temporary work in the Alentejo, he decided to migrate again, this time venturing across the Atlantic. Since the Argentine government had made it more difficult to obtain a migration license, if António wanted to follow the route taken by many fellow villagers and several family members to Argentina, he had to be resourceful. In 1938, he secured a passport to Bolivia and left with two other friends. Once in the port of Buenos Aires, however, they stayed in Argentina. Using the trusted links of personal networks, António made the trip south to Patagonia, where he worked as a mason. He was later joined by his wife and they settled there permanently.

Experiences like those of Francisco and António were common among transatlantic migrants from the Algarve. When Algarvian migrants joined thousands of laborers from other regions in Portugal and Europe in search of opportunities beyond the Atlantic, they did so in a context of existing traditions of labor mobility and applying previous experiences to new circumstances. The destinations may have been new, but the use of migration as a labor strategy and its function in the household economy were not. Algarvian young men had been migrating for centuries to complement the family economy, secure cash, buy land, and start new families.

From the eighteenth century to the mid-1900s, Algarvian migrants participated in internal, international, and transatlantic circuits of labor migration. The individual circumstances and places of origin and destination varied: rural workers from Loulé who worked in the Alentejo harvests, the copper mines of southern Spain, or construction work in São Paulo, Brazil; farmers from Tavira who worked in the Alentejo mines and the fields and company towns of California; fishermen from Olhão who participated in the fishing season off the coast of Spain and also migrated to Angola or the northeast of the United States; artisans from the parishes of Loulé who migrated to Morocco and to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and many other combinations. Sometimes these multiple migration paths were undertaken by the same person; others, by different members of the same family. Still in many other cases, migrants went to only one destination, either following circuits of seasonal or tem-

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1 The two preceding stories are based on information collected through oral history interviews and passport requests’ books. Interviews with Francisco Mendes (Villa Elisa, Aug. 14, 1991) and António Pires [pseud.] (Comodoro Rivadavia, Jan. 14, 2003); Livros de registo de passaportes, 1928 and 1938, Fundo Governo Civil, ADF. Interviews are cited in a short format in the notes; full details are available in the bibliography.