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# Mexican Immigration to the United States

## 1900–1999

A Unit of Study for Grades 7–12

Kelly Lytle Hernandez


**NATIONAL CENTER FOR HISTORY IN THE SCHOOLS**
**University of California, Los Angeles**

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# Table of Contents

# Introduction

## I. Approach and Rationale

*Mexican Immigration to the United States, 1900–1999* is one of over seventy teaching units published by the National Center for History for the Schools that are the fruits of collaborations between history professors and experienced teachers of United States History. They represent specific issues and "dramatic episodes" in history from which you and your students can delve into the deeper meanings of these selected landmark events and explore their wider context in the great historical narrative. By studying crucial turning points in history the student becomes aware that choices had to be made by real human beings, that those decisions were the result of specific factors, and that they set in motion a series of historical consequences. We have selected issues and dramatic episodes that bring alive that decision-making process. We hope that through this approach, your students will realize that history is an ongoing, open-ended process, and that the decisions they make today create the conditions of tomorrow's history.

Our teaching units are based on primary sources, taken from government documents, artifacts, magazines, newspapers, films, private correspondence, literature, contemporary photographs, and paintings from the period under study. What we hope you achieve using primary source documents in these lessons is to have your students connect more intimately with the past. In this way we hope to recreate for your students a sense of "being there," a sense of seeing history through the eyes of the very people who were making decisions. This will help your students develop historical empathy, to realize that history is not an impersonal process divorced from real people like themselves. At the same time, by analyzing primary sources, students will actually practice the historian's craft, discovering for themselves how to analyze evidence, establish a valid interpretation and construct a coherent narrative in which all the relevant factors play a part.

## II. Content and Organization

Within this unit, you will find: Teaching Background Materials, including Unit Overview, Unit Context, Correlation to the National Standards for History, Unit Objectives, and Introduction to *Mexican Immigration to the United States, 1900–1999*; and Lesson Plans with Student Resources. This unit, as we have said above, focuses on certain key moments in time and should be used as a supplement to your customary course materials. Although these lessons are recommended for use by grades 7–12, they can be adapted for other grade levels.

The Teacher Background section should provide you with a good overview of the entire unit. You may consult it for your own use, and you may choose to share it with students if they are of a sufficient grade level to understand the materials.

The Lesson Plans include a variety of ideas and approaches for the teacher which can be elaborated upon or cut as you see the need. These lesson plans contain student resources which accompany

each lesson. The resources consist of primary source documents, handouts and student background materials, and a bibliography.

In our series of teaching units, each collection can be taught in several ways. You can teach all of the lessons offered on any given topic, or you can select and adapt the ones that best support your particular course needs. We have not attempted to be comprehensive or prescriptive in our offerings, but rather to give you an array of enticing possibilities for in-depth study, at varying grade levels. We hope that you will find the lesson plans exciting and stimulating for your classes. We also hope that your students will never again see history as a boring sweep of facts and meaningless dates but rather as an endless treasure of real life stories and an exercise in analysis and reconstruction.

# Teacher Background

## I. Unit Overview

According to the 2000 census, Latinos will soon be the largest minority group in the United States and the vast majority of Latinos are Mexican Americans or Mexican immigrants. How will America adjust to its changing demographics remains to be told, but lessons can be learned from the past. This unit provides teachers and students a lens into the past through primary sources that inform them of the reasons that Mexicans immigrated to the United States and reveal how Mexican immigrants responded to life in the U.S. and how the U.S. responded to Mexican immigration.

## II. Unit Context

This unit covers the entire twentieth century and would fit within a course of study of United States history, immigration, or Mexican-American studies.

## III. Correlation to National History Standards

*Mexican Immigration to the United States,1900–1999* offers teachers opportunities to connect with several standards in four different eras of twentieth-century United States history as delineated in *National Standards for United States History, Basic Edition* (Los Angeles, National Center for History in the Schools, 1996). The unit provides teaching materials that address **Standard 3A** of Era 7, The Emergence of Modern America, 1890–1930; **Standard 1B** of Era 8, The Great Depression and World War II, 1929–1945; **Standard 4A** of Era 9, Postwar United States, 1945 to the early 1970s; and **Standard 2B** of Era 10, Contemporary United States, 1968 to the Present.

Students investigate the social tensions and their consequences in the post World War I era by examining factors that lead to immigration restriction and its impact on Mexican immigration. While studying the Great Depression and World War II, students analyze the effects of repatriation during the 1930s and the establishment of the Bracero program during the war years. In the post-World War II period, students investigate and evaluate the agendas, strategies, and effectiveness of Latino Americans in the quest for civil rights and equal opportunities. For the contemporary period, students analyze and debate the ethics and effectiveness of policies designed to curb undocumented Mexican immigration. Overall, students analyze the push-pull factors that prompted Mexican immigration throughout the twentieth century and identify the major issues that affected immigrants and explain the conflicts these issues engendered.

Students interrogate historical data from a variety of sources including legislative acts, oral histories, graphs, and *corridos*. The unit requires students to engage in historical thinking; to raise questions and to marshal evidence in support of their answers; to analyze cause-and-effect relationships; and to go beyond their textbooks and examine the historical record for themselves.

## IV. Unit Objectives

1. Identify the push and pull factors involved in the immigration process.
2. Compare and contrast quantitative and qualitative primary sources.
3. Analyze the development of Mexican immigration to the United States between 1900 and 1999.
4. Evaluate the strengths and weakness of U.S. immigration policy.

## V. Lessons

Lesson One: Mexican Immigration to the United States, 1900–1999

Lesson Two: In Their Own Words: Oral Histories of Mexican Immigration

Lesson Three: *Corridos*: Songs of the People

Lesson Four: American Responses to Mexican Immigration, 1900–1999

# Lesson One


# Mexican Immigration to the United States 1900–1999

*Retalbo of Domingo Segura* (January 29, 1932)

This retalbo expresses thanks to "Our Lady of San Juan de los Lagos" for being rescued from a near drowning in the Rio Grande, El Paso Texas. The Rio Grande runs along the Texas-Mexico border and thus is a site of border crossings. A *retalbo* is painting on tin with sacred images offered as thanks for a safe journey. The *retalbos* in this unit each reflect a different period of Mexican immigration to the United States and some of the struggles faced while crossing the border or working as an undocumented laborer in the United States.

# Lesson One
# Mexican Immigration to the United States
# 1900–1999

## A. Organizing Question

1. What were the push-pull factors that influenced Mexican immigration to the United States during the 20th century?

## B. Objectives

- To understand the "push-pull" dynamic of immigration.
- To apply the "push-pull" theory to Mexican immigration to the U.S. in the 20th century.

## C. Lesson Activities

*Explain "push" and "pull" factors to the students:*

Men and women take many social and economic conditions into consideration before leaving their homes and immigrating to another country. Difficult conditions known as "push factors," such as poverty, unemployment, or political repression may encourage people to leave their home countries, or *emigrate*; "pull factors," such as access to jobs and religious freedom attract them to enter and live in a different country, or *immigrate* to that country. These "push-pull" factors provide a useful model for understanding why people immigrate.

**Day One**

1. Divide the class into three groups. Each group will be responsible for reading and reporting on one of the three historical summaries of Mexican immigration to the United States. Each summary covers a different time period in the 20th century. Historical Summary Part One (**Student Handout One**) begins in 1900 and ends in 1941. Historical Summary Part Two (**Student Handout Two**) begins in 1942 and ends in 1965. Historical Summary Part Three (**Student Handout Three**) ranges from 1966 to 1999. Ask each group to read its assigned historical summary and discuss the following questions for their time period.
   a. What "push factors" encouraged Mexican emigrants to leave their home country?
   b. What "pull factors" attracted Mexican immigrants to the United States?
   c. What laws, policies, and programs have encouraged or discouraged Mexican immigration to the U.S.?

After the groups have had time to read their historical summary and discussed their answers to the questions above, have the group members fill out a graphic organizer (**Student Handout Four**) that lists the push and pull factors of Mexican immigration to the United States for their assigned time period. Then the group must select a reporter or a team to present the information they have learned to the class. Finally, each group must select two recorders to carefully listen to the other two groups' presentations and fill out graphic organizers for the periods that they did not read about. At the end of this activity, each group should have three graphic organizers reviewing the push and pull factors of Mexican immigration for each of the three historical summaries.

**Key to Vocabulary**

**Student Handout One**

*campesino* rural farmer

*deport* send out of the country

*ejido* a piece of land with communal ownership

*emigrate* leave one's country to live in another

*immigrate* enter a country of which one is not native in order to reside there.

*repatriate* return to the country and/or citizenship of origin

**Student Handout Two**

*bilateral* affecting two sides equally; two-sided

*Bracero Program*
1942 federal program which filled wartime farm labor shortages by allowing growers to bring in Mexican nationals as "guest workers

*United States Border Patrol*
the national police force assigned to prevent undocumented immigration

**Student Handout Three**

*Immigration Act of 1965*
National law that abolished the national origins quota system for granting immigrant visas. Under national origins, the number of people from a given country already living in the United States determined the number of future immigrants. The new law established allocation of immigrant visas on a first come, first served basis, subject to certain exceptions. As a result, the U.S. immigrant population since 1965 has been much more diverse than it was previously.

*Immigration Reform and Control Act*
1986 law which was passed in order to control and deter undocumented immigration to the United States. Its major provisions stipulate legalization

of undocumented aliens who had been continuously unlawfully present since 1982, legalization of certain agricultural workers, sanctions for employers who knowingly hire undocumented workers, and increased enforcement at U.S. borders.

*Operation Hold the Line*
an action initially performed by U.S. Border Patrol in 1993 during which agents formed a human blockade—more than 400 agents and vehicles, posted every 100 yards from one end of El Paso to the other—that would discourage people from attempting to cross.

*peso devaluation*
lowering the value of the peso (the Mexican dollar)

*Proposition 187*
a law passed by California voters on November 8, 1994 which denied public benefits to undocumented aliens in that state.

*undocumented immigration*
entering a country without documents representing permission to enter such as travel, work, or student visas

**Day Two**

1. Have the students create graphs based upon the data tables as follows:

   **Graph 1:** Document 1–A, Part 1
   **Graph 2:** Document 1–A, Part 2
   **Graph 3:** Document 1–A, Part 3
   **Graph 4:** Document 1–B
   **Graph 5:** Document 1–C, years 1942–1965
   **Graph 6:** Document 1–C, years 1966–1999

   Have the students use spreadsheet software, if available, or graph paper. (See sample graphs on pages 11–13) If desired, divide the students into groups and have each group complete one graph.

2. After the graphs are complete, have the students come back together as a class. Guide the students to compare their graphs with the information on their graphic organizers from **Day One**. In this activity the students should be able to identify how the social, political, and economic push and pull factors led to ebbs and flows in Mexican immigration to the United States.

   NOTE: Many who become immigrants each year are already living in the United States under a temporary visa or under some other legal status, or as undocumented aliens. Also, legislation changes sometimes skew immigration statistics for certain

years. For example, the year 1991 marked their change to legal immigrant status under legalization programs in 1987 and 1988.* Guide students to identify overall trends and the corresponding push and pull causes.

*Population Reference Bureau, <www.prb.org>

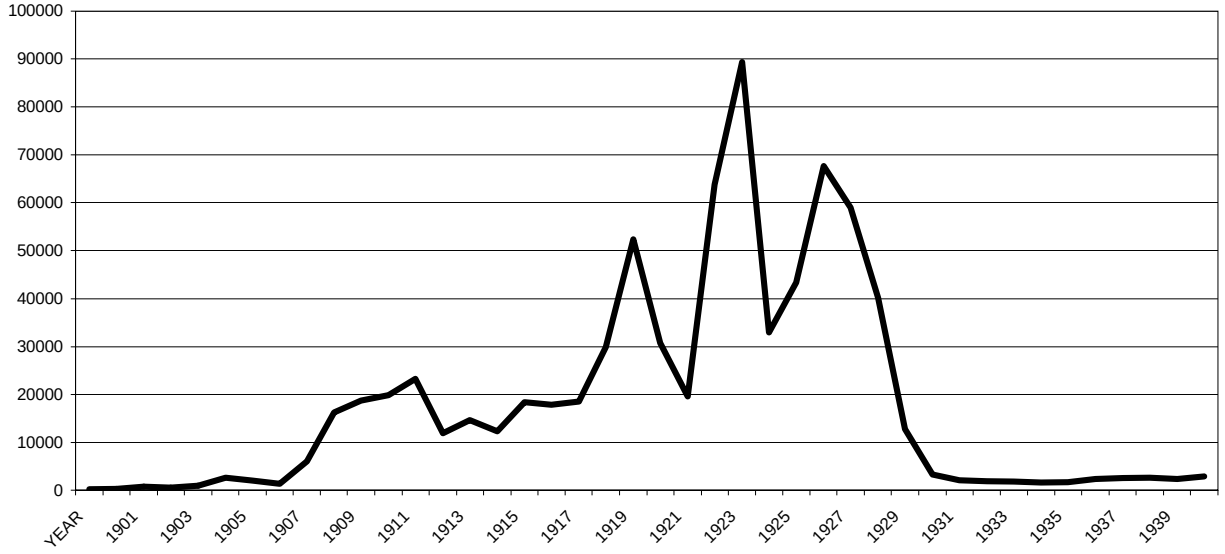
3. Use the following questions to gude the class discussion:
   a) What is the overall trend of Mexican immigration to the U.S. in the 20th century?

   b) What push/pull factors that you have learned about explain the rise and fall of Mexican immigration to the U.S. in the 20th century?

   c) Which factors that you read about contributed to the rise of undocumented immigration from Mexico?

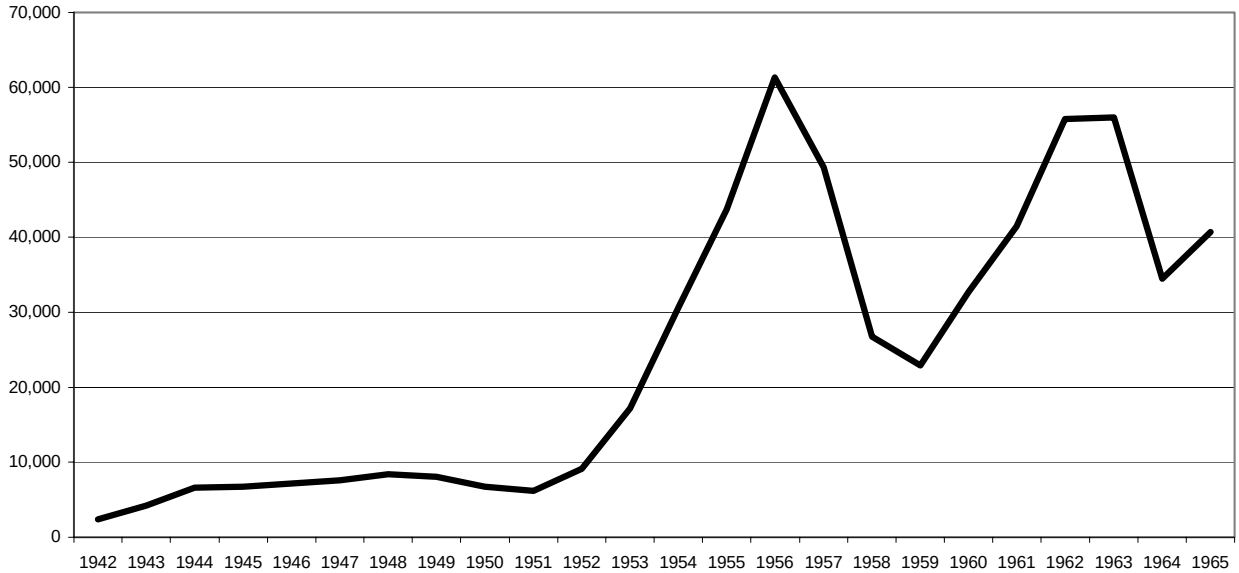
## Document 1–A (Part 1)

**Number of Mexican Immigrants Admitted to the United States, 1900–1941**



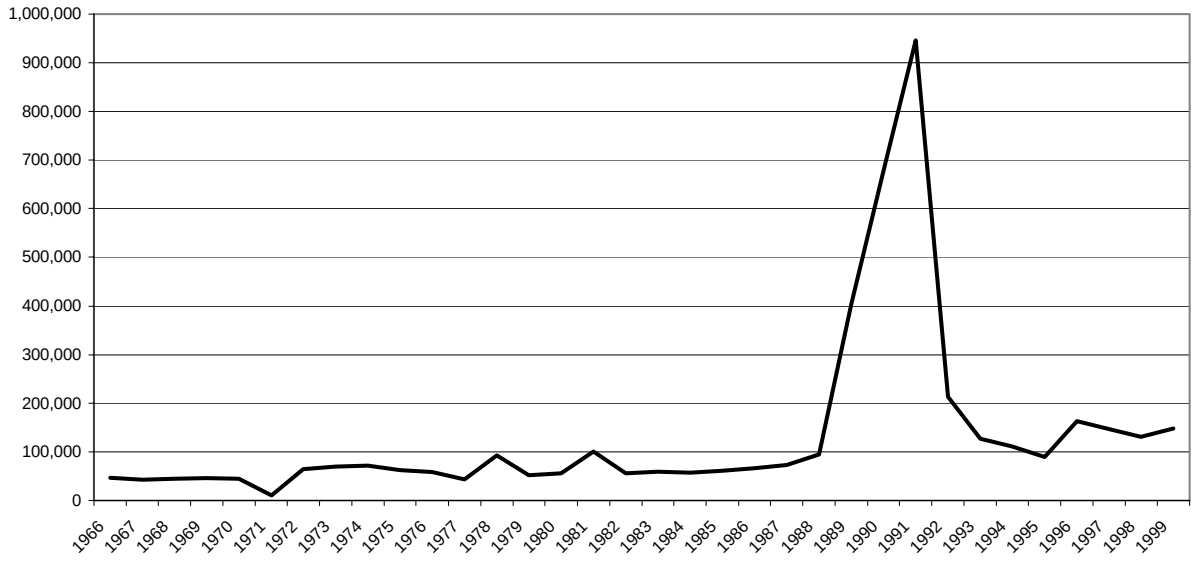

## Document 1–A (Part 2)

**Number of Mexican Immigrants Admitted to the United States, 1942–1965**



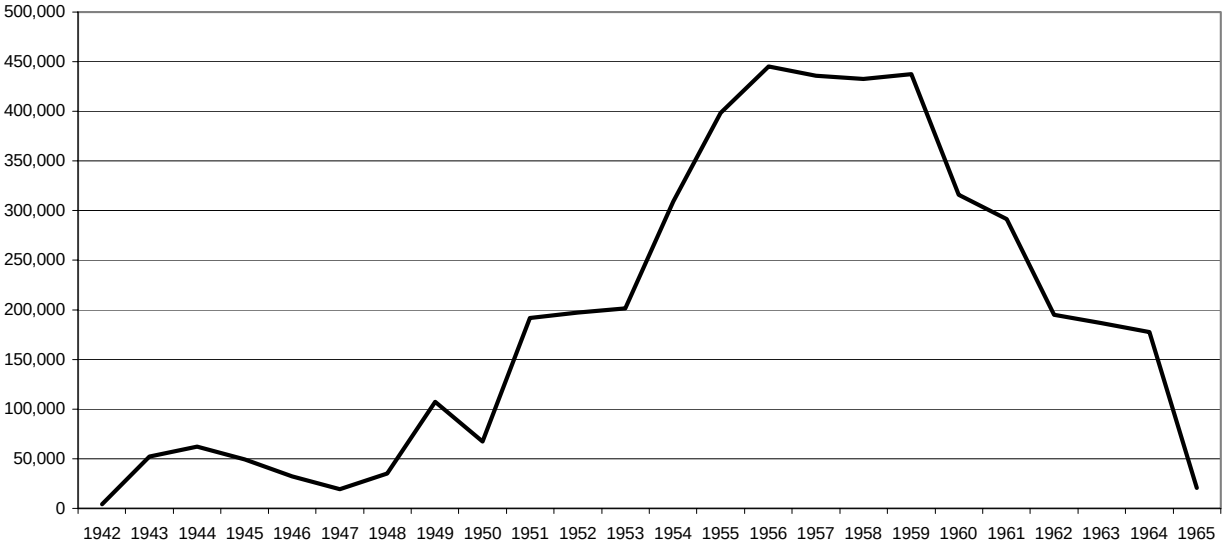
## Document 1–A (Part 3)

**Number of Mexican Immigrants Admitted to the United States, 1966–1999**



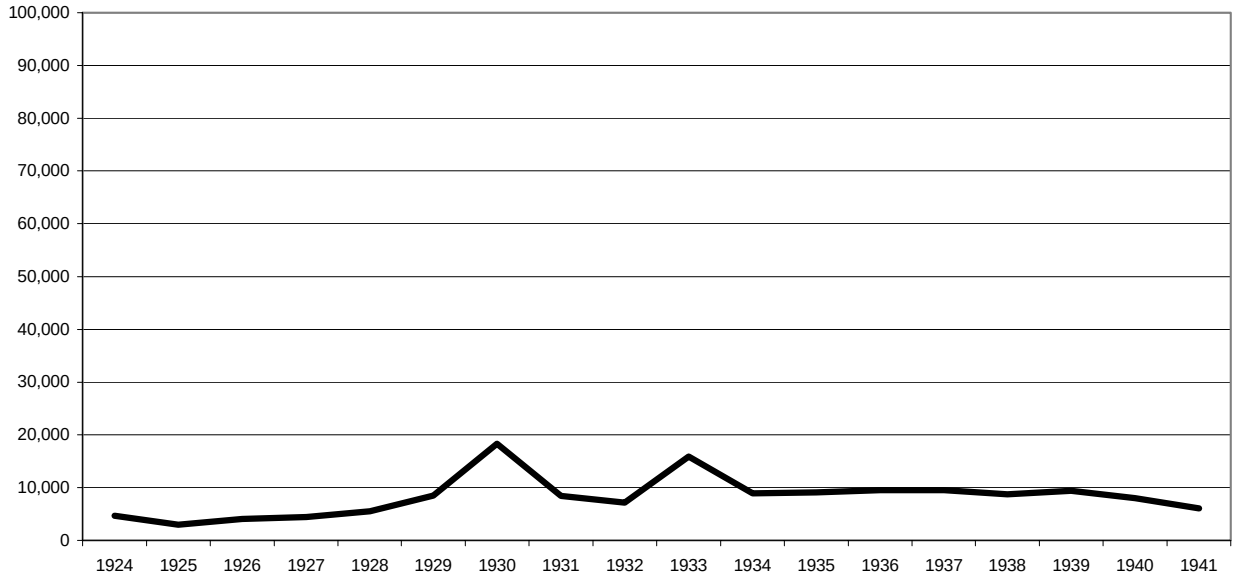

## Document 1–B

**Numbers of Braceros Admitted Annually, 1942–1965**



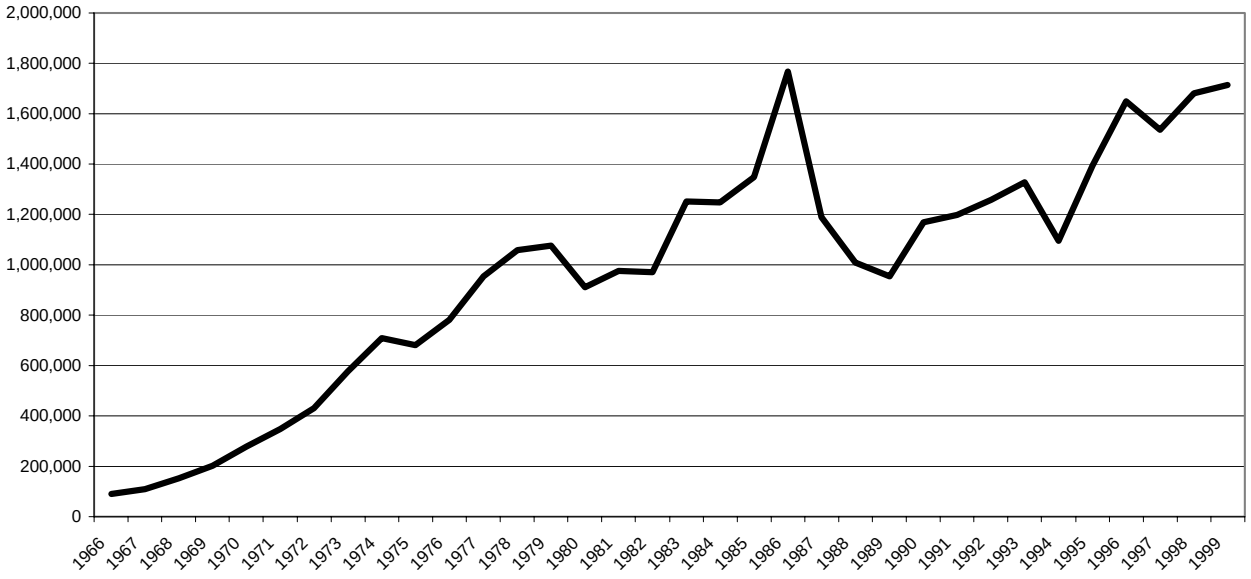
## Document 1–C, years 1942–1965

**Number of Apprehensions by the U.S. Border Patrol, 1942–1965**




## Document 1–C, years 1942–1965

**Number of Apprehensions by the U.S. Border Patrol, 1966–1999**



## Historical Summary Part One
## 1900 to 1941

Throughout the 19th century, much of Mexico's population lived and worked on communally owned lands called *ejidos*. But, when Porifirio Díaz became President of Mexico in 1880, he began confiscating the *ejidos* to sell the land to large land development companies. Without *ejidos*, the Mexican rural population, or *campesinos*, were forced into low wage work on ranches, railroads, and in mines. The devastating blow of the end of the *ejidos* to rural Mexican life was compounded by a population explosion between 1875 and 1910 that increased the Mexican population by 50 percent. The population boom created a labor surplus that depressed wages during a period of drastic inflation on basic foodstuffs. Therefore, at the turn of the century, removal from the land, a large labor surplus, low wages, and high prices on basic foods "pushed" many *campesinos* out of Mexico. In 1910, the Mexican Revolution ousted Porfirio Díaz from power but created chaos and violence until the political conditions of the country stabilized in 1920. Between 1910 and 1920, the revolution induced thousands more to leave Mexico. War refugees impoverished by the ensuing economic turmoil, many Mexicans migrated north to work in the rapidly developing agricultural regions of the southwestern United States.

Viable irrigation systems established in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Calfornia in the early 20th century helped to usher in a massive agricultural boom as land owners planted cotton, citrus, and beet crops. The resulting need for labor to harvest the fields was met by the thousands of *campesinos* fleeing poverty and war in Mexico. Higher wages and political stability drew *campesinos* north across the border. Throughout the 20th century, Mexicans composed over 80 percent of the "army" of migrant laborers that moved between harvests throughout the Southwest, making the immigrant labor pool indispensable.

Mexican immigration to the United States continued to grow until the 1929 when the Great Depression reversed the pattern of Mexican immigration. Although the "push" factor of poverty in Mexico did not end during the Great Depression, the "pull" factor of higher wages in the U.S. evaporated as large growers turned to poor American families instead of Mexicans to harvest their crops. Soon after the Great Depression began, Mexicans who had once been sought for their cheap labor became seen as economic competition. Mexicans quickly found themselves unwelcome in the United States and began to return home to Mexico. During the Great Depression, the annual flow of Mexican immigration to the United States contracted until more Mexicans were repatriated and deported out of the United States than those who immigrated into the United States. Therefore, the Great Depression marks an end in the first stage of Mexican immigration to the United States. Not until World War II sparked an upswing in the U.S. economy did Mexican immigration to the United States begin to increase again.

**Vocabulary Words**

campesinos

deport

ejidos

emigrate

immigrate

repatriate

Mexican emigrating to U.S.
Nuevo Laredo, Mexico

Library of Congress
LC-USZ62-97491 (ca. 1912)


Inspecting a freight train from
Mexico for smuggled immigrants.
El Paso, Texas

Library of Congress
LC-USF34-018222-E (June 1938)
Dorothea Lange, photorapher

## Historical Summary Part Two
## 1942–1965

In 1941 the United States entered World War II, jumpstarting the American economy out of the Great Depression. Mobilization for the war touched every sector of the American economy and placed new demands upon American agriculture. The United States government asked growers to rapidly produce more fruits, vegetables, and cotton to support the war effort at home and abroad. With American men and women employed in the higher wage industrial sectors or serving in the Armed Services, southwestern growers argued that they required more immigrant labor from Mexico to fulfill the nation's production needs. To help growers secure steady labor from Mexico, officials of the United States government approached the Mexican government about the possibility of formally facilitating short-term Mexican immigration to the United States. After considerable debate about the pros and cons of reopening the pathways of Mexican labor migration to the United States, in August 1942 the Mexican government agreed to allow the U.S. government to contract Mexican laborers to work on southwestern farms and railroads on short-term contracts for the duration of the war. The government-to-government, or bilateral, agreement was called the Bracero Program.

U.S. and Mexican officials intended the Bracero Program to stimulate and regulate the immigration of Mexican laborers to the United States. For example, Mexican workers who entered the United States as members of the Bracero program (known as Braceros) were guaranteed a basic labor contract with benefits, such as a minimum wage, health insurance, and adequate housing. Also, Braceros were prohibited from working in any industries other than those where a significant labor need existed, specifically agriculture and railroads. The Bracero Program did successfully initiate a new phase of regulated Mexican immigration, but the program's poor implementation also sparked a dramatic increase in unregulated immigration, otherwise known as undocumented immigration.

Bracero contracts were limited in number and often difficult to obtain. For example, the number of Bracero contracts available varied from year to year and was determined by calculating how many additional non-domestic laborers were needed during any given harvest period. The number of Mexican laborers who desired to work in the United States consistently outnumbered the number of Bracero contracts available. Also, not all Mexican workers were eligible for the Bracero Program since the Mexican government required Braceros applicants to be from a region experiencing serious unemployment. Braceros also had to be at least 14 (there was no upper age limit though older workers and women could legally be paid lower wages), meet certain health requirements, and have previous experience as an agricultural laborer.

Even though many Mexican workers were eligible, the process of successfully securing a Bracero contract was difficult and expensive to undertake. For example, to secure a Bracero contract, prospective Braceros had to travel to official recruitment centers in Mexico. The recruitment centers were often far, and Mexican officials frequently demanded bribes for contracts. The significant number of Mexican workers who were either ineligible for the Bracero Program or unable to undertake the process of securing a Bracero contract began to bypass the program entirely and head north

outside of the control of and to the irritation of both the U.S. and Mexican governments. These workers soon found a loophole in the Bracero Program's implementation that worked to their advantage—if they were apprehended by the U.S. Border Patrol after illegally entering the United States and while working on a U.S. farm, undocumented Mexican immigrants could simply secure a Bracero contract from U.S. officials. This loophole combined with the abundance of Mexican laborers seeking work in the U.S. created a situation in which U.S. Border Patrol apprehension statistics steadily climbed until Border Patrol officers were arresting more Mexicans for illegally entering the U.S. than Braceros were being contracted to work in the United States from Mexico.

Although the Bracero Program was intended to be a short-term wartime program, by 1945 when World War II ended, U.S. and Mexican officials decided to keep the Bracero Program in place, but dramatically reduced the number of Braceros contracts available to Mexican workers. Despite the reduction in Bracero contracts, Mexican worker continued to migrate north for work outside of the parameters of the Bracero Program and outside of the control of U.S. and Mexican officials. When the U.S. entered the Korean War in 1951, the U.S. and Mexican governments began to offer more

Waiting outside the soccer stadium in Mexico City. According to Farm Security Administration employee Hilda Mayer, many had been waiting for five days since hearing of the opportunity to work in the United States.

Howard R. Rosenberg, "Snapshots in a Farm Labor Tradition,"
*Labor Management Decisions*, Volume 3, No. 1 (Winter-Spring, 1993).
Available: < http://are.berkeley.edu/APMP/pubs/lmd/html/winterspring_93/snapshots.html>

Bracero contracts to Mexican workers because the United States was once again experiencing a need for agricultural laborers. The increase was greater than had been experienced during World War II. The numbers continued to rise through 1959; after that, the number of Bracero contracts offered to Mexican agricultural workers began to decline, in part due to the mechanization in cotton and sugar beet production, but also because significant political resistance to the program had developed in the United States and Mexico that would eventually lead to the program's demise in 1965.

Processing forms for the Bracero Program.

Howard R. Rosenberg,
"Snapshots in a Farm Labor Tradition," *Labor Management Decisions*, Volume 3, No. 1 (Winter-Spring, 1993).
Available:
< http://are.berkeley.edu/APMP/pubs/lmd/html/winterspring_93/snapshots.html>

While many Mexican officials saw the Bracero Program as an important policy for reducing poverty in Mexico and maintaining strong foreign relations with the United States, others resented the exodus of Mexican laborers to the United States. In the United States, organized labor opposed the Bracero Program because they believed that Braceros lowered wages. Even southwestern growers disagreed over the usefulness of the program. Many supported the program because it filled their labor needs, while others resented having to agree to Bracero contracts that guaranteed workers such provisions as a minimum wage. Braceros themselves had mixed experiences with the program. Some experienced abuse and discrimination, particularly after 1954 when the United States failed to strictly enforce the provisions of the Bracero contract, while others were able to accomplish their goal of earning good wages.

Although the availability to Bracero contracts waxed and waned over time, throughout the period significant wage differentials between Mexico and the United States was a contintuous enticement to migrate north for better wages. Therefore, a decreased availability of Bracero contracts often simply led to increased undocumented immigration.

This undocumented immigration disturbed both U.S. and Mexican officials both of whom had their own reasons for wanting to strictly regulate the movement of Mexican laborers to the United States. Daily undocumented entries of Mexican laborers reaffirmed the porous character of U.S. borders. American officials worried about border security during the World War II and, later, during the Cold War. For Mexico's part, many Mexican employers protested losing their sources of cheap labor to northern competitors and Mexican officials worried that Mexican laborers would be exploited in the United States if not protected by the Bracero contract. Neither the U.S nor Mexico wished to see the rate of undocumented immigration grow.

The Mexican government placed significant pressure on the United States to aggressively deport all undocumented Mexican immigrants living in the United States as a prerequisite for allowing the Bracero Program to continue after World War II. After the war, the United States Border Patrol experimented with new law enforcement tactics not only for patrolling the U.S.-Mexico border to prevent illegal entries, but also for detecting, arresting, and deporting undocumented Mexican immigrants who had successfully entered the country. The Border Patrol's aggressive deportation campaign climaxed in the summer of 1954 with the implementation of Operation Wetback. During Operation

Wetback, the Border Patrol assigned most of its officers to the U.S.-Mexico border region to apprehend undocumented Mexican immigrants living in the border states. By the end of 1954 they had apprehended and deported over 1,000,000 undocumented immigrants. Operation Wetback outraged many U.S. growers who believed that they depended upon informal and undocumented immigration. The Border Patrol and other Immigration officials helped, encouraged, and often intimidated growers into using Braceros rather than undocumented workers. U.S. officials had hoped that Operation Wetback would successfully discourage Mexicans from illegally entering the U.S. and encourage American employers to use legal sources of labor, but several years later, Border Patrol apprehension statistics began to rise again indicating that undocumented immigration from Mexico continued despite their efforts.

The Bracero Program and undocumented immigration were uneasy siblings. The Bracero Program was intended to be the centerpiece of Mexican immigration policy. In many ways, it was. It reignited the migration of Mexican workers north for short-term employment. However, the program's poor implementation, the tendency to prefer the ease of hiring undocumented workers rather than Braceros, and the surplus of Mexican workers migrating north eventually made undocumented labor the Bracero Program's constant companion. Even so, the Bracero Program survived longer than anyone had intended. It was designed as an emergency wartime effort; yet it did not end until 1965, two decades after the final battles of World War II were fought. Many students of Mexican immigration argue that today's flow of undocumented immigration can be traced back to the networks that the Bracero Program built between U.S. employers and Mexican laborers.

**Vocabulary Words**

bilateral

Bracero Program

United States Border Patrol

## Historical Summary Part Three
## 1966–1999

The Immigration Act of 1965 ushered in a new era of Mexican immigration. Under the National Origins Act of 1924 no limits had been placed on annual immigration from the Western Hemisphere. The 1965 Act, however, imposed a numerical limit upon immigrants allowed to enter the United States from the western hemisphere (South America, Central America, Caribbean, Mexico, and Canada). Only 120,000 persons from the western hemisphere were allowed to legally immigrate to the United States per year. An important exception to the new numerical limits, the spouse, unmarried children and parents of United States citizens could immigrate to the United States regardless of the numerical limit.

Thus, for the first time in U.S. history, limits were placed on the annual number of Mexicans who could legally immigrate to the United States. Shortly after the Immigration Act was fully implemented in 1968, a series of crises struck the Mexican economy that pressured many Mexican families to continue migrating north despite the new immigration restrictions. Hundreds of thousands of Mexican immigrants disregarded the new limits placed on legal Mexican immigration and continued the pattern of seeking short-term employment in the U.S. They waded across the Rio Grande into Texas, jumped border fences in California, braved the deserts of Arizona and New Mexico, or falsified immigration papers.

The Mexican economy grew steadily between 1970 and 1974—but by 1976 substantial inflation and devaluation of the Mexican peso thrust many families into uncertain financial conditions. Beginning in the early 1980s and steadily worsening over the decade, an expanding foreign debt and dropping oil prices further crippled the Mexican economy anew. Finally, in 1994, a series of political assassinations and an armed insurrection in Chiapas, Mexico caused additional deflation of the peso. In December of that year, the Mexican economy plunged when Mexican investors removed $11 billion dollars from Mexican banks in just a few days.

While the Mexican economy was faltering in the mid-1990s, the U.S. economy was experiencing a period of rapid expansion. The resulting low unemployment in the United States was a factor in enticing a larger number of Mexican laborers to migrate north in order to flee the deplorable economic conditions in Mexico. However, in this new era of numerical limits, most were crossing the border without documentation.

Scholars debate the number of undocumented Mexican immigrants in the United States. For example, in the 1970s, scholars' estimations of undocumented immigrants ranged from 600,000 to 6,000,000 undocumented immigrants. Whatever the actual number of undocumented immigrants living in the United States, the issue of undocumented immigration became a political hot button beginning in the 1970s. In 1986, Congress hoped to gain control over illegal immigration by passing the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). IRCA had four major points. First, significant new appropriations were made for the United States Border Patrol. Second, penalties were enacted against employers who willfully hired undocumented immigrants. Third, long-term undocumented immigrants were granted amnesty. Fourth, many undocumented agricultural workers were legalized.

IRCA did not ended illegal immigration; rather, it drastically changed the pattern of Mexican immigration to the United States. With additional funding from IRCA, the U.S. Border Patrol increased the number of border guards and patrols in an attempt to close the border to undocumented workers. These new efforts, commonly known as Operation Hold the Line and Operation Gatekeeper, forced undocumented immigrants to cross the border through arid deserts to evade detection. Operation Hold the Line has had two major effects. First, the number of immigrants who die each year while trying to cross the U.S.-Mexico border through the desert has increased. Second, successful undocumented immigrants tend to stay within the U.S. for longer periods of time rather than risking apprehension by migrating back and forth between the U.S. and Mexico.

With the failure of IRCA to stem the tide of undocumented immigration, voters in California attempted to end illegal immigration by passing Proposition 187 in 1994. Proposition 187 was designed to deny undocumented immigrants and their children access to public services and public education. Although the voters of California passed Proposition 187, most of its provisions were later found to be unconstitutional by the 9th District Court. The new era of Mexican immigration to the United States begun by the Immigration Act of 1965 is still unfolding and the primary sources for this period are still being drafted, painted, published, and sung. You too are witnesses of and participants in this era of Mexican immigration to the United States.

**Vocabulary Words**

Immigration Act of 1965
Immigration Reform and Control Act
Operation Hold the Line
peso devaluation
Proposition 187
undocumented immigration

Photo by James R. Tourtellotte, U.S. Customs

A Customs Inspector at the Nogales, Arizona border crossing interviews an individual as he enters the United States from Mexico.

## GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

### Mexican Immigration to the United States

Group _____ Time Period _____

| PUSH FACTORS | PULL FACTORS |
| --- | --- |
| | |

## Number of Mexican Immigrants Admitted to the United States, 1900–1941

| YEAR | NUMBER OF MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS ADMITTED |
|---|---|
| 1900 | 237 |
| 1901 | 347 |
| 1902 | 709 |
| 1903 | 528 |
| 1904 | 1,009 |
| 1905 | 2,637 |
| 1906 | 1,997 |
| 1907 | 1,406 |
| 1908 | 6,067 |
| 1909 | 16,251 |
| 1910 | 18,691 |
| 1911 | 19,889 |
| 1912 | 23,238 |
| 1913 | 11,926 |
| 1914 | 14,614 |
| 1915 | 12,340 |
| 1916 | 18,425 |
| 1917 | 17,869 |
| 1918 | 18,524 |
| 1919 | 29,818 |
| 1920 | 52,361 |
| 1921 | 30,758 |
| 1922 | 19,551 |
| 1923 | 63,768 |
| 1924 | 89,336 |
| 1925 | 32,964 |
| 1926 | 43,316 |
| 1927 | 67,721 |
| 1928 | 59,016 |
| 1929 | 40,154 |
| 1930 | 12,703 |
| 1931 | 3,333 |
| 1932 | 2,171 |
| 1933 | 1,936 |
| 1934 | 1,801 |
| 1935 | 1,560 |
| 1936 | 1,716 |
| 1937 | 2,347 |
| 1938 | 2,502 |
| 1939 | 2,640 |
| 1940 | 2,313 |
| 1941 | 2,824 |

*INS Statistical Yearbook,* 1999

## Number of Mexican Immigrants Admitted to the United States, 1942–1965

| YEAR | NUMBER OF MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS ADMITTED |
|---|---|
| 1942 | 2,378 |
| 1943 | 4,172 |
| 1944 | 6,598 |
| 1945 | 6,702 |
| 1946 | 7,146 |
| 1947 | 7,558 |
| 1948 | 8,384 |
| 1949 | 8,083 |
| 1950 | 6,744 |
| 1951 | 6,153 |
| 1952 | 9,079 |
| 1953 | 17,183 |
| 1954 | 30,645 |
| 1955 | 43,702 |
| 1956 | 61,320 |
| 1957 | 49,321 |
| 1958 | 26,791 |
| 1959 | 22,909 |
| 1960 | 32,708 |
| 1961 | 41,476 |
| 1962 | 55,805 |
| 1963 | 55,986 |
| 1964 | 34,448 |
| 1965 | 40,686 |

*INS Statistical Yearbook,* 1999

## Number of Mexican Immigrants Admitted to the United States, 1966–1999

| YEAR | NUMBER OF MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS ADMITTED |
|---|---|
| 1966 | 47,217 |
| 1967 | 43,034 |
| 1968 | 44,716 |
| 1969 | 45,748 |
| 1970 | 44,821 |
| 1971 | 10,105 |
| 1972 | 64,040 |
| 1973 | 70,141 |
| 1974 | 71,586 |
| 1975 | 62,205 |
| 1976 | 57,863 |
| 1977 | 44,079 |
| 1978 | 92,367 |
| 1979 | 52,096 |
| 1980 | 56,680 |
| 1981 | 101,268 |
| 1982 | 56,106 |
| 1983 | 59,079 |
| 1984 | 57,557 |
| 1985 | 61,077 |
| 1986 | 66,533 |
| 1987 | 72,351 |
| 1988 | 95,039 |
| 1989 | 405,172 |
| 1990 | 679,068 |
| 1991 | 946,167 |
| 1992 | 213,802 |
| 1993 | 126,561 |
| 1994 | 111,398 |
| 1995 | 89,932 |
| 1996 | 163,572 |
| 1997 | 146,865 |
| 1998 | 131,575 |
| 1999 | 147,573 |

*INS Statistical Yearbook,* 1999

## Number of Braceros Admitted Annually, 1942–1965

| YEAR | BRACEROS ADMITTED |
|---|---|
| 1942 | 4,203 |
| 1943 | 52,098 |
| 1944 | 62,170 |
| 1945 | 49,454 |
| 1946 | 32,043 |
| 1947 | 19,632 |
| 1948 | 35,345 |
| 1949 | 107,000 |
| 1950 | 67,500 |
| 1951 | 192,000 |
| 1952 | 197,100 |
| 1953 | 201,380 |
| 1954 | 309,033 |
| 1955 | 398,650 |
| 1956 | 445,197 |
| 1957 | 436,049 |
| 1958 | 432,857 |
| 1959 | 437,643 |
| 1960 | 315,846 |
| 1961 | 291,420 |
| 1962 | 194,978 |
| 1963 | 186,865 |
| 1964 | 177,736 |
| 1965 | 20,286 |

## Number of Apprehensions by the U.S. Border Patrol

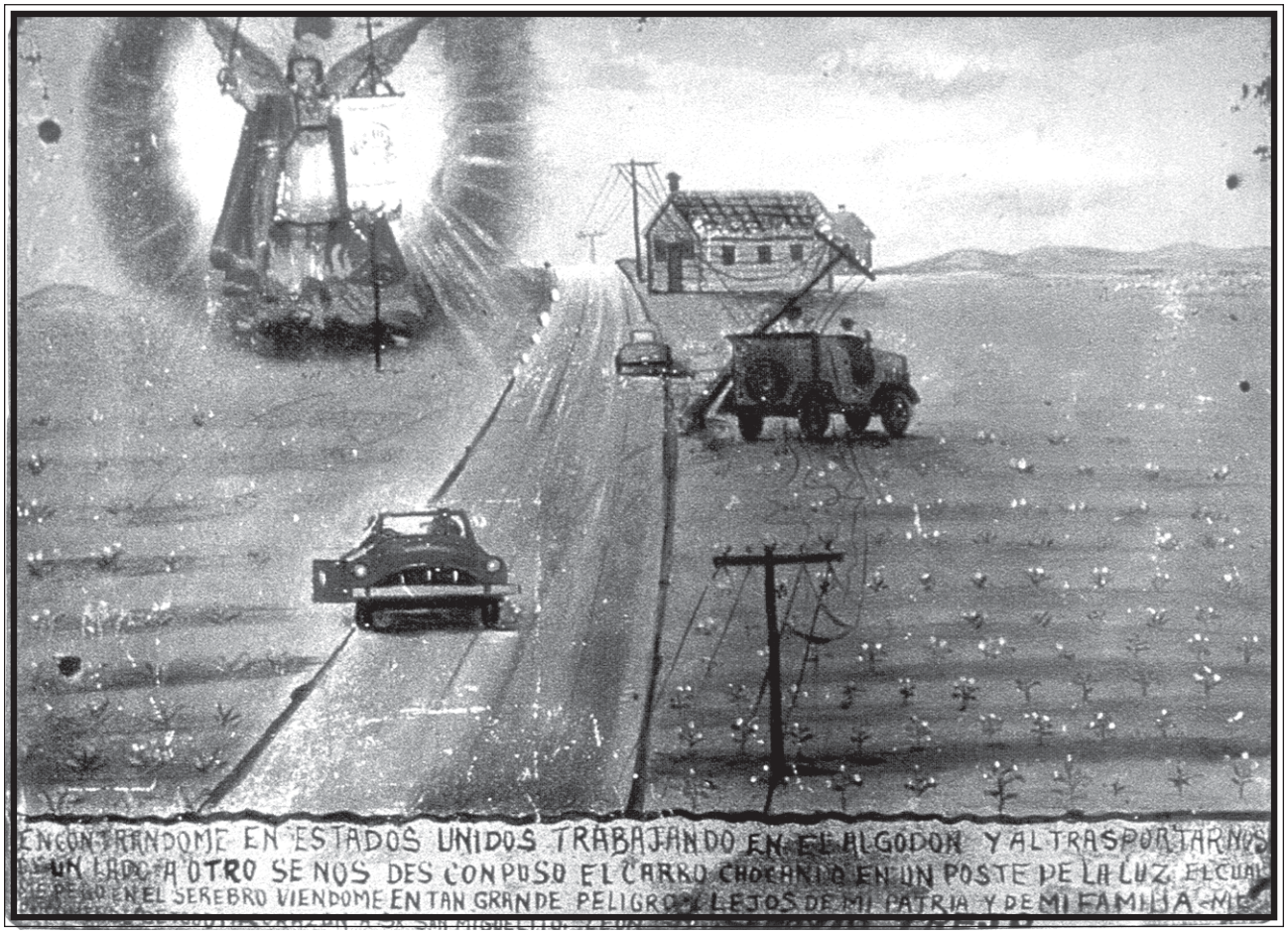
*Note:* These figures reflect the total number of apprehensions of all nationalities. However, Mexicans have consistently formed the majority of apprehensions.

| Year | Number of Apprehensions |
|---|---|
| 1924 | 4,614 |
| 1925 | 2,961 |
| 1926 | 4,047 |
| 1927 | 4,495 |
| 1928 | 5,529 |
| 1929 | 8,538 |
| 1930 | 18,319 |
| 1931 | 8,409 |
| 1932 | 7,116 |
| 1933 | 15,875 |
| 1934 | 8,910 |
| 1935 | 9,139 |
| 1936 | 9,534 |
| 1937 | 9,535 |
| 1938 | 8,684 |
| 1939 | 9,376 |
| 1940 | 8,051 |
| 1941 | 6,082 |
| 1942 | n.a. |
| 1943 | 8,189 |
| 1944 | 26,689 |
| 1945 | 63,602 |
| 1946 | 91,456 |
| 1947 | 182,986 |
| 1948 | 179,385 |
| 1949 | 278,538 |
| 1950 | 485,215 |
| 1951 | 500,000 |
| 1952 | 543,538 |
| 1953 | 865,318 |
| 1954 | 1,075,168 |
| 1955 | 242,608 |
| 1956 | 72,442 |
| 1957 | 44,451 |
| 1958 | 37,242 |
| 1959 | 30,196 |
| 1960 | 29,651 |
| 1961 | 29,817 |
| 1962 | 30,272 |
| 1963 | 39,124 |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1964 | 43,844 |
| 1965 | 55,340 |
| 1966 | 89,751 |
| 1967 | 108,327 |
| 1968 | 151,705 |
| 1969 | 201,636 |
| 1970 | 277,377 |
| 1971 | 348,178 |
| 1972 | 430,213 |
| 1973 | 576,823 |
| 1974 | 709,959 |
| 1975 | 680,392 |
| 1976 | 781,474 |
| 1977 | 954,778 |
| 1978 | 1,057,977 |
| 1979 | 1,076,418 |
| 1980 | 910,361 |
| 1981 | 975,780 |
| 1982 | 970,246 |
| 1983 | 1,251,357 |
| 1984 | 1,246,981 |
| 1985 | 1,348,749 |
| 1986 | 1,767,400 |
| 1987 | 1,190,488 |
| 1988 | 1,008,145 |
| 1989 | 954,243 |
| 1990 | 1,169,939 |
| 1991 | 1,197,875 |
| 1992 | 1,258,481 |
| 1993 | 1,327,261 |
| 1994 | 1,094,719 |
| 1995 | 1,394,554 |
| 1996 | 1,649,986 |
| 1997 | 1,536,520 |
| 1998 | 1,679,439 |
| 1999 | 1,714,035 |

*INS Statistical Yearbook,* 1999

# Lesson Two




# In Their Own Words:
# Oral Histories of Mexican Immigration

*Retalbo of Senovio Trejo* (undated)

The painter gives thanks for recovering from a car crash while working far from home "in the cotton fields . . . moving from place to place." A *retalbo* is painting on tin with sacred images offered as thanks for a safe journey. The *retalbos* in this unit each reflect a different period of Mexican immigration to the United States and some of the struggles faced while crossing the border or working as an undocumented laborer in the United States.

# Lesson Two
# In Their Own Words:
# Oral Histories of Mexican Immigration

## A. Organizing Question

1. How do the push/pull factors learned in **Lesson One** apply to the lives of individual immigrants?

## B. Lesson Objectives

- To examine how individuals experience the broad trends of Mexican immigration to the U.S.
- To analyze how Mexican immigrants adjust to life in the U.S.

## C. Lesson Activities

*What is an Oral History?*

Scholars, community activists, journalists, and interested community members have recorded the personal, stories, thoughts, and opinions of Mexican immigrants to the United States. In countless interviews, they have recorded the personal histories of Mexican immigrants, and the results of their labor are valuable collections of personal narratives and oral histories.

1. Assign each student to read one or two of the oral histories included in this Lesson (**Documents 2–A**, **2–B**, **2–C**, **2–D**, **2–E**, **2–F**, and **2–G**).
2. After they have read their selection(s), instruct them to complete the Immigrant Profile Sheet (**Student Handout Five**) for their selected oral history/histories.
3. After completing the profile sheet, the students can choose one of the following two activities:
   a. Have the students select partners who have read different oral histories. Next, the students can conduct interviews with one another by role-playing as the person in their respective oral histories. The should ask each other questions, such as, but not limited to:
      - What is your name?
      - When did you come to the United States?
      - Why did you come to the United States?
      - How did you come to the United States?

- What type of work have you done since arriving in the United States?
- What has life been like in the United States?

Or

b. Students can write a letter home to family and friends in the voice and from the perspective of the subject of their respective oral history. In their letter they should discuss their work and life in the U.S., why they left Mexico, why they came to the U.S., and what life is like in the United States.

**Madelin Tellez**
Junior High School Student
Oceanside, California

When my mama told me we were coming here I was a little sad, and a little afraid about how it would be. I went to sixth grade in Mexico and now I am in seventh here. I didn't know any English, but I found some friends who told me which rooms I had to go to. There are other kids here from Mexico, so I don't feel lonely and it's easy to make friends. All of my teachers are very nice too. It's a little bit different here. There are classes in English and Spanish. In Mexico everyone spoke Spanish. Also, we never had P.E. In Mexico the girls don't run or play basketball or volleyball, only the boys. I like it. . . . When I grow up I want to stay here and work in a career until I earn enough money, then I want to go back to Mexico.

Marilyn P. Davis, *Mexican Voices/American Dreams* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990), 205–6.

## Vidal Olivares

Husband of Estela Parilla Morales de Olivares
Truck Driver
Los Angeles, CA

My origins are in a ranchito in the state of Jalisco, but I came to the United States in 1976. I have gone back three times. I had no trouble passing the first time, because I had a friend's green card. We look very much alike and he loaned me his papers, so I passed for him. At this time I was a bachelor. I stayed for two years, and when I returned to Mexico I met my wife and we married. But again, for economic reasons — I didn't have a job — I returned to work here.

My brother always wants me to come home. He can tell me that because he has work. He's a truck driver for a big company there and makes good money. That's why he doesn't have any interest in coming here.

It's very hard, the life in Mexico. We hardly had any money to eat. I had to leave my wife. We were newlyweds, we had been together only about ten months, and when I left she was pregnant. I wanted to get together the money for her and for my baby that was to be born. . . .

The second time I came, I had no knowledge of the kid who loaned me his card before, so I had to pass with a coyote*. It was a big problem. At the border there are these cholos or rateros** that rob people. We managed to get by them because we were all men, thanks be to God, but they made us run. Aside from this we had to walk from seven o'clock at night until five in the morning. We arrived at where the coyotes had their car. Some of us had to get in the trunk and others inside. They took us to a house. It was a Wednesday, and they kept us there until Sunday — waiting! They gave us hardly anything to eat. This was the hardest time. . . . I stayed until my baby was a year old, trying to save the money to build a house in my pueblo. I came back for her first birthday. I had been gone a year and nine months.

Well, I met my daughter and again returned to the United States. Passing the third time was really easy. When I arrived a man asked if I wanted to go to Los Angeles.

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* coyote a person hired to help undocumented immigrants cross the border
** ratero thief

I said, "Yes, but first I want to eat breakfast." He said, "No, right now it is easy. Come now, I will give you breakfast." And yes, he gave me breakfast in his house in Tijuana. From there we jumped over the fence, then we waited for a few minutes because there was a patrol. As soon as the patrol passed we quickly ran, it was only about 100 meters, and we jumped in a car. . . . It was easy. We arrived in Los Angeles at about three in the afternoon. . . . At times one has good luck.

Later I wrote and asked my wife if she would come. I had a friend, a woman who said she would help me. I paid her; it wasn't free. She picked my wife and the baby up in Tijuana in a pickup. It was very easy. The only thing was, she charged me quite a bit, $500 for both of them. . . .

For those of us raised in a pueblo in Mexico, here we find a life that is really nice, beautiful. One becomes accustomed to the life and doesn't want to return. Now that I have my family, I am planning to stay, if they let us. If someday they send me and my family back, we will return, because I like living here very much.

Marilyn P. Davis, *Mexican Voices/American Dreams* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990), 206–9.

## Estela Parilla Morales de Olivares

Wife of Vidal Olivares
Auto Parts Worker
Los Angeles

I wanted to come. My husband would often ask me to join him. I always thought it was impossible, but I wanted to come. I was living with my parents. They told me to think about it because it was very far away, but they thought we knew best. . . . When I arrived, everything seemed so strange to me. They were going to take me to buy clothes, because I didn't have any, and when we arrived at the store I didn't want to get out of the car. I imagined the migra* was going to grab me. . . Finally, I got out, but I had to look all around; I just felt they would jump out and get me. . . .

I had thought it would be beautiful to live here, everything easier, but no it's very difficult. . . . I miss my parents too, but what can I do? It's so far away. We want to save money then return, because to stay here, no. I want to be here a little more time so my children can learn a little English, then we'll return to Mexico. . . .

I just began working. It's very dirty, but its work. It's dirty, dirty, pure steel parts that I have to clean on the machine. I put the parts in the machine and move them until they are clean, but take them out and put them in get you so dirty.

I have been here three years. It's very hard. When you don't know, you think everything is nice; but now that I know, it's very different. If someone had told me how it is, I wouldn't have come. Everyone tells you about it, how pretty, and one thing and another, but they never tell you how they suffer. Well, it's beautiful here, I won't say it's not, but with money. When you are there you always have that temptation of el norte, el norte.

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* migra U.S. Border Patrol

*Note:*
Estela and Vidal received their permanent residents' status under the IRCA of 1986.

Marilyn P. Davis, *Mexican Voices/American Dreams* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990), 209–11.

## Don Heliodoro Barragan

Las Barrancas, Mexico

How did we go? We didn't know buses or trucks at that time. We didn't have any of those things. I went on foot to Catarina. It took about one and a quarter hours from my house. Because of these questions of the Cristeros, they were chasing me. They wanted money; it was very dangerous. They had already killed Jose Luis Chávez and raped two young women down by the bridge. When I heard they were looking for me I went into hiding. I slept in the fields and when I arrived in Catarina I hid in a pile on Manzanita and sent a young man off to buy my train ticket. . . . I left with five hundred pesos in gold. It was Easter Monday, April 11, 1927, and I was thirty-two years old.

Marilyn P. Davis, *Mexican Voices/American Dreams* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990), 11.

## Enrique

Forty-five years old

Yes, that's true. I came to the United States because I couldn't support my family. In my on country I worked as a truck driver carrying sugarcane, but we couldn't live on the income I made. In the United States I work for minimum wage, but I have two jobs. On one I work from seven at night until seven in the morning. Then I sleep for a few hours and at ten in the morning I begin my other job and work until three in the afternoon. Altogether, I work about eighty hours a week. I don't get much sleep, but it doesn't matter. I am here to work. . . . I'm very unhappy to have to leave my family again, especially now because I have two sons who are graduating from high school and they are going to enter the university.

Marilyn P. Davis, *Mexican Voices/American Dreams* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990), 36.

## Elias Garza

My life is a real story, especially in the United States where they drive one crazy from working so much. They squeeze one here until one is left useless, and then one has to go back to Mexico to be a burden to one's countrymen. But the trouble is that is true not only here but also over there. It is a favor that we owe Don Porfirio [President Porfirio Díaz] that we were left so ignorant and so slow minded that we have only been fit for rough work. I began to work when I was only twelve years old. . . . I took charge of driving the oxen. They called me the driver. . . . I think they paid me $0.25 a day and I had to go round and round the mill from the time the sun rose until it set. . . . At that time I heard that there were some good jobs here in the United States and that good money could be made. Some other friends accompanied me and we went first to Mexico City and from there we came to Ciudad Juárez. We then went to El Paso and there we took a renganche* for Kansas. We worked on the tracks, taking up and laying down the rails, removing old ties and putting in new, and doing all kinds of hard work. They only paid $1.50 and exploited us without mercy in the Commissary camp, for they sold us everything very high. Nevertheless as at that time things generally were cheap I managed to make a little money with which I went back to La Piedad to see my mother. She died a little later and this left me very sad. I decided to come back to the United States, and I came to Los Angeles, California. . . . Later I was married to a woman from San Antonio, Texas. . . . we went to Mexico together. We boarded a ship at San Pedro and from there went to Mazatlán until we got to Michoacán. We saw that things were bad there, for that was in 1912, and the disorders of the revolution had already started; so we came back to the United States by way of Laredo, Texas. In San Antonio we were under contract to go and pick cotton in a camp in the Valley of the Rio Grande. . . . When we arrived at the camp the planter gave us an old hovel which had been used as a chicken house before, to live in, out in the open. I didn't want to live there and told him that if he didn't give us a little house which was a little better we would go. He told us to go, and my wife and I and my children were leaving when the sheriff fell upon us. He took me to jail and there the planter told them that I wanted to leave without paying him for my passage. He charged me twice the cost of the transportation, and though I tried first to not pay

* renganche labor contractor

him, and then to pay him what it cost, I couldn't do anything. The authorities would only pay attention to him, and as they were in league with him they told me that if I didn't pay they would take my wife and my little children to work. Then I paid them. . . . I have worked in the packing plants here since then, in cement and other jobs, even as a farm laborer. In spite of it all I have managed to save some money with which I have bought this automobile and some clothes. I have now decided to work in the colony in Mexico and not come back to this country where I have left the best of my youth.

Manuel Gamio, *The Life Story of the Mexican Immigrant* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 149–53.

## Elisa Silva

I am twenty-three years old. I was married in Mazatlán when I was seventeen. My husband was an employee of a business house in the port but he treated me very badly and even my own mother advised me to get a divorce. A short time after I was divorced my father died. Then my mother, my two sisters and I decided to come to the United States. As we had been told that there were good opportunities for earning money in Los Angeles, working as extras in the movies and in other ways, we sold our belongings and with the little which our father had left us we came to this place, entering first at Nogales, Arizona. From the time we entered I noticed a change in everything, in customs, and so forth, but I believed that I would soon become acclimated and be able to adjust myself to these customs. . . . My sisters and I decided to look for work at once. One of my sisters, the oldest, who knew how to sew well, found work at once in the house of a Mexican woman doing sewing. My mother then decided that my younger sister had better go to school and that I should also work in order to help out with the household expenses and with the education of my sister. As I didn't know how to sew or anything and as I don't know English I found it hard to find work, much as I looked. As we had to earn something, a girl friend of mine, also a Mexican, from Sonora, advised me to go to a dance-hall. After consulting with my mother and my sisters I decided to come and work here every night dancing. . . . This work is what suits me best for I don't need to know any English here. It is true that at times I get a desire to look for another job, because I get very tired. . . . In Mexico this work might perhaps not be considered respectable, but I don't lose anything here by doing it. It is true that some men at times make propositions to me which are insulting, but everything is fixed by just telling them no. If they insist one can have them taken out of the hall by the police. . . .

Of the customs of this country I only like the ones about work. The others aren't anything compared to those of Mexico. There people are kinder than they are here, less ambitious about money. I shall never really like living this way. . . . I don't believe I will ever be able to adjust myself to this country. . . . Life, to be sure, is easier here because one can buy so many things on credit and cheaper than in Mexico. But I don't know what it is I don't like. My youngest sister, who is in a business college learning English, say that she likes this city a lot and the United States as a whole and that if we go to Mazatlán she will stay here working.

Manuel Gamio, *The Life Story of the Mexican Immigrant* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 159–62.

## Oral History Profile Sheet

**Name of Immigrant:** _____

**Age:** _____ **Hometown:** _____

**Life story and information:**

**Push/pull factors discussed:**

**How have they adjusted to life in the U.S.?**

# Lesson Three


# *Corridos:*
# Songs of the People

*Retalbo of M. Esther Tapia Picón* (undated)

This retalbo is dedicated to the Virgin of San Juan for saving them from the immigration authorities as they were on their way to Los Angeles. A *retalbo* is painting on tin with sacred images offered as thanks for a safe journey. The *retalbos* in this unit each reflect a different period of Mexican immigration to the United States and some of the struggles faced while crossing the border or working as an undocumented laborer in the United States.

# Lesson Three
# *Corridos*: Songs of the People

## A. Organizing Question

1. How have push/pull factors of Mexican immigration to the United States been expressed through song?

## B. Lesson Objectives

- Explain the push/pull factors of Mexican immigration to the United States with traditional Mexican songs called *corridos*.
- Explore the core themes of the collective experience of immigration expressed through popular culture.

## C. Lesson Activities

*What is a corrido?*

A *corrido* (ballad) is a traditional Mexican song form that often chronicles an individual's life experience or important historical events. *Corridos* have proven to be very useful to historians searching for a lens into the thoughts, opinions, and perspectives of Mexican immigrants living in the United States.

1. Have students select 2–3 *corridos* that they would like to study (**Documents 3–A**, **3–B**, **3–C**, **3–D**, **3–E**, and **3–F**). Have the students read their selected *corridos* and answer the following questions.
   a. Compare and contrast your selected *corridos*. What are the common themes throughout the *corridos*?
   b. What "push" and "pull" factors do the authors of your selected *corridos* discuss?
2. Ask the students to choose their favorite *corrido*. Then group the students together who have selected the same *corrido* and instruct them to prepare a choral reading of the *corrido* for the class.
3. After studying several *corridos* and performing a choral reading, the students will be ready to write their own. They will write their own *corrido* from the perspective of a Mexican immigrant based upon the push/pull factors of a certain time-period or upon an oral history that they read during **Lesson Two**. After writing their own *corrido* they can read or sing it to the class.

## Corrido of the Uprooted Ones

Men, pay attention,
What I say is true.
There is no other country like Mexico,
Beautiful, lush, and green.

All the foreigners
Are amazed by Mexcio.
Previous to 1943
There were no complications.

Mexico, Mexico was happy,
Sincere, humble, honest
Until our race started crossing
To the other side.

Contractors and truckers
To me they are all the same.
They were only waiting
For nationals to cross

They resembled hungry wolves
Outside their thicket.
We believe they are honorable
But we don't know them.

They work us like slaves
And treat us like dogs.
All we need is for them to ride us.
And to put the bridle on us.

If someone doesn't like what I say
It's because he wasn't there.
Let him go as a bracero
To the United States.

He will see that he will work
Like a sold slave.
Before we were honorable men,
Now we have lost it all.

With our passports
We think we are Americans.
But we are called the uprooted ones.

Here I bid farewell
To all my countrymen
If you want to have honor.
Don't go to the other side
To feed the contractors and
Hungry truckers.

María Herrera-Sobek, *Northward Bound*: *The Mexican Immigrant Experience in Ballad and Song* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 164–5.

## Deported

I am going to sing to you, gentlemen,
I am going to tell you, gentlemen,
All about my sufferings
When I left my native land,
When I left my native land,
In order to go to that country.

It must have been ten at night,
It must have been ten at night,
When a train began to whistle;
I heard my mother say,
"Here comes that hateful train
To take my son away."

Finally they rang the bell,
Finally they rang the bell.
"Let's go on out of the station;
I'd rather not see my mother
Weeping for her dear son,
The darling of her heart."

When we reached Chihuahua,
When we reached Chihuahua,
There was a great confusion:
The customshouse employees,
The customshouse employees,
Were having an inspection.

We finally arrived at Juárez,
We finally arrived at Juárez,
Where I had my inspection:
"Where are you going, where are you from,
How much money have you,
In order to enter this country?"

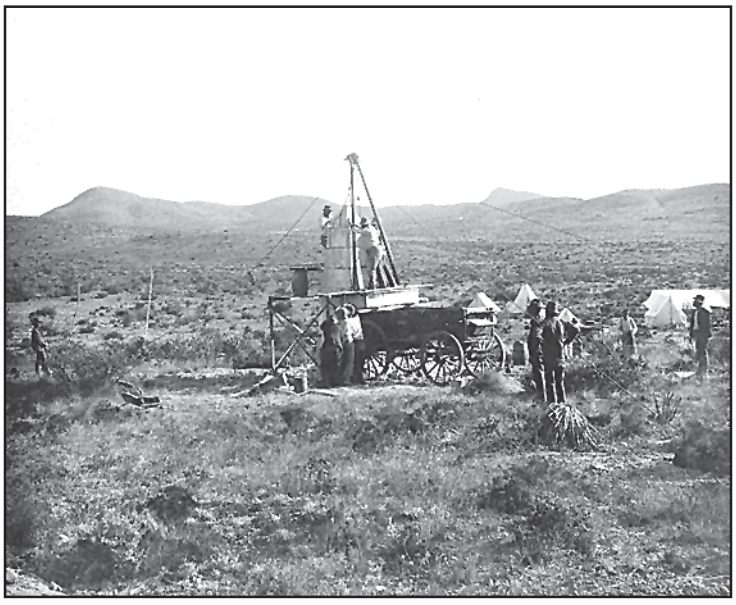
"Gentlemen, I have money,
Gentlemen, I have money
Enough to be able to emigrate."
"Your money is worthless,
Your money is worthless;
We'll have to give you a bath."

The blondes are very unkind;
The *gringos* (Americans) are very unkind.
They take advantage of the chance
To treat all the Mexicans,
To treat all the Mexicans
Without compassion.

Today they are rounding them up,
Today they are rounding them up;
And without consideration
Women, children and old folks
Are taken to the border
And expelled from that country.

So farewell, dear countrymen,
So farewell, dear countrymen;
They are going to deport us now,
But we are not bandits,
But we are not bandits,
We came to *camellar* (work).

María Herrera-Sobek, *Northward Bound*: *The Mexican Immigrant Experience in Ballad and Song* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 127.



Rebuilding Monument 40, marking the U.S.–Mexican border Rio Grande (n.d.)

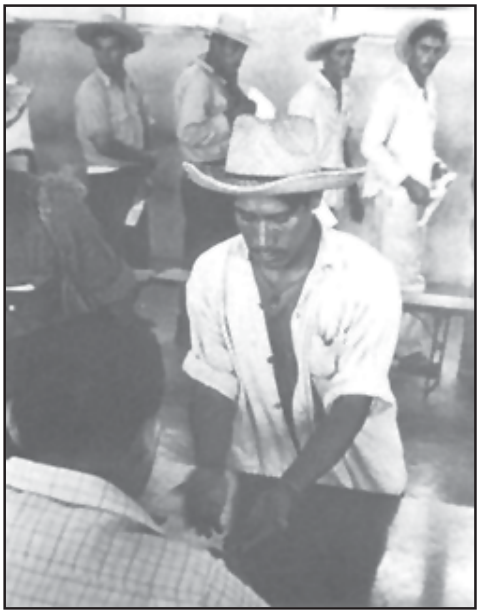
National Archives, NWDNS-77-MB-442D

## Mexican Bracero

I am a Mexican Bracero,
I am a Mexican Bracero
I have come to work
For this sister country
That has called on me.

They ask for arms
To substitute
Those that are fighting
Without fear of dying.

María Herrera-Sobek, *The Bracero Experience: Elitelore versus Folklore* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1979), 82.



Mexican Bracero (n.d.)

U.S. Department of Labor

## About "The Railroad Worker" or "The Dishwasher"

I dreamed in my youth of being a movie star
And one fine day I came to visit Hollywood.
One day, desperate from all the revolutions,
I crossed into the U.S.A. without paying the immigration

What a joke! What a joke!
I crossed without paying a cent

Upon reaching the station, I came upon a brother
And he invited me to work for the "Traque"

I thought "El Traque" was a fancy department store,
But it was fixing the rails where the trains run. . . .

When I got tired of "El Traque" he invited me again
To pick tomatoes and to hoe beets

There I earned indulgences crawling on my knees
Bowing down for three, four, five miles

What poorly paid work
For working on one's knees!

My friend, who was no dummy, he stuck to it,
And when he had his fare he returned home to Mexico

I worked for almost nothing and left for Sacramento.
When I had nothing left I had to work on the cement

What a terrible torment! What a terrible torment!
That so-called cement.

Pour some dirt and sand into a cement mixer.
Fifty cents an hour all day til the whistle blows

I traveled through towns and cities, and is all such a beauty.
I went through St. Louis, Missouri and arrived at New York.

I went to Detroit, Michigan, the city of the automobile
I visited the assembly lines. How beautiful it was!

I went on to the North Pole; I saw all its great fisheries.
I saw all the seals and the swallows, which I had never seen.

I traveled on to California and saw all its orange groves
And all the huge tomato farms

The beautiful state of Texas with its huge agricultural farms
Has many crops; all is very beautiful.

The gringuitos (Americans) would ask me, "Do you like what you see?"
It used to belong to the Mexicans, now it is all ours. . . .

The United States is beautiful, there is no doubt about that
I had to return home, because of my love for Julia.

María Herrera-Sobek, *The Bracero Experience: Elitelore versus Folklore* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1979), 91.


Mexican girls bunching broccoli; they earn about $2.50 a day.
John Jacob's farm; Maricopa County, Arizona

National Archives (NWDNS-16-G-159(2)AAA8172W) 1942

## The Corrido of the Wetbacks

Because we are wetbacks
The law is always after us,
Because of our illegal status
And cannot speak English;
The stubborn gringo chases us out
And with the same stubbornness we return.

If they kick one [wetback] out through Laredo
Ten will come in through Mexicali,
If another is kicked out through Tijuana
Six will come in through Nogales
You just figure it out,
How many come in each month.

Our problem
Can easily be solved
All we need is a gringuita (American woman)
So that we can get married
And after we get our green card
We can get a divorce.

María Herrera-Sobek, *The Bracero Experience: Elitelore versus Folklore* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1979), 100.

## The Corrido of the Illegal Worker

As I was walking along the border
I was already burdened by hunger.
They say that hunger is unrelenting,
But it is more than that to the one who suffers from it.
I crossed over to the other side.
I had to make it under the wire.

In a few moments
The Immigration caught men.
He said to me, "You are illegal."
I answered, "Yes, sir."
"Don't worry about it,
Perhaps you are right."

"If you want to work,
As long as you are not a Chavista,
I myself will take you
To a contractor
We are giving an opportunity
To all the wire jumpers."

They took us to a field
Together with school kids.
We were surrounded by policemen
Who provoked a fight
In order to break the strike
In the Coachella Valley.

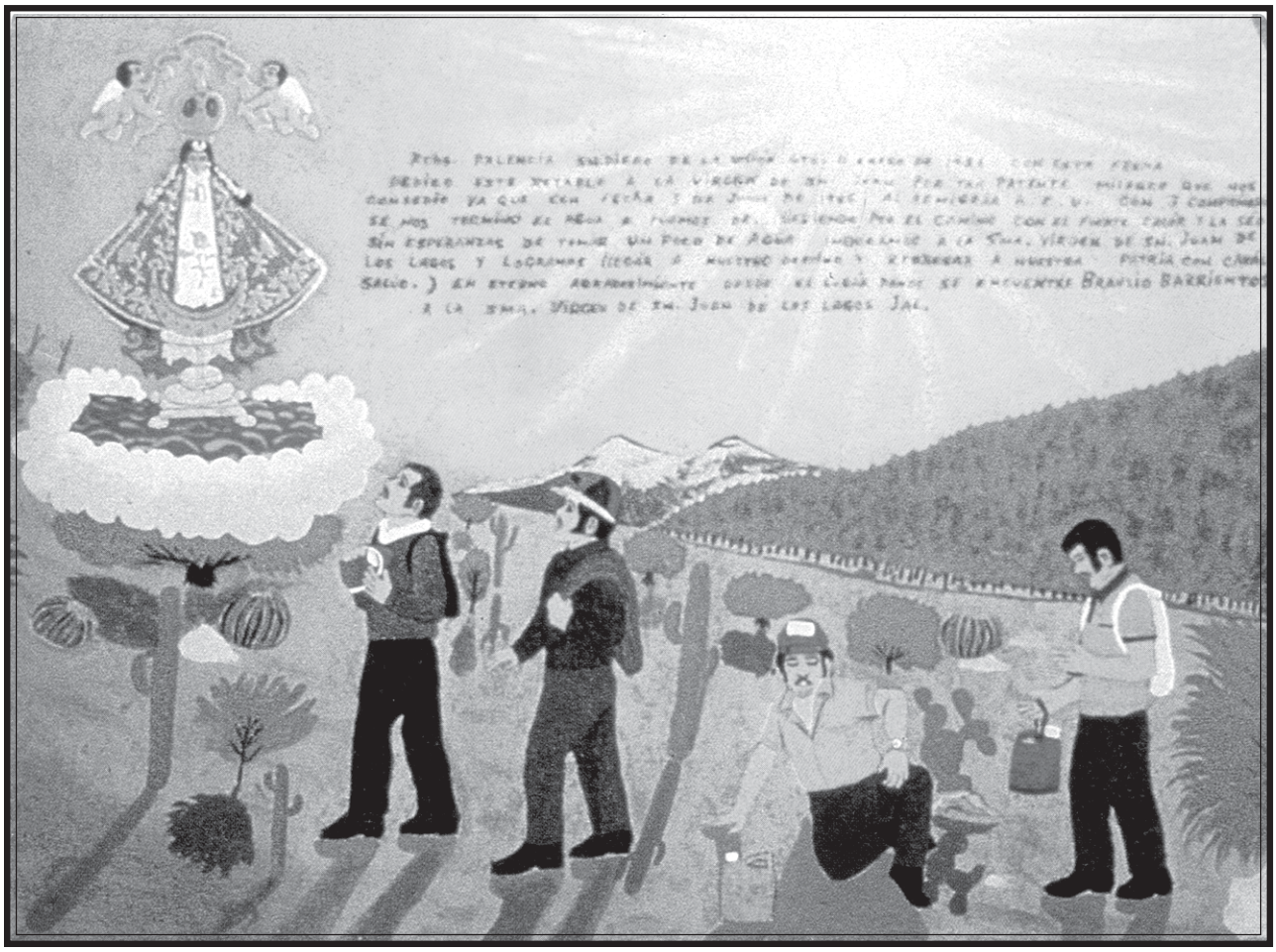
Police and Immigration
Together with the growers
This was the contractors conspiracy
For the sake of evil money
Against our people
They acted like dogs.

We slept under the vines
The whole bunch of wire jumpers.
And to top it all off
The wasps stung us.
That wretched contractor
Did not even give us medicine.
Later we went on strike
In order to help the union.
The wretched contractor
Turned the Immigration on us.
They took us handcuffed
To prison.

I tell my friends
"It is better not to scab;
Never cross the border
Like a rabbit
Let alone to break the Strike
Don't be so stupid anymore."

María Herrera-Sobek, *The Bracero Experience: Elitelore versus Folklore* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1979), 118.

# Lesson Four



## American Responses to Mexican Immigration
## 1900–present

*Retalbo of Braulio Barrientos* (1986)

On June 5, 1986, the painter and three friends were re-entering the United States when they ran out of water. The retalbo gives thanks for surviving the great heat, reaching their destination, and eventually returning home safely. A *retalbo* is painting on tin with sacred images offered as thanks for a safe journey. The *retalbos* in this unit each reflect a different period of Mexican immigration to the United States and some of the struggles faced while crossing the border or working as an undocumented laborer in the United States.

# Lesson Four
# American Responses to Mexican Immigration, 1900–1999

## A. Organizing Questions

1. How have American attitudes and official policy towards Mexican immigration to the United States changed over time?
2. How do American policies towards immigration reflect American attitudes regarding Mexican immigration?

## B. Lesson Objectives

- To explore how American attitudes have changed and remained the same over time.
- To analyze the evolution of American immigration policy.

## C. Lesson Activities

**Day One**

1. Have the students read **Documents 4–A**, **4–B**, and **4–C**, or **Documents 4–D** and **4–E**. After students have read the quotes, ask them to identify the pros and cons of Mexican immigration to the United States discussed within the quotes. Several of the quotes contain sensitive subject matter. The following activities will give students the opportunity to respond to any quotes, which may upset them in any way.

2. Have the students find a discussion partner who read a different set of primary sources. Have the pairs discuss the pros and cons of Mexican immigration as identified by the primary sources. How have the arguments for or against Mexican immigration changed and remained over time?

3. For the next activity choose between the following two possibilities:

   a. Four Corners—Create four large signs (strongly agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, strongly disagree) and place one of these in each of the four corners of the classroom. Read one of the flowing statements out loud and ask the students to quietly consider whether or not they agree with the quote. Then ask the students to move to the corner of the room that corresponds to their opinion. Once there, they can discuss their reasons for selecting their opinion with other students in their corresponding corners. After they have discussed their reasons, ask for volunteers from each group to share their responses with the whole class.

      Repeat this process for 5–6 of the other quotes provided in the primary sources.

- "Everywhere immigrants have enriched and strengthened the fabric of American life. "—John F. Kennedy
- "Unless the stream of these people can be turned away from their country to other countries, they will soon outnumber us so that we will not be able to save our language or our government." -Benjamin Franklin
- Mexican immigrants take jobs from American workers.
- If Mexico is having economic problems, the United States should allow Mexican immigrants to come here for a better life.
- Mexican immigrants make significant contributions to American society.

**OR**

b. Hot Seat—This is a group activity that allows a student to assume the persona of a character either from one of the *corridos*, the personal narratives, or the quotes from this lesson. The student answers questions (in character) from someone else in the group, requiring that the student live in the shoes of the selected character.

Divide the class into small groups of 3-5 students. Each student selects a different character to become. In turn, students are given two minutes to respond "in character" to questions posed by other members of the group. Possible questions are:

- Do you think there are too many immigrants in the United States?
- Do legal immigrants take jobs away from Americans workers?
- Do undocumented workers take jobs away from American workers?
- If a country is having economic problems, should the United States allow those people to come here for a better life?
- Is immigration good or bad for the United States?
- If a country is having political problems, should the United States allow persecuted citizens from those countries to live in the United States?

**Day Two**

*Activity One*

1. Split the class into groups of five.
2. Distribute copies of **Documents 4–F**, **4–G**, **4–H**, **4–I**, and **4–G**.
3. Have each student read one of the documents.
4. Ask the students to discuss what they have read during this lesson and consult their graphic organizers made during **Lesson One** to create an "Enforcement Timeline" of the United States' efforts to facilitate legal immigration and curb undocumented immigration.
5. Next, have the students compare the "Enforcement Timeline" to the graphs they made during **Lesson One**. During this exercise, they should discuss whether or not American efforts to facilitate legal immigration and curb undocumented immigration from Mexico have been successful or unsuccessful over time.

*Activity Two*

1. Each student can choose to either write a letter to the president of the United States or an editorial to their local newspaper explaining the historical factors of Mexican immigration to the United States, giving their own suggestions on future policy and enforcement strategies. Instruct the students to feel free to quote any of the statistics they learned in earlier lessons or to refer to the personal narratives and *corridos* that they have read.

## Views on Mexican Immigration
## (Part I: 1900–1941)
## John Box, Congressman

Congressman John Box (Democrat—Texas) delivered the following speech on his bill for placing restrictions upon Mexican immigration before the House of Representatives in 1928.

Every reason which calls for the exclusion of the most wretched, ignorant, dirty, diseased, and degraded people of Europe and Asia demands that the illiterate, unclean, peonized masses moving this way from Mexico be stopped at the border. . . .

The admission of a large and increasing number of Mexican peons to engage in all kinds of work is at variance with the American purpose to protect the wages of its working people and maintain their standard of living. Mexican labor is not free; it is not well paid; its standard of living is low. The yearly admission of several scores of thousands from just across the Mexican border tends constantly to lower the wages and conditions of men and women of America who labor with their hands in industry, in transportation, and in agriculture. One who has been in Mexico or in Mexican sections of cities and towns the southwestern United States enough to make general observation needs no evidence or argument to convince him of the truth of the statement that Mexican peon labor is poorly paid and lived miserably in the midst of want, dirt, and disease.

In industry and transportation they displace great numbers of Americans who are left without employment and drift into poverty, even vagrancy, unable to maintain families or to help sustain American communities…

Another purpose of the immigration laws in the protection of American racial stock from further degradation or change through mongrelization. The Mexican peon is a mixture of Mediterranean-blooded Spanish peasant with low-grade Indians who did not fight to extinction but submitted and multiplied as serfs. Into that was fused much Negro slave blood. This blend of low grade Spaniard, peonized Indian, and Negro slave mixes with Negroes, mulattos and other mongrels, and some sorry whites, already here. The prevention of such mongrelization of the degradation it causes is one of the purposes of our laws which the admission of these people will tend to defeat…

To keep out the illiterate and the diseased is another essential part of the Nation's immigration policy. The Mexican peons are illiterate and ignorant. Because of their unsanitary habits and living conditions and their vices they are especially subject to smallpox, venereal diseases, tuberculosis, and other dangerous contagions. Their admission is inconsistent with this phase of our policy.

## Views on Mexican Immigration
## (Part I: 1900–1941)
## Ernesto Galarza, Labor Activist

Ernesto Galarza (1905–1984) immigrated to the United States during the early 1900s. As a graduate student, he was the first Mexican-American to be admitted to Stanford University. He expressed this response to arguments for placing restrictions upon Mexican immigration while still a graduate student there. He later also became the first Mexican-American to earn a PhD in history and political science at Columbia University. After World War II, he became a labor organizer and eventually was named the secretary of the National Farm Labor Union. Also a writer, he was the first Latino from the United States to be nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in Literature (1976).

First, as to unemployment. The Mexican is the first to suffer from depression in industrial and agricultural enterprise. . . . I flatly disagree with those who maintain that there is enough work for these people but that they refuse to work, preferring to live on charity. On the contrary, it is widely felt by the Mexicans that there are more men than there are jobs. . . . The precariousness of the job in the face of so much competition has brought home to the Mexican time and again his absolute weaknesses as a bargainer for employment. . . .

He has also something to day as to the wage scale. . . . The Mexican. . . recognizes his absolute inability to force his wage upward and by dint of necessity he shuffles along with a standard of living which the American worker regards with contempt and alarm. . . .

The Mexican immigrant still feels the burden of old prejudices. Only when there are threats to limit immigration from Mexico is it that a few in America sing the praises of the peon. . . . At other times the sentiments which seem to be deeply rooted in the American mind are that he is unclean, improvident, indolent, and innately dull. Add to this the suspicion that he constitutes a peril to the American worker's wage scale and you have a situation with which no average Mexican can cope. . . .

*Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work, 56th Annual Session*, "Life in the United States for Mexican People: Out of the Experience of a Mexican" (University of Chicago Press, 1929).

## Views on Mexican Immigration
## (Part I: 1900–1941)
## S. Parker Frisselle, Chamber of Commerce

S. Parker Frisselle (Fresno) was the director of the California Chamber of Commerce. He gave the following testimony before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization.

To show what California agriculture means to the United States, the Government reports show that there was invested in agriculture in that State of California in 1925 the sum of $3,161,000,000. The Government reports show that California was third in production in agriculture and produced $466,000,000 worth of agricultural products in 1925. That gives you a conception of the size of the agricultural problem of the State of California. . . .

There is an idea in the minds of many that we in California are attempting, or others are attempting, to introduce into America cheap labor. I have employed thousands of Mexicans in the 14 years I have been farming the 5,000 acres of land which I have. And I believe that anybody that has been in the same position will agree that Mexican labor is anything but cheap labor. There is also in the minds of many the thought that the Mexican is an immigrant. My experience of the Mexican is that he is a "homer." Like the pigeon he goes back to roost. He is not a man that comes into this country for anything except our dollars and our work; and the railroads, and all of us, have been unsuccessful in keeping him here because he is a "homer." Those who know the Mexican know that that is a fact.

We recognize in California, perhaps somewhat differently from the other gentlemen, whom you will hear later, that with the Mexican comes a social problem. We in California think we can handle the social problem. It is a serious one. It comes into our schools, it comes into our cities, and it comes into our whole civilization in California. We, gentlemen, are just as anxious as you are not to build the civilization of California or any other western district upon a Mexican foundation. We take him because there is nothing else available. We have gone east, west, and north, and south and he is the only man power available to us. We recognize the social problem and want you to know it because it is more serious in California than any other territory which will be heard from later; but we have it, and I want to be on record as attacking that social problem and saying that California believes that it can meet and handle the social problem and develop agriculture at the same time. . . .

Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, House of Representatives, 69th Congress January 28 and 29, Feb, 2, 9, 11, and 23, 1926

# Views on Mexican Immigration
# (Part II: 1942–1965)
# American G.I. Forum
# Texas State Federation of Labor

Mexican American veterans in Texas formed the American G.I. Forum in 1948 as an effort to win the rights that they had fought for in World War II but lacked in peacetime. "The American G.I. Forum . . . by and large had little or no sympathy for the man who crossed the border illegally. Apparently the Texas State Federation of Labor supported the G.I. Forum's position. Eventually the two organizations coproduced a study entitled *What Price Wetbacks?*, which concluded that illegal aliens in United States agriculture damaged the health of the American people, that illegals displaced American workers, that they harmed the retailers . . . and that the open-border policy of the American government posed a threat to the security of the United States. Critics of Operation Wetback considered it xenophobic and heartless."[1]

[1]"Operation Wetback." *The Handbook of Texas Online* <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/OO/pqo1.html>

Over 80 per cent of the present-day national migratory farm labor force is made up of American citizens of Mexican descent. . . . Many are third and fourth generation Americans, and most are at least second generation citizens of Texas. Generally they are residents of agricultural communities and are skilled agricultural workers. Most are property owners, either owning their homes or small acreages. . . . In their home communities, they are considered solvent citizens, devout, interested in community projects—first class citizens in every respect. . . . These migrant workers are the immediate victims of the wetback invasion. They felt the effects first when they were displaced from their jobs and their homes. But the effects in the long run, will go far beyond this group, hitting all levels of the population in the border country first, then spreading the virus to other sections—unless the wetback tide is halted.

American G. I. Forum of Texas and Texas State Federation of Labor (AFL), *What Price Wetbacks?* (Austin, Texas: The Forum,1953).

# Views on Mexican Immigration
# (Part II: 1942–1965)
## *Los Angeles Times*

The following articles reporting the activities of "Operation Wetback" appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* morning newspapers on Friday, June 18, 1954 and Sunday, June 20, 1954.

## Fast-Moving Raiders Nab 500 in L.A. Wetback Roundup

200-Man Force Arrests Mexicans in Factories, Homes and Roadblocks

*Los Angeles Times*, JUNE 18, 1954

More than 500 Mexican nationals who were in the United States illegally were arrested here yesterday in a series of quick-moving raids that began at 7a.m. in concert with a State-wide "wetback roundup" by Federal authorities.

Kickoff point of the 200-man dragnet was the East Los Angeles Sheriff's Station and teams of officers spread through the industrial area to plants which reportedly employ numbers of Mexican nationals.

Throughout the morning the teams questioned and arrested scores on scores of aliens – on street corners, in factories, in foundries, in brickyards, in many other industrial plants, in private homes and in road blocks.

The operation was headed by Clarence Porter, assistant area director of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization. In addition to Federal officers, also participating were personnel of the Sheriff's office, the Los Angeles Police Department's metropolitan squad, the California Highway Patrol and the State Department of Employment.

### Detention Buses

The Federal bureau had stationed detention busses at several points to serve as mobile jails and as these were filled the Mexicans were taken to the main detention center at the Elysian Park Recreation Center, 1900 Bishop Road, and other busses took their places.

Among those taken into custody were 12 women and four small children. The others ranged from fuzzy-cheeked boys in their teens to horny-handed field workers in their 50s and 60s.

The arrests came singly or in groups up to a dozen. But there were not as many as had originally been expected.

The word had passed, some of the aliens admitted, and many stayed away from work and remained behind the closed doors of their homes. Some industrial plants reported as many as 30 absentees probably caused by the swiftly spreading news of the raids.

### News Release

Although newspaper accounts had reported that the drive would take place, many of those arrested said they believed they could escape detection or that the raids would be smaller than announced.

Porter, however, admitted that yesterday's operation had "only scratched the surface" and predicted that many hundreds more will be arrested during the next few days.

Some minor skirmishes were involved in the morning's forays by officers.

One man, sought as illegal entrant from

Mexico, tried to escape by diving out a window of a trailer home at 3883 E 1st Street, but was badly cut in the process and arrested.

He was identified by deputy sheriffs as Raoul Gonzales, 19, also known as Raoul Diaz and Valentin Vengana. He was treated at Angeles Emergency Hospital where a 4-inch sliver of glass was drawn from his back, and then booked for immigration officials at the East Los Angeles Sheriff's Station. . . .

For the most part, however, the internees accepted their fate philosophically—with a shrug and a faint smile and a softly spoken promise that "I will be back, sometime."

## Wetbacks Herded at Nogales Camp

1187 Wait in Blistering Heat for the Last Leg of Journey Home

*Los Angeles Times*, JUNE 20, 1954

Human misery was compounded here Friday by a blistering desert sun and swirls of alkaline dirt.

A packed dirt compound more than a mile out of tourist thronged Nogales was the last stop before the end of the line for 1187 wetback Mexicans wrenched from jobs, homes, and families in the United States.

These unwitting victims of the U.S. Operation Wetback milled around today for six hot miserable hours in the process of being loaded aboard a 15-car special train for the final leg of their unwilling journey back into their native Mexico.

**Tempers Flare**

And, at midpoint in the morning's misery their tempers flared into a half humorous Mexican kind of anger born of frustration.

They began by pegging watermelon and fruit peels at three Los Angeles newspapermen given special permission to observe and photograph the departure.

Then suddenly the barrage turned into a hail of stones as the waiting wetbacks broke into a chorus of hoots and epithets. . . . The unhappy congregation is the end product of the sweeping campaign launched nine days ago by the U.S. Immigration to clear the nation of its engulfing tide of illegal aliens.

These uncounted thousands drawn to the golden land of the north by a combination of economic mishaps and pinches in Mexico, were agreed almost to a man, in their comments here today.

**Intend to Return**

They're coming back to the Golden Land. The best way they can.

Most said they would try the legal migrant worker route next time. But many were bold in their announced determination to recross the line as wetbacks. One band of four bound for Guadalajara offered to visit a reporter at his Los Angeles home within three weeks.

The drive to rid the border States of their illegal population was stepped up in its intensity today.

# Views and Legislation on Immigration
# (Part III: 1965–present)
# Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986

*Summary*
The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) was passed to control unauthorized immigration to the United States. Employer sanctions, increased appropriations for enforcement, and amnesty provisions of IRCA are the main ways of accomplishing its objective. The employer sanctions provision designates penalties for employers who hire aliens not authorized to work in the United States. Under the amnesty provision, undocumented aliens who lived continuously in the United States since before January 1, 1982, could have applied to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) for legal resident status by May 4, 1988, the application cutoff date.

*Main Points*:

Comprehensive immigration legislation [that]:

a. Authorized legalization (i.e., temporary and then permanent resident status) for aliens who had resided in the United States in an unlawful status since January 1, 1982 (entering illegally or as temporary visitors with authorized stay expiring before that date or with the Government's knowledge of their unlawful status before that date) and are not excludable.

b. Created sanctions prohibiting employers from knowingly hiring, recruiting, or referring for a fee aliens not authorized to work in the United States.

c. Increased enforcement at U.S. borders.

d. Created a new classification of seasonal agricultural worker and provisions for the legalization of certain such workers.

e. Extended the registry date (i.e., the date from which an alien has resided illegally and continuously in the United States and thus qualifies for adjustment to permanent resident status) from June 30, 1948 to January 1, 1972.

f. Authorized adjustment to permanent resident status for Cubans and Haitians who entered the United States without inspection and had continuously resided in country since January 1, 1982.

g. Increased the numerical limitation for immigrants admitted under the preference system for dependent areas from 600 to 5,000 beginning in fiscal year 1988.

h. Created a new special immigrant category for certain retired employees of international organizations and their families and a new nonimmigrant status for parents and children of such immigrants.

i. Created a nonimmigrant Visa Waiver Pilot program allowing certain aliens to visit the United States without applying for a nonimmigrant visa.

j. Allocated 5,000 nonpreference visas in each of fiscal years 1987 and 1988 for aliens born in countries from which immigration was adversely affected by the 1965 act.

Available: <http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/aboutins/statistics/LegisHist/561.htm>

## Views and Legislation on Immigration
## (Part III: 1965–present)
## Excerpt from the text of Proposition 187

SECTION 1. Findings and Declaration.

The People of California find and declare as follows:

That they have suffered and are suffering economic hardship caused by the presence of illegal aliens in this state.

That they have suffered and are suffering personal injury and damage caused by the criminal conduct of illegal aliens in this state.

That they have a right to the protection of their government from any person or persons entering this country unlawfully.

Therefore, the People of California declare their intention to provide for cooperation between their agencies of state and local government with the federal government, and to establish a system of required notification by and between such agencies to prevent illegal aliens in the United States from receiving benefits or public services in the State of California.

SECTION 5. Exclusion of Illegal Aliens from Public Social Services.

*10001.5. (a) In order to carry out the intention of the People of California that only citizens of the United States and aliens lawfully admitted to the United States may receive the benefits of public social services and to ensure that all persons employed in the providing of those services shall diligently protect public funds from misuse, the provisions of this section are adopted.*

SECTION 6. Exclusion of Illegal Aliens from Publicly Funded Health Care.

*130. (a) In order to carry out the intention of the People of California that, excepting emergency medical care as required by federal law, only citizens of the United States and aliens lawfully admitted to the United States may receive the benefits of publicly-funded health care, and to ensure that all persons employed in the providing of those services shall diligently protect public funds from misuse, the provisions of this section are adopted.*

SECTION 7. Exclusion of Illegal Aliens from Public Elementary and Secondary Schools.

*48215. (a) No public elementary or secondary school shall admit, or permit the attendance of, any child who is not a citizen of the United States, an alien lawfully admitted as a permanent resident, or a person who is otherwise authorized under federal law to be present in the United States.*

SECTION 8. Exclusion of Illegal Aliens from Public Postsecondary Educational Institutions.

*66010.8. (a) No public institution of postsecondary education shall admit, enroll, or permit the attendance of any person who is not a citizen of the United States, an alien lawfully admitted as a permanent resident in the United States, or a person who is otherwise authorized under federal law to be present in the United States.*

Digital Equipment Corporation (1994).

## Views and Legislation on Immigration (Part III: 1965–present)
## *Los Angeles Times*

### R.I.P. Sign for Prop. 187

*Los Angeles Times*, MARCH 19, 1998

Proposition 187, the 1994 ballot initiative intended to deny education, nonemergency health care and other public services to illegal immigrants, should be declared dead by its makers.

U.S. District Judge Mariana R. Pfaelzer has said again that regulating immigration is an exclusively federal responsibility. She made the pronouncement Wednesday in a final ruling that the ballot measure is unconstitutional. The judge's decision should be allowed to close a sad and divisive chapter in California's political history.

No one will gain from an appeal, yet Gov. Pete Wilson has already announced plans to take this matter to the federal 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, the next stop on a long route to the Supreme Court. Prolonging the legal battle will continue the impression of hostility to Latinos, which has done great harm to the state's image as well as to its business opportunities.

Proponents sold the ill-named "Save Our State" initiative as a way to discourage the flow of illegal immigrants "enticed" to California by public services and benefits; in actuality, jobs and willing employers are the biggest magnets.

Approval of Proposition 187 was predictable, especially at a time when a prolonged recession and chronic downsizing had cost so many Californians their employment. During the bad economic times, many politicians, including Wilson, looked for a scapegoat and fixed the blame on immigrants. It wasn't a new political ploy, but that doesn't make it any less shameful.

Wilson the ambitious politician wrongly exploited anti-immigrant sentiment, but Wilson the governor was never wrong to attack Washington's inability to control the nation's borders and the federal refusal to fairly compensate California, which still pays more in educating and helping immigrants than it gets back from Washington.

Californians who want to reduce illegal immigration without trampling constitutional rights should endorse sensible solutions such as discouraging employers from hiring illegal immigrants, controlling all borders and working on bilateral measures to reduce the economic and political pressures that encourage illegal immigration.

The legal wrangling over Proposition 187 has taken more than three years and could go on for months or even years more. So could the human costs and the harmful consequences to California. Pete Wilson could stop the damage today by bowing to the logic of Judge Pfaelzer.

## Views and Legislation on Immigration (Part III: 1965–present)
## *Los Angeles Times*

### El Paso Plan Deters Illegal Immigrants Border

*Los Angeles Times*, JULY 27, 1994
JAMES BORNEHEIER

A concerted Border Patrol effort to stop illegal immigration in El Paso is a substantial deterrent to illegal crossings and has led to small drops in school enrollments and crime rates, according to researchers working for the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform.

Researchers also give Operation Hold-the-Line credit for significant decreases in allegations of human rights violations and other abuses by the Border Patrol, and the effort seems to enjoy strong public support, even among the Mexican American community.

But the study also finds that the redeployment of agents causes staffing and morale problems and that the enforcement strategy is not a single, all-purpose solution to stemming large numbers of illegal immigrants crossing U.S. borders.

Indeed, the report found that illegal immigrants intent on long-distance crossings were largely unaffected by the enforcement technique and adapted by finding new routes into the United States.

The report, to be issued by the federal commission today, makes it clear that merely stopping illegal immigration at the border is only one part of a complex problem. "To the extent that Operation Hold-the-Line is successful in curtailing illegal crossings . . . perhaps it will also serve to focus increased attention on the need to facilitate legal crossings," the study found.

For instance, some of the pressure to cross illegally is caused by lengthy delays at legal crossing points, highlighting the need for more Immigration and Naturalization Service administrative personnel, the researchers said.

"What is really needed is borders that work," said Frank D. Bean, leader of the group of researchers at the University of Texas at Austin that performed the study.

Bean, a University of Texas professor of demographics, has been studying immigration policy for 15 years. He previously worked for the Urban Institute in Washington.

He and six other members of the Population Research Center at the Austin campus spent about eight months poring over official records and collecting anecdotal material on the effects of Operation Hold-the-Line.

Although some politicians have called for the INS to launch such an operation at the San Diego border, some immigration officials have said Operation Hold-the-Line is better suited to El Paso's topography and immigrant population and not easily duplicated in Southern California.

The INS, however, has said it intends to bring the strategy to San Diego. Agency officials could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

Operation Hold-the-Line began in September, 1993, and was aimed at a 20-mile stretch of the U.S.-Mexico border between El Paso and Juarez, where illegal crossings were estimated at 8,000 a day. Its original name, Operation Blockade, was dropped because of its negative connotation.

Previously, the Border Patrol there had allowed relatively unhindered movements across the Rio Grande, hoping to intercept illegal crossers already in the city. Under the new strategy, agents saturated the border to cut off illegal immigration at its source.

After the operation began in September, 1993, apprehensions declined from 700 a day to about 200 a day.

The nine-member federal immigration commission, created by the Immigration Act of 1990, has been working for more than two years on a comprehensive report to Congress on a wide range of immigration issues. Chaired by former Texas Rep. Barbara Jordan, the commission report is due Sept. 30.

The commission requested the study on the El Paso program because it was concerned about a lack of hard data on the new, preventive border strategy.

"The commission is going through the study very carefully," said Susan Martin, the group's executive director. "We had received some preliminary reports on (Operation Hold-the-Line) . . . and it's a pleasant surprise that the Texas team was able to confirm those early findings. They've developed a very clever methodology, and the commission hopes it can be a broader model (to evaluate) other border strategies."

The Texas researchers had to inch toward some of their conclusions.

"You have to take trends into account," said Bean. "There does seem to be a small effect on certain types of crimes, especially property crime. But it's not at all clear that Mexicans were committing these crimes. The decrease may have been caused by a transfer of police units.

"Some of the school findings were even more tentative. (But) when you take four or five indicators together, they start to suggest something."

The nearly 200-page report also found that:

* The deterrent effect seems to have lessened as the operation has continued.
* Some illegal immigrants appear to have changed their daily border-crossing pattern and have extended their stays in El Paso.
* Illegal immigrants who work as street vendors and small-scale, petty criminals have been substantially deterred from crossing.
* Business activity in El Paso and Juarez does not appear to have suffered during the operation.
* The rate of seizure of illegal drugs and other contraband has increased.

The bulk of the report is positive, but the commission also cites several potential problem areas.

The study concluded that Operation Hold-the-Line was better at controlling localized immigration patterns in El Paso but ineffective at slowing long-distance labor migration.

The toll on Border Patrol agents was significant. The strategy locks agents into long periods of inactivity in fixed holding positions, causing boredom and anxiety, the study found.

The saturation strategy is very labor-intensive and has "stretched to the limit the ability of the El Paso sector to carry out (its) functions," researchers said.

Long before the commission released the study's findings, Operation Hold-the-Line had caught the attention of California politicians.

Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-El Cajon) has been a leader in sealing the Mexican border by building better access roads and an improved border fence. In September, he called on Atty. Gen. Janet Reno to replicate Operation Hold-the-Line along the San Diego-Tijuana border.

"The success of the El Paso operation demonstrates that it is possible to seal the border," Hunter said. "For years naysayers have said that what has been accomplished in El Paso was impossible."

**Holding the Line**

Here are selected findings from a study on Operation Hold-the-Line, a tough, preventive Border Patrol strategy to stop illegal immigration in El Paso. The report is to be released today by the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform.

PROS

* Illegal crossings have been substantially deterred.
* Illegal immigrants engaged in street vending and small-scale crime have been discouraged from crossing border.
* Charges of human rights violations by the Border Patrol have declined.
* The strategy has broad public support, including from the Mexican American community.
* The operation has led to small declines in school enrollment and numbers of births.

CONS

* Long-distance labor migration has shifted to other border crossings.
* Seems more effective at deterring temporary crossers whose destinations are U.S. border communities.
* Redeployment and longer individual shifts have eroded morale among agents.
* Strategy is labor-intensive and expansion of program would stretch present resources.
* Deterrent effect has lessened as operation continues.

## Views and Legislation on Immigration (Part III: 1965–present)

## Excerpt from *Six Deadly Years in the Making: Operation Gatekeeper*

*The Creation of Operation Gatekeeper: Influencing Factors*

With significant fanfare and the endorsement of Attorney General Janet Reno and INS Commissioner Doris Meissner, INS officially kicked off Operation Gatekeeper in October of 1994. Operation Gatekeeper specifically targeted the California part of the United States-Mexico border with the intention of disrupting border-crossing patterns within the region. Specifically, its intended goal was to shift the flow of illegal border crossing from urban San Diego to more remote terrain further east of the city, thereby reducing the overall number of people crossing through the sector as a whole. The underlying idea was if that it was harder to cross, fewer people would attempt to do so.

Several influencing factors converged to create Operation Gatekeeper.[1] One critical factor was Operation Hold the Line, which essentially served as a model for Gatekeeper. The INS implemented the initiative in El Paso, Texas in October of 1993 as "a deterrence-oriented deployment." Operation Hold the Line functioned by positioning agents along the border in such a way that they were highly visible both to each other and would-be border crossers, thus deterring large numbers of daily migrants from successfully crossing. Operation Hold the Line boasted a 70 percent drop in El Paso sector apprehensions. However, the migrants had merely shifted in their traffic patterns to sites that were not as much under vigilance. . . .

*The Ultimate Results of Gatekeeper*

Despite all of the money spent, new agents hired, and technologies employed, total apprehensions along the sector as a whole have only been reduced less than one percent over this time period.[7] The fact remains that powerful "push" and "pull" factors continue to perpetuate the long-established cycle of migrancy.

Push factors that propel migrants to leave include low wages and unemployment, while pull factors drawing the migrants to work in the United States include the need for cheap labor and for workers to do the jobs that natives cannot or will not do. Operations such as Gatekeeper and Hold the Line do not ultimately deter the migrants from undertaking their perilous journeys because border crossing is not merely an enforcement issue.

The migrants simply keep coming, now diverted into more treacherous terrain. The INS is fully cognizant of the inherent dangers associated with crossing through the deserts and mountains east of San Diego. In fact, their very own documents describe the eastern segment of the sector in the following way:

> The eastern 52 miles of the Sector . . . is marked by steep mountains, deep canyons, thick brush, and an absence of urban infrastructure and transportation facilities. The steep mountainsides, canyon walls, large boulders, and dense vegetation make

> travel slow, difficult, and dangerous, and the lack of food, water, and transportation compounds the challenges faced by travelers. The eastern portion of the Sector also experiences extreme temperatures, ranging from freezing cold in the winter to searing heat in the summer that can kill the unprepared traveler.[2]

Because of the harshness of the terrain, the INS has started to provide special training in search and rescue techniques. The fact that Border Patrol agents are involved in such training exhibits that the INS clearly knows the mortal danger that Operation Gatekeeper poses for hundreds of thousands of annual border crossers.

The number of deaths along the border has soared under Gatekeeper, increasing by 600 percent during the last six years. The number of migrants who have died as a direct effect of Gatekeeper currently stands at 545, of whom 77 have passed away so far in the year 2000 alone. And this number will only continue to rise: an average of one migrant per day now perishes along the border.

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[1] Information for this section can be found at www.usdoj.gov/oig/gatekpr/gkp01.htm
[2] www.globalexchange.org/education/california/DayOfTheDead/gatekeeper.html

American Friends Service Committee Inc., Pacific Southwest Regional Office U.S. Mexico Border Program, Immigration Law Enforcement Monitoring Project, *Six Deadly Years in the Making: Operation Gatekeeper.* Available: <http://www.afsc.org/sandiego/brdr2k03.htm>

## Suggestions for Further Reading

**Teachers**

Chávez, Leo R. *Shadowed Lives: Undocumented Immigrants in American Society.* Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998.

Chávez chronicles the lives of many undocumented immigrants in contemporary America.

Cornelius, Wayne A. *Mexican Migration to the United States: Causes, Consequences and U.S. Responses.* Cambridge: Migration and Development Study Group, Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1978.

Cornelius provides a quick history of Mexican immigration to the U.S.

Davis, Marilyn P. *Mexican Voices/American Dreams: An Oral History of Mexican Immigration to the United States.* New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1990.

A book of recent oral histories.

García, Juan Ramon. *Operation Wetback: The Mass Deportation of Mexican Undocumented Workers in 1954.* Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980.

García's book is the most thorough treatment of Operation Wetback of 1954.

García, Mario T. *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880–1920.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

García provides an excellent analysis of Mexican immigration in the El Paso region and discusses Mexican assimilation in the U.S.

Gutiérrez, David. *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Gutiérrez's book provides an excellent analysis of how Mexican immigration has been received by and addressed by Mexican-Americans.

Herrera-Sobek, María. *The Bracero Experience: Elitelore versus Folklore.* Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1979.

_____. *Northward Bound: The Mexican Immigrant Experience in Ballad and Song.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.

Both of Herrera-Sobek's books are a wealth of primary sources composed by Mexican immigrants about the experiences in Mexico and the U.S.

**Students**

Ashabranner, Brent. *Our Beckoning Borders: Illegal Immigration to America.* Cobblehill, 1993.

A survey of illegal immigration, including interviews with immigrants that focuses on the Mexican border. (young adult)

**Web sites**

<http://www.closeup.org/immi_act.htm>

Teaching Activity on U.S. Immigration Policy that allows students to "examine current immigration policies in the United States, at both the state and federal levels. Students will consider a variety of viewpoints on several controversial issues related to immigration, and discuss these issues in light of past, current, and proposed legislation."

<http://fyi.cnn.com/2001/fyi/lesson.plans/06/15/new.frontier>

Contains lesson plan and primary sources that encourage students to "identify economic and cultural changes that are occurring in U.S.-Mexican border towns, analyze the risks and federal policies associated with the illegal immigration of Mexicans into the United States, and list the benefits and drawbacks of the North American Free Trade Agreement."

<http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/destinationamerica>

This site contains lessons plans, suggested readings for teachers and students, and primary sources that help students to analyze "immigration to the United States can be a controversial issue" and encourages "reading both fiction and nonfiction books about immigration can help us formulate our own opinions."

<http://www.bergen.org/AAST/Projects/Immigration>

"The American Immigration Home Page was startd as a part of a school project for a 10th grade American History Class. The project was meant to give information as to how immigrants not only were treated, but also why they decided to come to America. Feel free to explore the rest of the site."

<http://www.theatlantic.com/unbound/flashbks/immigr/immigint.htm>

The April 1996 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* contains articles written for the magazine between 1883 and 1994 about immigration to the United States.

<http://teachers.eusd.k12.ca.us/jleff/pamryan.html>

Contains Web links to Mexican history and migrant workers in the United States.

<http://www.msmc.la.edu/ccf/9-12/IR.9-12.Mexican.Books.html>

Reviews books for grades 9–12 written about the Mexican-American experience.