El Comité Nacional de Repatriación:

Mexican Management of the Conational Exodus, 1932-1934

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on a quasi-governmental committee formed in November, 1932 during the interim Mexican presidency of Abelardo L. Rodríguez. “El Comité Nacional de Repatriación” (The National Repatriation Committee) brought together Mexican businessmen, politicians, social-aid administrators and government officials to deal with the U.S. repatriations of “ethnic Mexicans” (Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans). The Comité attempted to raise half a million pesos (“La Campaña de Medio Millón”) for the repatriates to cultivate Mexico’s hinterlands in agricultural communities (“colonias”). However, the Comité’s promised delivery of farm equipment, tools, livestock and guaranteed wages came too slowly for the still destitute and starving repatriados who sometimes reacted with threats of violence against local and state officials. Cloaked in political rhetoric, the Comité failed to meet the expectations of the repatriate population and the Mexican public. The ambitious plans of the Comité became mired in confusion and scandal. Finally, bowing to pressure from Mexican labor unions and the Mexican press, President Rodríguez dissolved the Comité on June 14, 1934.

In addition, this work addresses Mexican immigration settlement through the early 1930s, Mexican immigration theory, the administration of President Herbert Hoover and the conational exodus. The hardships faced by the repatriates are covered as well as unemployment issues, nativism, and U.S. immigration policies through the early years of the Great Depression. The conclusions reached confirm that the general Mexican public welcomed the Campaña de Medio Millón and the work initiated by the National Repatriation Committee. However, the negative publicity regarding the failure of the two

principal resettlement colonies in Oaxaca and Guerrero convinced President Rodríguez to disband both the Comité and the Campaña de Medio Millón.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my father and mother, Richard B. Bridgewater and Lucille Leal Bridgewater, and to the memory of Professor F. Arturo Rosales.

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I would like to thank the three academic mentors in my life, my father, Richard B. Bridgewater, Professor John Womack, Jr. and Professor F. Arturo Rosales. My education was a family priority and I appreciate the opportunities my parents gave me. My mother, Lucille Leal Bridgewater is a source of great strength and support.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation focuses on a quasi-governmental committee formed in November, 1932 by interim Mexican president Abelardo Lujan Rodríguez. "El Comité Nacional de Repatriación" (The National Repatriation Committee) brought together Mexican businessmen, politicians, social-aid administrators and government officials to deal with U.S. repatriations of ethnic Mexicans. The Comité attempted to raise half a million pesos ("La Campaña de Medio Millón") for the repatriates to cultivate Mexico's hinterlands in agricultural communities ("*colonias*"). However, the Comité's promised delivery of farm equipment, tools, livestock and guaranteed wages came too slowly for the *repatriados* who sometimes reacted with threats of violence against local and state officials. Cloaked in political rhetoric, the Comité failed to meet the expectations of the repatriate population (many were U.S. citizens coerced and "migrated back to Mexico") or the Mexican general public. The ambitious plans of the Comité became mired in confusion and scandal. Finally, bowing to pressure from Mexican labor unions and the highly critical Mexican press, President Rodríguez dissolved the Comité on June 14, 1934.

El Comité Nacional de Repatriación enjoyed early successes and its influential members made for good publicity. At the onset of the "Campaña de Medio Millón," the Comité rallied the Mexican nation to support the thousands of *repatriados*. The Comité's diverse membership instilled a public sense of duty and responsibility for the plight of the repatriates (not just Mexican men, but women, children and families). The members of the Comité (representatives from Mexican charitable organizations, industry, commerce,

and government officials), sensed a nation-building opportunity and embraced the chance to raise money for the noble repatriate cause. Public donations and worker contributions to the "Campaña de Medio Millón" was also significant.

The brief existence of the Comité (during the most intense period of U.S. "depression-era" repatriation drives) planned for the construction of agricultural *colonias* in Mexico that the Comité hoped would absorb repatriates into the national economy. Bilateral negotiations between the U.S. and Mexican governments, aid workers, municipal leaders, businessmen, transportation executives and union representatives motivated the Comité to address the "repatriate issue" as a national duty. My research includes U.S. State Department papers (American Consulate General, Mexican Affairs Division, The National Archives), Spanish-language newspapers in the United States, Mexican newspapers (primarily *El Universal* and *Excélsior*) and the important secondary sources on the general subject of Mexican repatriation (see partial list below).[1] These publications and sources present much of the "north of the border" appraisals of bi-national politics and vested interests. However for the more complete story, I travelled to

[1] Jaime R. Aguila, "Mexican /U.S. Immigration Policy Prior to the Great Depression," *Diplomatic History,* 31:2, 2007.
Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal, Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995.
Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994.
Abraham Hoffman, "Mexican Repatriation Statistics: Some Suggested Alternatives to Carey McWilliams," *The Western Historical Quarterly,* Vol. 3, No. 4. October, 1974.
Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939*. Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1974.
Arturo F. Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*. Houston: Arte Público Press, 1997.

Mexico City (with Professor Arturo Rosales) and combed through four important archives.[2]

This dissertation will also provide a comparative exploration of the problem of repatriation in Mexico during the 1920s and early 1930s. During the era known as the *Maximato* (1928-1934), former president Plutarco Elías Calles ruled behind the scenes. During these years, three presidents; Emilio Portes Gil, Pasqual Ortiz Rubio, and Abelardo Lujan Rodríguez owed their two-year interim administrations to Calles. As American unemployment soared during the first years of the Great Depression, ethnic Mexicans in the United States became one group of scapegoats for the economic crisis and were often blamed for the inability of many native-born Americans to find and keep jobs. Broadly, I will show that the administration of President Rodríguez and the founding of the Comité Nacional de Repatriación created a "new diplomacy" between the United States and Mexico during this difficult time (which was a departure from the previous laissez-faire approach taken by presidents Portes Gil and Ortiz Rubio). Specifically, I argue that the leadership and experience of Abelardo Rodríguez recognized the interdependency between the United States and Mexico and his important role as an active mediator during the most intense period of repatriation forged a complicated, yet on-going accommodation of the repatriation process.

The dissertation will follow a chronological sequence, but will be organized topically. Each chapter will present a singular argument concerned with a specific topic

[2] 1) Instituto Nacional de Migración (AHIHM), 2) Archivo General de la Nación, 3) Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada, and 4) Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores (The Mexican Foreign Relations Archive).

and theme. The overarching question of the dissertation is: How did the formation of the Comité Nacional de Repatriación deal with the issue of repatriates stranded on the Mexican side of the border? While I want to present a thorough examination of Mexico's approach to the repatriation problem, I also want to explore the bi-national complexities and diplomatic nuances that President Rodríguez was well-versed in. This perspective is a distinct element that I analyze in the dissertation, so I will make every effort to keep the chapters as comparative as possible. Further, the comparative investigation asks larger questions such as: How did the interactions between the Comité and American interests shape repatriation policies? What can the short history of the Comité tell us about repatriation issues? Once those questions have been established, I can be more specific and ask: Where does President Rodríguez fit in this larger narrative? What do the themes of a "societal" rather than a "governmental" responsibility reveal about Mexican nationalism?

After the patriotic fanfare (the return of the conationals) and the post-Mexican Revolution posturing, the Comité de Repatriación found very little common ground and its efforts fell short. Compared to the vast numbers of repatriates, why were so few involved in the *colonias* projects? What explains the violence at the *colonias*? Why were basic items (food, medicine, tools) and farm machinery not delivered to the *colonias*? Were there hidden issues of class that separated *colonia* workers from members and agents of the Comité? These questions forecast the presidential campaign and administration of Lázaro Cárdenas and his "socialist" agenda. (The inability of the Comité Nacional de Repatriación and President Rodríguez to turn U.S. repatriation drives into something more positive for Mexico.)

Background and Historiography

On November 24, 1932, the leading Mexico City newspaper, *El Universal*, reported the formation of a Mexican National Repatriation Committee ("El Comité Nacional de Repatriación"). According to the article, the Chief of the Mexican Migration Department, Andrés Landa y Piña, presided over a meeting (on November 23, 1932) attended by representatives from the Ministry of the Interior (Secretaria de Gobernacíon), the National Chamber of Commerce (Alfredo Levy), the Confederation of Industrial Organizations, the Red Cross, the Central Department of the Federal District, the Public Charities (Beneficía Pública) and the American Chamber of Commerce.[3] Landa y Piña believed the problem of "numerous indigent Mexican repatriates from the United States" required the immediate attention of a "national rather than official committee."[4] His suggestion to staff the Comité de Repatriación Nacional with government representatives and businessmen from the Mexican industrial and commercial sectors met with unanimous approval. The meeting adjourned with the appointment of a provisional, seven-member "Comité" initially responsible for fund-raising, lunch-room and dormitory construction for repatriate workers and housing for the unemployed *repatriados*.

Throughout the 1920s, the Mexican government brought compatriot workers "home" in reaction to downturns in the American economy. The U.S. recession of 1920-1921 left thousands of impoverished Mexican laborers stranded in *el Norte*. President Álvaro Obregón repatriated 15,000 Mexicans and formed the Department of Repatriation

[3] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Division of Mexican Affairs. *Formation of Mexican National Repatriation Committee* (December 1932), by John S. Littell, Vice-Consul, American Consulate General, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 311.1215/36. Washington, D.C., 1932.
[4] *El Universal*, 24 November 1932.

within The Ministry of Foreign Relations. Obregón's administration (1920-1924) displayed a genuine concern for Mexican workers and the Mexican consular offices received increased government funding to assist immigrants in *México de Afuera* (external Mexico). Consular coalition building with Mexican laborer (*bracero)* communities and "*México de Afuera*," mutual aid societies such as the *Comisiones Honorificas Mexicanos* and the *Brigadas de la Cruz Azul* expanded the protective reach of the Mexican government in the United States.[5] The presidential administration of Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-1928) also committed government resources to the *Comisiones* and the *Brigadas* as the controversy over unrestricted Mexican immigration in America reached a "new urgency."[6] The *Comisiones* and *Brigadas* promoted Mexican nationalism, provided information regarding visas, identification cards, the immigration process and drafted applications for Mexican government assistance.[7] An unsigned document dated February 15, 1928 titled, "Emigration-Immigration-Repatriation," expressed the concerns of Mexican union leaders regarding the mistreatment of expatriate workers in the United States and called for President Calles to promulgate "an organic law to end emigration of Mexican laborers." The document also described that consular delegations traveled to Mexico City, "and requested Government aid and assistance for the repatriation of groups of Mexican laborers and their families in the United States."[8]

[5] Jaime R. Aguila, "Mexican/U.S. Immigration Policy prior to the Great Depression," *Diplomatic History,* 31:2 (2007), 218.
[6] Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans In The Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), 24-30.
[7] Jaime R. Aguila, "Mexican Mutual Aid: The Origin of the *Comisiones Honorificas Mexicanas* and the *Brigadas de la Cruz Azul*." The University of Texas of the Permian Basin.
[8] F. Arturo Rosales, Private Papers on Mexican Repatriation, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

In order to maintain political control after the 1928 assassination of president-elect Obregón, Calles appointed himself as "Jefé Maximo" (his *de facto* reign as "chieftain of the Maximato" lasted from 1928 to 1934). The next three presidents (Emilio Portes Gil, Pasqual Ortiz Rubio and Abelardo Lujan Rodríguez) owed their two-year interim administrations to Calles. As American unemployment soared during the first years of the Great Depression, ethnic Mexicans in the United States became one group of scapegoats for the economic crisis and often blamed for the inability of many Americans to find and keep jobs.

President Herbert Hoover's Secretary of Labor, William Doak eagerly attempted to rid America of foreigners and targeted Mexicans in large cities such as Los Angeles, California and Chicago, Illinois. In 1931, Doak claimed that 400,000 aliens resided in the United States illegally and thousands of Mexicans lost their jobs. Pressured to leave by community authorities, Mexicans and their children (many born in America) returned to Mexico.[9] Abraham Hoffman examined the issue of repatriation with a clear and rational approach.

> There is no argument here…that repatriation for many Mexican immigrants was a traumatic experience or that repatriation could also involve coercion, deportation, exploitation and racism. However, to suggest that these elements in equal parts add up to a clear definition of the repatriation movement is to distort its history. Repatriation was a complicated process composed of many factors and nuances, most of which have been unexplored, neglected, omitted,

[9] F. Arturo Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1997), 48-49. Also, Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994) "Entire neighborhoods and communities were destroyed…when county and state agencies, with the blessing of the federal government, organized the mass removal of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans from towns and cities all over the United States" (2) and "U.S. authorities…did not simply "return" Mexicans to their home country, but sent many American citizens into exile in a foreign country" (94).

or oversimplified.[10]

Each of the interim Mexican presidents dealt with growing numbers of repatriates from the United States.[11] President Portes Gil amicably discussed the repatriations with American ambassadors (Dwight Morrow and Josephus Daniels) and President Ortiz Rubio allowed repatriates to re-enter Mexico with exemptions from custom duties.[12]

In 1930, the Mexican Migration Service of the Ministry of the Interior (with Andrés Landa y Piña as the presiding official) began negotiations with the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and scheduled annual conferences regarding the transportation of repatriates, the creation of communal colonies for the returned workers and proposed taxes on Mexican private property to fund the "*colonias*."[13] General Abelardo Rodríguez (a former Secretary of War and Navy) assumed the Mexican presidency in September of 1932 and like his predecessor, "expanded the list of articles repatriates could bring in duty-free." [14]

Two months later, the newly formed Comité Nacional de Repatriación embarked on a campaign to raise a half million pesos for the establishment of agricultural communal colonies for repatriate farmers (the favored project of Landa de Piña). The

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[10] Abraham Hoffman, "Mexican Repatriation Statistics: Some Suggested Alternatives to Carey McWilliams," *The Western Historical Quarterly,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (Oct., 1972), 391-404.
[11] Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in The Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), 174. According to Hoffman's table, U.S. repatriations from 1929 to 1932 totaled 365, 518 people.
[12] Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal, Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque : University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 133.
[13] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Division of Mexican Affairs, *Second National (Mexican) Migration Conference* (February, 1931), by Robert Frazier, Consul General, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 812.55 No. 98, Washington, D.C., 1931. In this report to the American Secretary of State, Frazier recounts the conference meeting held in Mexico City from February 2 through 9, 1931 (topics included: "Repatriation," "Emigration," "Immigration," "Tourist Travel" and "Citizenship of Mexican-born Women"). See also *Excélsior*, 9 February 1931 and 11 February, 1931.
[14] Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal, Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 133.

Comité (under the provisional leadership of Sr. Federico T. De Lachica) enjoyed enthusiastic support in the Mexican press and after six weeks, collected almost 86,000 pesos that included a private donation of 5,000 pesos from President Rodríguez and over 17,000 pesos from government workers and officials.[15] U.S. State Department officials in Mexico City noted a special "fundraiser bull-fight" scheduled with famed *matador* Alberto Balderas and radio announcements on stations XEW and XEB that requested public donations to the Comité.[16] American Vice-Consul, John Littell observed the Comité's enthusiastic reception by the Mexican newspapers.

> The campaign is being kept before the public by almost daily articles, coming from all parts of the country, published in the Mexico City press, and Mexico seems determined to do something in the near future for its repatriates from the United States. It is estimated that over 250,000 persons have been added to the population of Mexico since the beginning of 1929 from this source alone.[17]

President Rodríguez received many letters from influential businessmen, politicos, academics, artists, military men, friends and acquaintances who cheerfully sent their contributions to the Campaña de Medio Millón.

However, on February 9, 1933, Vice-Consul Littell filed a "voluntary report" regarding the formation of the "Union of Mexican Repatriates" that urged "all Mexican workers' organizations to work for the suspension of the present repatriation campaign, because the economic problems of the repatriates already in the country have not been solved." Littell also wrote that the "Union" wanted to control the number of repatriates

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[15] Abraham Hoffman, "*Unwanted Mexican Americans In The Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939*" (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), 138; *Excélsior*, 10 January 1933.
[16] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Division of Mexican Affairs, *President of Mexico Aids Progress of Repatriation Fund Campaign* (January, 1933), by John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 311.1215/38, Washington, D.C., 1933.
[17] Ibid.

"allowed into Mexico," complained that the 500,000 peso campaign "is being realized too slowly" and called for an accounting of the funds collected by the Comité for the repatriates.[18]

El Universal reported that during a February 3, 1933 meeting with the Comité, the "Union" representatives pressed the Comité to distribute the donated funds to the repatriate population. The Comité members rebuffed the idea as an obstacle to "permanent relief" and decided the money was better spent on agricultural communities that developed Mexican rural areas and provided employment for the repatriates.[19] The Comité initially announced that the first colony, "to accommodate six hundred families, is to be established in the State of Guanajuato…during the present month with funds already collected."[20]

On the evening of February 15, 1933 the Comité de Repatriación provided the Mexican press with a statement that addressed the concerns of the "Union of Mexican Repatriates" and the public at large.

> This Committee has received numerous congratulations for its decision to disregard any suggestions which are not made directly by the repatriates concerned and therefore avoiding outside intervention of all sorts. Regarding the idea that repatriation must be suspended, this Committee declares that the phenomenon of repatriation has not been provoked by the will of the nation, nor can it be suspended whether we wish it or not.[21]

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[18] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Division of Mexican Affairs, "*Union of Mexican Repatriates*" *Requests Suspension of Repatriation Campaign* (February, 1933), by John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 311.1215/39, Washington, D.C., 1933.
[19] *El Universal*, 4 February 1933 and 9 February 1933.
[20] Ibid.
[21] *El Universal*, 16 February 1933.

The Comité also disclosed that the 500,000 peso repatriation campaign already realized 104,742 pesos (deposited in the Bank of Mexico) with 100,000 pesos dedicated to an agricultural community in the State of Guerrero. In addition, the Comité announced a repatriate work project in the State of San Luis Potosí, with the daily wage set at one peso and free railway fare for five hundred repatriates and their families.[22]

By March of 1933, the total collections of the Comité amounted to 154,062 pesos and the establishment of the *colonias* became its singular goal. Much to the delight of President Rodríguez, a March 17, 1933 benefit concert for the repatriate cause ("A Beneficio de los Repatraidos Mexicanos") featured the famed Spanish classical guitarist, Andrés Segovia (the guitar master was paid 1,435 pesos for his appearance at the Teatro Arbeu).[23]

Abraham Hoffman noted that the Comité heeded the advice of leading Mexican intellectual Manuel Gamio who stated that "skills acquired by the repatriates in the United States were lost to the Mexican economy if the *repatriados* were scattered to all parts of Mexico."[24] The Comité also decided that workers sent to *colonias* located in the Mexican interior removed the repatriates from competition with other Mexicans seeking work (the concern of the "Union of Mexican Repatriates") and the distance from the United States kept them from returning to *el Norte*.

In April 1933, the Comité established three *colonias*: Colony Number 1, located at El Coloso, Guerrero remained an "experiment" and was perhaps used as a staging area

[22] Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), 139.
[23] F. Arturo Rosales, Private Papers on Mexican Repatriation, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.
[24] Ibid.

for repatriates on their way to other *colonias.* [25] Colony Number 2, near Minizo, Oaxaca, (known as "Pinotepa Nacional") with its fertile soil, ample water resources and few inhabitants seemed at the onset, a perfect location. In his April 20, 1933 "voluntary report", American Vice Consul John S. Littell explained that 1000 repatriates and their families came to the Oaxaca *colonia* from Mexico City (400) and El Paso (600). Andrés Landa y Piña traveled with repatriates that left from Guerrero and arrived in Oaxaca on the ship, "Bravo" (provided by the Ministry of War and Marine). Littell further noted that a sanitary brigade awaited the repatriates as well as an engineer corps to demarcate land parcels for farming. Palm tree shelters served as temporary housing units for the repatriates.

El Universal reported on the March 15, 1933 meeting between Anastasio García Toledo (Governor of Oaxaca) and President Abelardo Rodríguez.

> Regarding the colonization of his state, García Toledo stressed the necessity for land allotment to the repatriates that was unencumbered by communal claims. He informed the President of the Republic that his state would offer the Comité land free of all liens and without the prospect of any "agrarian problem," on which it would be possible to raise two crops of corn a year. The Governor stated the people of Oaxaca are willing to lend the repatriates (without charge) oxen, draft animals and cattle while they are raising their first crops.[26]

Littell wrote that Colony 2 "will be a test of truth of the semi-official National Repatriation Committee" and whether repatriates trained in the United States can

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[25] Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican American In The Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1974), 140-141. Hoffman claims "A group of about twenty *repatriados* from Detroit, Michigan, had arrived at the site as early as December 1932…" See also, United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Division of Mexican Affairs, "*One Thousand Families of Mexican Repatriates to Form New Oaxaca Colony*" (April, 1933), by John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 311.1215/43, Washington, D.C., 1933. Littell describes the Guerrero site as a "concentration point."

[26] *Excélsior,* 16 March 1933 and 18 March 1933.

improve agricultural standards, the industrial production of Mexico and the promotion of its national industries.[27] Colony Number 3, designated for construction at Santo Domingo, near Magdalena Bay, Lower (Baja) California prepared for the arrival of 1800 repatriate farmers and Littell listed other planned *colonias* in Cóbano, Colima; Canton de Autlan, Jalisco (located on Mexico's west coast between Acapulco and Baja California) and a future *colonia* near San Andrés Tuxtla, Veracruz on the Mexican east coast.

The Comité formally established Colony Number 2 in May of 1933. Most of the Comité's funds went toward the Oaxaca *colonia* and it was hoped that Pinotepa would serve as an example of progress and administrative success. In August 1933, the Ministry of Interior commended Colony 2 in an inspection report that lauded Pinotepa's Provisional Director, Sr. Andrés Landa y Piña (Chief of the Ministry's Migration Department). However, plans for the construction of a school for the repatriates' children came to abrupt halt when Landa y Piña resigned his positions on November 4, 1933.[28] Vice Consul Littell's report of May 28, 1934 (reviewed by Assistant Secretary of State Sayre) describes the total failure of Colony 1 in Guerrero and Colony 2 in Oaxaca.

> It appears both colonies have been abandoned, the reasons given being (1) the arbitrary government thereof and (2) the starvation rations given the colonists.

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[27] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Division of Mexican Affairs, "*One Thousand Families of Mexican Repatriates to Form New Oaxaca Colony*" (April, 1933), by John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 311.1215/43, Washington, D.C., 1933. Also, United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Division of Mexican Affairs, "*Statement of Mexican Minister of the Interior Regarding Repatriates' Colonies*" (May, 1933), By John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 311.1215/45, Washington, D.C., 1933.

[28] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Mexican Affairs Division, "*Failure of Mexican Repatriation Colony in Oaxaca*" (February, 1934), by John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group, 311.1215/50, Washington, D.C., 1934.

> The repatriates complained…of the directors of the Pinotepa Nacional colony, where life was stated to be unbearable since last October (1933)…on the pretext of imposing discipline, the directors were attended by six armed individuals…(and) the colonists…were being threatened with severe punishment in the event of disobedience. They decided to abandon the colony en masse, making a painful 23-day journey to Acapulco. There they lived on the charity of the people and…it was their good fortune that General Cárdenas, Presidential candidate of the National Revolutionary Party…supplied at his own expense, the busses necessary to take them to Mexico City. [29]

The repatriates at Pinotepa also learned that their harvested corn crop went to feed herds of swine instead of its promised distribution to the workers.

The Colony 1 repatriates abandoned their *colonia* for similar reasons and both groups presented their grievances to the Ministry of the Interior in Mexico City in hopes of immediate assistance. Tools, farm equipment and mules never arrived to the repatriates and the workers often resorted to threats of violence in order to provide for their basic needs.[30] Several repatriates fell ill and some died (due to the hostile, tropical climate) without medicines and food in ramshackle lodging houses between the *colonias* and Mexico City. Those that managed to make the trip hoped the Ministry of Agriculture considered their requests for land parcels near the national irrigation systems. Most of the colonists, farmers by occupation, needed any type of assistance to restart their lives after the failure of the *colonias* under the auspices of the Comité de Repatriación.

Allegations of graft and corruption hounded the Comité almost since its inception and a December 29, 1934 article in *El Universal* reported that unemployed repatriates

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[29] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Mexican Affairs Division, "*Further Details Regarding Failure of First Two Mexican Repatriation Colonies*" (May, 1934), by John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group, 311.1215/61, Washington, D.C., 1934.

[30] Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal, Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 142.

asked the Ministry of the Interior for a strict accounting of the over 300,000 pesos that the Comité collected in the campaign for 500,000 pesos. On February 9, 1934, the Ministry of Interior issued a statement deploring the dissentions in the Comité and the charges of misuse of funds. After expenses, expenditures and the costs associated with the establishment of the *colonias* at El Coloso and Pinotepa, a balance of 101,407.09 pesos remained in the Comité's account at the Bank of Mexico.

El Universal, a newspaper very critical of the Comité's administration of the *colonias,* published two statements by Rafael González C., a representative of the League of Mexican Workers and Farmers (the organization that the repatriate workers joined at the Pinotepa *colonia*).

> The repatriates worked with all their strength and enthusiasm but it was useless in light of the poor system of administration. Machinery was taken away before the colonists could make good use of it and that *colonia* resembled a slave colony rather a community of free workers. Further, the *colonia* suffered from impoverished conditions.[31]
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> An agent named Manuel Chávez threatened the colonists with a pistol and often said that the life of a repatriate costs only 25 pesos. No machinery or mules ever arrived and the repatriates worked with picks and hatchets. They were told to leave the *colonia* if they didn't want to work.[32]

President Rodríguez dissolved the Comité de Repatriación on June 14, 1934 and turned over its monies and resources to the Ministry of Agriculture and Development.

The decree made by President Rodríguez called for an accounting of the remaining funds left in the Comité's charge and Rodríguez stated that the Comité had not "satisfactorily fulfilled the mission entrusted to it…and its continuance would be contrary

[31] *El Universal,* 2 June 1934
[32] *El Universal,* 6 June 1934

to interests of the very people whom it was attempting to help."[33] Rodríguez, anxious to repair the damage done by the Comité's lackluster fifteen months in operation, formed the official, "Mexican Repatriation Board" on July 26, 1934. Outgoing President Rodríguez transferred 110,223.14 pesos and all agricultural implements to the Mexican Repatriation Board.

Rodríguez also resettled the displaced repatriates from El Coloso, Guerrero and Pinotepa, Oaxaca to lands near Rio Verde, San Luís Potosí. He supplied them with provisions and tools that amounted to 5,900 pesos. The President contemplated the upcoming meeting that the Mexican Repatriation Board scheduled with the Assistant Superintendent of Charities from Los Angeles, California, Mr. Rex Thomson and reflected on the repatriates' future.

> These colonies have as their purpose the immediate quantitative and qualitative improvement of the repatriates' condition of life; material, intellectual, physical and so forth…for which purpose there will be better living quarters, food, clothing and farm cultivation. The purpose attempted is not only that of obtaining the flourishing development of the colonists, but also and principally to make their model of living and working an influence to the farmers of the neighboring regions.[34]

Thomson moved thousand of repatriates to Mexico yet did so with the cooperation of Mexican officials. He believed that large repatriations of large numbers of Mexicans from Los Angeles (over 12,000 Mexican families) "should be handled by a representative of the County rather than be made into an international question…in this manner,

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[33] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Mexican Affairs Division, "*Formal Dissolution of Mexican National Repatriation Committee*" (June, 1934), by John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 311.1215/63, Washington, D.C., 1934.
[34] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Mexican Affairs Division, "*Formation of an Official Mexican Repatriation Board*" (July, 1934), by John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 311.1215/71, Washington, D.C., 1934.

responsibility for any difficulties which may later arise will not be attributed to the United States Federal Government."[35] Thomson wanted the Mexican government to resettle the Los Angeles repatriates in a West Coast *colonia* "with a view to future commercial interchange." Thomson also worked out the free railway transportation of repatriates not just to the border, but to the workers' homes in Mexico. His offer of travel assistance was welcomed as a remarkable gesture and in the last months of the Rodríguez administration, it seemed (at least to U.S. State Department officials) that four important benefits might occur: "1) a relief from the burden of thousands of Mexicans in Los Angeles dependent on the charity of Mr. Thomson's agency, 2) the addition to the Mexican population of citizens with a higher standard of living, 3) profit to both countries from commercial interchange, and 4) the further strengthening of good-will between Mexico and the United States."[36]

In an August 23, 1934 letter to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Josephus Daniels, commended the formation of the new Mexican Repatriation Board that "is discussing ways and means of taking care and handling the 12,000 Mexican families in Los Angeles County who are now being supported by Los Angeles Welfare Organizations and whom the Mexican government is endeavoring to bring back to Mexico…and it has been proposed that they be returned gradually…and that idle government lands be colonized with these repatriates."

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[35] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Mexican Affairs Division, "*Interview With Mr. Rex Thompson Regarding Mexican Government Aid To Unemployed Mexicans In The United States*" (May, 1934), by John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 311.1215/55, Washington, D.C., 1934

[36] Ibid.

The Comité Nacional de Repatriación was not a total failure (as the Mexican newspapers often editorialized). The obvious success was the fund-raising capability of the influential members of the Comité and their penchant for post-Mexican Revolution rhetoric. At the onset of the Campaña de Medio Millón, the nation felt a unified duty to provide for the *repatriados*. The combination of businessmen and government officials in the Comité gave the impression of a "societal" rather than a "governmental" responsibility toward those who, for a variety of reasons, found themselves in Mexico. Delegates from charitable institutions, industry and government ministries gave a public façade of limitless opportunity, unhampered by political favoritism and perhaps the opportunity to raise money in an unrestricted, more "freewheeling" manner.

Serious academic interest on Mexican repatriation began in the 1970s. Two books were published in 1974; one by an American scholar, Abraham Hoffman (*Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939*) and another by Mexican-born, Mercedes Carreras de Velasco (*Los Mexicanos que devolvió la crisis, 1929-1932*). Hoffman concentrated his study on Los Angeles and the bulk if his sources were Los Angeles County records, local newspapers and documents from the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Carreras de Velasco's Spanish language monograph contains a more panoramic view of the Mexican exodus. Unfortunately, her book provides little interpretation and glaring errors exist regarding the chronology of events and the role of the Mexican government and the establishment of resettlement colonies. Both Carreras de Velasco and Hoffman touch only lightly on what happened to repatriates once they arrived in Mexico. Carreras de Velasco drew primarily from an abundance of Mexican consular records available at La Archivo

Histórico de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (AHSRE) and a random body of Mexican newspaper stories; usually the articles mentioned in the archival documents. The influential 1982 monograph by Francisco Balderrama (*In Defense of La Raza: The Los Angeles Mexican Consulate and the Mexican Community, 1929-1936*) also focused on Los Angeles. His work was limited to how the counsels dealt with the problems of destitute immigrants who remained in California. Like Carreras de Velasco, Balderrama also used AHSRE sources.

Since the 1970s, other scholars have published micro-studies on repatriation in a variety of journals. The well-known Mexican historian, Moises González Navarro, treated the issue peripherally in a 1970 article regarding the effect of the depression on Mexicans ("*Efectos sociales de la crisis de 1929"*). A few years later, two Indiana University historians, Neil Betten and Raymond Mohl and a graduate student from the University of Chicago, Daniel T. Simon, wrote articles on repatriation in the industrial suburbs of Gary and East Chicago, Indiana ("*From Discrimination to Repatriation: Mexican Life in Gary, Indiana During the Great Depression"*). Their sources, although abundant and varied, were primarily local.

In the mid-1980s, R. Reynolds McKay, in two successive studies, viewed repatriation from Texas, and also relied on local sources ("*The Federal Deportation Campaign in Texas: Mexican Deportation from the Lower Rio Grande Valley During the Great Depression"* and "*The Impact of the Great Depression on Immigrant Mexican Labor: Repatriation of the Bridgeport, Texas Coal Miners"*). In 1994, Camille Guerin-González used perhaps the most extensive collection of references - local documents and a variety of Mexican archival records from the AHSRE. Guerin-González researched the

repatriations from California through the late 1930s (her work was her dissertation). Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez published the most often cited book on repatriation in 1995 (*"Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s"*). This volume revealed the many injustices associated with the repatriation drives. Although the numbers are exaggerated, the book revealed the plight of the repatriates. The most exciting recent scholarship is by Mexican historian, Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso from the Colegio de San Luis Potosí. His publications are listed below in the bibliography and I presented my initial findings with him in a panel discussion at the Rocky Mountain Latin American Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Professor Alanís-Enciso has conducted oral interviews with repatriates and is a wealth of information regarding Mexican sources, historiography and demographics.

Finally, the existing scholarship on President Abelardo Rodríguez is rather limited but the small scale provides several avenues to explore his life and career. In Roberto Quirós Martinez's 1934 biography, *Abelardo L. Rodríguez: El major amigo del proletario*, the narrative is effusive and congratulatory. Martinez tracks the accomplishments of President Rodríguez in chronological order with many photos, interviews, quotations and copies of presidential decrees. In 1938, Francisco Javier Gaxiola, Jr. published his biography, *El Presidente Rodriguez, 1932-1934* which is a more generalized appraisal of Rodríguez, his rise to the presidency and the difficult political challenges he faced. In that same year, Rodríguez published his *Notas de mi Viaje a Rusia*, a critical assessment of the Soviet system and its failure. The ex-president also served as governor of Sonora in the early 1940s and wrote *Ideario* in 1949 that chronicled his achievements as a regional leader. In his 1962 autobiography,

Autobiografía de Abelardo L. Rodríguez, the ex-president recounted his career as a professional baseball player, his days as a soldier/statesman, his focus on educational reforms in Mexico, and included a pull-out copy of his 1951 honorary Doctorate of Laws degree from the University of California, Berkeley.

An influential book that contemplates Mexico's fundamental question, the agrarian problem is Eyler N. Simpson's, *The Ejido, Mexico's Way Out*. This 1937 classic evaluated issues of land reform and the future economic and social organization of Mexico. Simpson's research illustrates the problematic 1920s and 1930s that I will discuss in my dissertation.

Another important article that examines the pre-presidential regional leadership of Abelardo Rodríguez is, *The "Shame Suicides" and Tijuana* by Vincent Cabeza de Baca and Juan Cabeza de Baca (included in "*On the Border: Society and Culture between the United States and Mexico*," edited by Andrew Grant Wood in 2001). This article documents a period of great tension between American and Mexican officials over the "vice-industry" in Tijuana during the 1920s when Rodríguez was the provisional governor of Baja California. All of these historical accounts support the fact that Abelardo Rodríguez was much more than an interim president. His political savvy and diplomatic skill places him as an important actor in U.S./Mexican relations. He had become a leading figure well before his tenure as President of the Republic.

Sources/Methodology

As mentioned above, the settling of repatriates is also linked land reform policies in the 1930s. Studies on the formation of *ejidos* (communal land grants), such as those by John Gledhill and Paul Friedrich, indicate that many returning expatriates became

chieftains in the struggle to wrest land from large *hacendados* (plantation owners). The process accomplished with the help of the grantees themselves, armed by the government, required savvy and men accustomed to violence in order to defend newly acquired parcels from "white guards" working for the land owners. The experience acquired by returning emigrants in their treks often provided just these characteristics. As the bibliography shown below indicates, much as been written on repatriation but the topic is dealt with as it affected Mexicans on this side of the border. Significantly, Balderrama and Rodríguez, in Decade *of Betrayal* (a thorough compilation of the repatriation experience in the United States), treat this issue only peripherally. In addition, these scholars did not view any of the following Mexican sources. In Mexico City, from the *El Archivo General de la Nación* (AGN), the *Archivo Hístorico de la Secretraría de Relaciones Exteriores* (AHSRE), and at the *Biblioteca Miguel Lerdo de Tejada*. All these data deal primarily with the founding of repatriation colonies during the presidency of Abelardo Rodríguez and the federal government's foray into this process after 1934.

I am also aware of official materials and newspaper clippings from municipal and state archives in Guanajuato and Jalisco which detail the plight of newly returned Mexicans in temporary camps around cities like León and Guadalajara. In this respect, a Master's thesis (Sociology) written in 1934 by James Gilbert, a researcher from the University of Southern California, is invaluable. He interviewed a number of newly returned emigrants in 1933.

In my possession are coped materials from the National Archives in Washington, D.C, which have been the primary sources of previous monographs on repatriation. But

other sources from the National Archives concern the almost successful efforts by the "Joint Immigration Commission", a California nativist organization, to declare Mexicans ineligible for naturalization and as a consequence, unable to enter the United States legally. This issue is important because it influenced Mexican government policy regarding foreigners in Mexico.

I will orient the reader to the complex relationships that existed between the United States and Mexico in the early years of the twentieth century. I will utilize a methodology of combining biography, cultural and intellectual history and literary studies to highlight the era that included the Mexican Revolution, World War I, and the Great Depression. I will also provide a richer context between the two nations and argue that Mexican history is often overlooked as it is intertwined with American history.

I will examine the first and second waves of substantial Mexican immigration to the United States. In order to understand the issues that the Comité Nacional de Repatriación confronted in the early 1930s, it is necessary to understand immigration trends and "push-pull" factors (labor contractors sent to Mexico to engage workers for American mining, railroad and agricultural enterprises. I will also investigate the downturns and the upturns in the American economy which had a direct impact on the need for Mexican labor during this forty-year period.

This is an investigation of the historical role of repatriation, the complexities of U.S./Mexican diplomatic history (from 1848 to the 1930s) and how Mexican presidential administrations, religious authorities, consular officials and mutual aid societies addressed their compatriot's well-being in America within the parameters of shifting U.S. immigration policies and labor demands. At issue are the many Mexican-initiated

repatriation campaigns for the purposes of nation-building, individual presidential control of national politics and the genuine feeling of responsibility Mexican leaders had for *bracero* laborers in the United States.

After the Mexican American War (1846-1848) the United States government refused to honor the provisions in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that guaranteed the property rights of Mexican landowners. Fearing more U.S. aggression, the Mexican government hoped to resettle their stranded compatriots along the new border regions as a buttress to potential American expansion. However, the cost and planning of such an undertaking proved too large a task for the weakened Mexican state (Aguila, "The First Mexican Repatriation Campaign," 3-5). Although substantial funding efforts (from 1848 to 1851) by Mexican Catholic church authorities and incentives from the state governments of Chihuahua, Sinaloa and Sonora (public land grants and tax credits) provided for moderate resettlement success, the demand for expatriate laborers in the California mining industry stalled this initial Mexican repatriation drive (Aguila, 5). Increased American racial prejudice galvanized Mexican religious and government officials "to aid their compatriots" (Aguila, 5).

In 1876, Mexican President Porfirio Díaz instructed his consular officials on the border to "protect their compatriots in the United States" (Aguila, "Mexican /U.S. Immigration Policy prior to the Great Depression," 108). By the century's end, Díaz opened Mexico to foreign investiture, capitalist expansion and institutionalized a stark division between Mexican wealthy elites and the working class. While Díaz amalgamated his power base and exercised almost total control of national politics, U.S. demands for cheap labor created a significant Mexican population in the United States

(over 125,000 by 1900). Mexican communities constituted "*México de afuera*-Exterior Mexico" and expected the Díaz regime's protection and assistance. Díaz's waning power in the mid-1900s prompted a contradictory, dual approach of worker repression in Mexico (the 1906 and 1907 violent suppressions of striking miners in Cananea, Sonora and textile workers in Rio Blanco, Vera Cruz) and the repatriation of compatriot workers in the United States who faced sudden unemployment due to the economic crisis of 1907-1908 (Aguila, "The Porfirian Repatriation Process on the Eve of the Mexican Revolution," 1-6).

This elaborate repatriation drive funded Mexican consular authorities and religious groups with the necessary capital to pay for repatriate railroad passage to El Paso/Ciudad Juarez. From there, Díaz directed the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Relations to get the workers back to the Mexican interior (Aguila, "The Porfirian Repatriation Process on the Eve of the Mexican Revolution," 13-17). In Aguila's analysis, the Diaz repatriation "implemented a short term solution, but failed to consider long terms plans regarding the inconsistent demands for Mexican labor in the United States" (Aguila, 1). However, as the United States government distanced itself from the issue, Díaz presented strength in leadership and by 1909 U.S. employers called again for Mexican laborers.

The U.S. involvement in World War I stepped up the need for Mexican laborers and exempted them from The Immigration Act of 1917. Massive numbers of *braceros* arrived in the United States. Unfortunately, the recession of 1920-1921 left thousands of *braceros* stranded in poverty. Outraged by the indifferent attitude of American officials and employers, Mexican President Álvaro Obregón repatriated 15,000 Mexicans during

this crisis and formed the Department of Repatriation within The Ministry of Foreign Relations. His concern for compatriot self-help and the return of these workers necessitated quick action and Mexican consular offices received increased government funding. Through consular coalition building with the *bracero* communities, two mutual aid societies, the *Comisiones Honorificas Mexicanos* and the *Brigadas de la Cruz Azul* expanded the protective reach of the Mexican government (Aguila, "Mexican /U.S. Immigration Policy prior to the Great Depression," 218). President Plutarco Calles also committed government resources to the *Comisiones* and the *Brigadas* and encouraged their interaction with *México de afuera*. As grassroots organizers, the dedicated men and women of the *Comisiones* and *Brigadas* were chartered under the consular offices and reported to the Ministry of Foreign Relations in Mexico City. The advantage of these organizations was their formation within the *México de afuera* communities and they closed the "distance gap" between *bracero* concerns and consular offices located in larger population centers. The *Comisiones* and *Brigadas* helped negotiate labor contracts, intervened in cases of racial discrimination, raised funds for schools, promoted Mexican nationalism, provided information regarding visas, identification cards, the immigration process and drafted applications for Mexican government assistance (Aguila, "The Origin of the *Comisiones Honorificas Mexicanas* and the *Brigades de la Cruz Azul*" 13-16). According to Aguila, mutual aid organizations "might still exist, if not for the devastation of the Great Depression" (Aguila, 18).

Indeed the long history of Mexican governmental involvement in the lives of *braceros* and their families in the United States addresses racism and prejudice against Mexicans in the United States. The "presence of Mexicans in America" is a significant component

of labor and diplomatic history between the two nations. Ethnic scholarship (Mexican American History and Chicano Studies) often focuses on the victimization of the downtrodden *bracero* in the same way it demonizes the Porfiriato. To do so, oversimplifies the discussion and one might as well rely on the "one-line sound bite" that most Americans rely on for immigration news.

In *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1995) Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodriquez assert that repatriates had *agringado* (Americanized) children and that the Mexican government did little to ease the transition back to Mexican culture and society (Balderrama and Rodriguez, 194-210). The authors also suggest that the extended families of the repatriates resented their initial departure and perceived them as failures. Aguila contends that Chicano scholarship treats the Mexican government and the mutual aid societies as "exploitative to the repatriates" (Aguila, "Mexican/U.S. Immigration Policy prior to the Great Depression," 208). Aguila's research disproves any such notion.

Another important source is Gunther Peck's, *Reinventing Free Labor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Although Peck's analysis does not deal specifically with Mexican governmental reactions to oppressive American corporate and *padrone* labor recruitment tactics, his work addresses the U.S. demand for cheap Mexican labor. Peck's conclusion that Mexican workers remained mobile and illusive to American corporate employers and their Mexican *padrones* suggests they also avoided the repatriation campaigns of Porfirio Díaz and Álvaro Obregón.

The presidential administration of Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-1928) also committed government resources to the *Comisiones* and the *Brigadas* as the controversy

over unrestricted Mexican immigration in America reached a "new urgency."[37] The *Comisiones* and *Brigadas* promoted Mexican nationalism, provided information regarding visas, identification cards, the immigration process and drafted applications for Mexican government assistance.[38] An unsigned document dated February 15, 1928 titled, "Emigration-Immigration-Repatriation," expressed the concerns of Mexican union leaders regarding the mistreatment of expatriate workers in the United States and called for President Calles to promulgate "an organic law to end emigration of Mexican laborers." The document also described that consular delegations traveled to Mexico City, "and requested Government aid and assistance for the repatriation of groups of Mexican laborers and their families in the United States."[39]

In order to maintain political control after the 1928 assassination of president-elect Obregón, Calles appointed himself as "Jefé Maximo" (his *de facto* reign as "chieftain of the Maximato" lasted from 1928 to 1934). The next three presidents (Emilio Portes Gil, Pasqual Ortiz Rubio and Abelardo Lujan Rodríguez) owed their two-year interim administrations to Calles. As American unemployment soared during the first years of the Great Depression, ethnic Mexicans in the United States became one group of scapegoats for the economic crisis and often blamed for the inability of many Americans to find and keep jobs.

President Herbert Hoover's Secretary of Labor, William Doak eagerly attempted to rid America of foreigners and targeted Mexicans in large cities such as Los Angeles,

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[37] Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans In The Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), 24-30.
[38] Jaime R. Aguila, "Mexican Mutual Aid: The Origin of the *Comisiones Honorificas Mexicanas* and the *Brigadas de la Cruz Azul*." The University of Texas of the Permian Basin.
[39] F. Arturo Rosales, Private Papers on Mexican Repatriation, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

California and Chicago, Illinois. In 1931, Doak claimed that 400,000 aliens resided in the United States illegally and thousands of Mexicans lost their jobs. Pressured to leave by community authorities, Mexicans and their children (many born in America) returned to Mexico.[40] In 1930, the Mexican Migration Service of the Ministry of the Interior (with Andrés Landa y Piña as the presiding official) began negotiations with the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and scheduled annual conferences regarding the transportation of repatriates, the creation of communal colonies for the returned workers and proposed taxes on Mexican private property to fund the "*colonias*."[41] General Abelardo Rodríguez (a former Secretary of War and Navy) assumed the Mexican presidency in September of 1932 and like his predecessor, "expanded the list of articles repatriates could bring in duty-free."[42]

When Abelardo Rodríguez assumed the presidency from Pascual Ortiz Rubio in 1932, he formed the *Comité Nacional de Repatriación* (National Repatriation Committee), a private sector group that attempted to construct special colonies for returning Mexicans in the jungle regions of Oaxaca and Guerrero. Former presidents Portes Gil and Ortiz Rubio, both considered tools of Calles, adhered to a policy that the

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[40] F. Arturo Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1997), 48-49. Also, Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994) "Entire neighborhoods and communities were destroyed…when county and state agencies, with the blessing of the federal government, organized the mass removal of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans from towns and cities all over the United States" (2) and "U.S. authorities…did not simply "return" Mexicans to their home country, but sent many American citizens into exile in a foreign country" (94).

[41] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Division of Mexican Affairs, *Second National (Mexican) Migration Conference* (February, 1931), by Robert Frazier, Consul General, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 812.55 No. 98, Washington, D.C., 1931. In this report to the American Secretary of State, Frazier recounts the conference meeting held in Mexico City from February 2 through 9, 1931 (topics included: "Repatriation," "Emigration," "Immigration," "Tourist Travel" and "Citizenship of Mexican-born Women"). See also *Excélsior*, 9 February 1931 and 11 February, 1931.

[42] Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal, Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 133.

federal government should avoid direct involvement in resettling the returning emigrants. Thus, the burden fell on state and municipal governments, a task for which these entities were ill equipped. This is when Rodríguez formed the Comité (see above discussion on the Comité itself).

When Lázaro Cárdenas replaced Rodríguez, he implemented a more far-reaching program using federal pesos. During 1938, in the border state of Tamaulipas, the *18 de Marzo* (March 18) colony (named after the date of the American and British oil expropriations) was formed as part of the land reform initiative which intensified during the Cárdenas administration. Even though these efforts came too late, the gesture served to promote Cárdenas' image as a "man of the people." In 1938, Mexican Foreign Minister Ramón Beteta, with much fanfare, traveled throughout the United States to offset the backlash surrounding the oil expropriation and to assure Mexican immigrants that their government was willing to help them return home.

The settling of repatriates is also linked to the forming of *ejidos* (communal farms) by the Mexican government. Returning expatriates received land, along with other Mexicans, expropriated from large haciendas. But landholders hired "white guards" to prevent them from occupying *ejidos*. As a consequence, grantees themselves, armed by the government, had to resort to violence. The experience acquired by emigrants in their sojourn abroad often provided them with leadership qualities in these struggles.

Two theoretical issues will guide my writing. One is to show the laissez-faire approach to the problem of repatriation during an era known as the *Maximato* (1929-1934), when former president, Plutarco Elías Calles ruled behind the scenes in contrast to an interventionist approach taken by Presidents Rodríguez and Lázaro Cárdenas

(Cárdenas completely broke free from Calles' grip after his election in 1934). This dichotomy reflects avenues taken in the 1930s in many other areas of public policy. The second is that returning immigrants themselves resolved more of their own problems than the government. The bad experiences of repatriates stranded on the Mexican side of the border and the difficulty that the Mexican government had in providing them with transportation to the interior. Unable to keep up with a more efficient expulsion operation in the United States (which essentially abandoned unwanted Mexicans in border towns), this section will also detail the actual trek of the returnees from the border to their homes and/or families Mexico.

Going past the scope of this dissertation, I will need to go further into the Mexicanist historiography. In the context of the historiography on the ejido, which is very extensive: Why was the government unable to find a solution to the ongoing phenomena of return migration during economic cycles, while seemingly having more success with the ejido system—at least in some parts of Mexico? John Gledhill's book, *Casi Nada, A Study of Agrarian Reform in the Homeland of Cárdenismo* questions much of the triumphalism of the Cardenista era. Furthermore, based on the books by Fernando Alanís Enciso, and to a certain extent the work of Casey Walsh, there seems to be some agreement that repatriates fared no better under Cárdenas than they had in previous or future administrations. Did repatriates fare better under Cárdenas? If yes, than why? What was different?

How does the Comité Nacional de Repatriación fit within the larger historiography? How does it complement, contradict, continue, or contribute to works like Balderrama and Rodriguez, Hoffman, Mercedes Carrera de Velasco, Alanis Enciso,

and other Mexicanists? Finally, the issue of repatriation develops and is part of, a larger concept of "transborder" and "transnational" communities. The subject, writ large, must explore the changing concepts of borders, border crossings, and borderlands as a way to understand the complexity of transborder communities.

An understanding of colonialism and neo-colonialism can serve as starting points for further discussions on race and ethnicity in the transborder context. Ethnic and racial hierarchies are often recast into nationalistic ideologies that dominate the headlines and complicate the discussions of contemporary migration and the historiography of U.S. / Mexico diplomatic relations. To understand this transborder historical context, one must "replace a vision solely centered on each country as a separate entity and thinking of regions as a comprehensive whole."[43] Therefore, the challenge is to conceptualize structural conditions that frame migration to the U.S. and labor relations, human relationships, worker experiences, couples and families that cross borders. Transborder migrations are more than geographic treks and are comprised of narratives, memories, hopes and dreams and multifaceted discourses.

In the historical context, the social fields of economics, politics, gender, and religion embrace relations between migrants and those of us who live in the United States and Mexico. Mexico is re-created from those who bring Mexico to transborder spaces and import, *la patria,* beyond her national boundaries. Whether the experience is grounded in the power dynamics of agribusiness, migratory policies, or the hiring of workers, the life histories and over-arching political nuances are all inserted into the labor structures of both Mexico and the United States.

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[43] Lynn Stephen, *Trans border Lives, Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon.* (Durham and London; Duke University Press 2007).

CHAPTER 2

A SHORT HISTORY OF MEXICAN IMMIGRATION SETTLEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

Before 1848, Mexico included the present-day southwestern region of the United States. After the U.S. victory in the U.S. / Mexico War (1846-1848), Mexican immigrants and their descendants found themselves in conquered territory. Although the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo granted U.S. citizenship, land rights and tolerance of the Spanish language and Catholic religious traditions to between 80,000 to 100,000 Mexicans that lived and worked north of the Rio Grande River, very few of these rights were ever realized by those Mexicans.[44] It's not surprising that at various times since the U.S. takeover (170 years ago), the immigrant Mexican presence has been labeled as, *la reconquista* (the reconquest). However, this term (perhaps appropriated from the reconquest of Spain by the combined military might of the marital union of Ferdinand II to Isabella I - the ouster of the 700 year Moorish reign by the armies of Castile and Aragón in 1492), inadequately described the post-1848 racial subordination and labor exploitation that immigrant Mexicans and the U.S. born population of Mexican descent groups (today known as "Chicanas" and "Chicanos" or Mexican Americans) were subjected to in the mid to late 1800s.[45]

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[44] Rudolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981) and Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).

[45] See Addendum document number ?.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Mexican workers had migrated to the U.S. in ever-increasing numbers and in a "revolving door" pattern of seasonal labor demands tempered by economic recessions in the U.S. economy. This migratory trend played out in the railroad industry, agribusiness and mining enterprises. Post-U.S. Civil War industrial expansion had created demands for Southwestern products, but the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and the 1907 "Gentlemen's Agreement" with Japan, restricted Asian immigrant labor. By the late 1800s, railroad industrialists had pushed into the western region of Mexico and hired *enganchistas* (labor recruiters) to offer employment contracts to Mexican workers. These often very skilled Mexican laborers took the offered jobs, built and maintained railroad infrastructure, and subsequently found additional employment opportunities in U.S. mining interests and agriculture.[46] While most of the Mexican laborers at this time were males, some Mexican women made the northward trek. However, women workers returned to their Mexican homes with greater frequency, after shorter stays in the U.S.[47]

Importantly, the frenetic economic boom in the Southwest (principally driven by railroad line extensions), complimented the economic aims of the "Porfiriato" (1876-1911) and the capitalistic development schemes of president/dictator, Porfirio Díaz. By the end of the nineteenth century, Díaz had encouraged heavy foreign investiture and export-led growth in the Mexican economy. His utilization of the hacienda system severed the established communal land tenure system and turned a growing peasant

[46] Lawrence A. Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980).
[47] Richard Griswold del Castillo, *La Familia: Chicano Families in the Urban Southwest, 1848 to the Present* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), and Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), and Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979).

population into landless workers. [48] Unable to find other jobs, these men and women began to seek employment in the United States. Between 1900 and 1910, staggering inflation in the Mexican economy, coupled with U.S. demands for labor, accounted for growing numbers of Mexican nationals in the United States. Lured to the Southwest by railroad work and agricultural jobs, still others made their way to the Midwest (especially Detroit and Chicago). Demographically, by the late 1800s, thousands of Mexicans from the states of Sonora, Sinaloa, and Baja California migrated to California, Texas and the Arizona portion of New Mexico territory. The cities of Guadalajara and Zacatecas witnessed huge flows of workers to the United States and by 1906, 22,000 "tapatíos" (people from Guadalajara) had left that city for job opportunities in the U.S.[49]

Importantly however, ever since the mid-1800s, the Mexican government felt "duty-bound, morally and as a nation, to repatriate its citizens who had remained in the annexed territories (Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Upper California and other northward regions)."[50] As more and more workers and families searched for better opportunities in the United States, the Mexican government sometimes reacted to the plight of workers who reported and experienced impoverished conditions, racism, mistreatment, exploitation and were forced to toil in terrible conditions. Although not a high priority in Porfirian politics, under the general language of the "Ley de Colonización" (an 1883 law

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[48] Lawrence A. Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980). By the end of the Díaz regime (1910), 97 percent of rural families were landless and communal ownership of land was made illegal. The vast majority of Mexico's rural population became sharecroppers and lived under a system of debt peonage (Cardoso, 1980:7).
[49] Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso, *They Should Stay There: The Story of Mexican Migration and Repatriation During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), p. 13.
[50] Ibid., p. 18.

regarding the settlement of public and/or vacant land in Mexico), some Mexicans who returned from the U.S. did receive land ownership deeds, free of charge.[51]

The U.S. Newlands Reclamation Act of 1902 allowed the expenditure of federal funding for large irrigation development projects and the call for Mexican agricultural workers went out again. Additionally, Mexican skilled and unskilled laborers were needed in the mining districts of the New Mexico territory (including Arizona), Oklahoma and California.[52] At the beginning of what is now referred to as, "The American Century," Mexicans certainly helped forge the new U.S. economic clout. On the U.S. – Mexico border in 1907, more than 1000 braceros travelled through the communities of Ciudad Juarez/El Paso, Ciudad Porfirio Díaz and Matamoros. By 1908, Mexican settlements appeared around railroad camps and especially along the South Texas border; so many that the *enganchistas* (labor recruiters) found it unnecessary to cross the border in search of fresh recruits.[53] In El Paso, nearly 16,000 Mexicans were contracted for the railroad industry which prompted Victor S. Clark (a U.S. Department of Labor official), to claim that over 100,000 Mexicans were poised to come northward annually from Mexico.[54] In 1910, the Mexican Minister of Development, Colonization and Industry was more conservative about the trend and figured the amount at "above

[51] Ibid., p.18, 19.
[52] Mario García, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso* (New Haven, and London: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 1-8, and Carie McWilliams, *North From Mexico: The Spanish speaking People of the United* States (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968).
[53] Lawrence A. Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980).
[54] Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso, *They Should Stay There: The Story of Mexican Migration and Repatriation During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), p. 13.

50,000" per year.[55] Using either statistic, Mexican migration to the U.S. doubled in the first decade of the 1900s.

However, in 1907-1908, an economic downturn/depression in the U.S. sent hundreds of Mexican factory workers and miners were back to Mexico. Accomplished by U.S. immigration authorities and labor leaders in mid-1908, thousands of braceros were left stranded at the border in Ciudad Juárez. Mexican state and federal governments sent funds in order to repatriate these workers to their villages and communities. Enrique Creel, the governor of Chihuahua, repatriated up to 150 braceros a day and offered the returning workers jobs as miners.[56] Remarkably, newly elected President Francisco Madero in 1910, instructed his Ministry of Foreign Relations (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, SRE) to distribute circulars to Mexican consuls in the U.S. promoting the return of Mexican nationals. In 1913, the Ministry of Development sent another circular to Mexican consulate offices in the U.S., "explaining that they needed to repatriate Mexican nationals working in that country so the latter could help develop Mexico. (:)

> "According the ministry, repatriation needed to be undertaken as soon as possible, though the urgency applied only to those migrants with skills that would be advantageous to the nation. Nothing would be gained by hastening the return of workers who lacked such skills. For this reason, preference should be given to those who had accumulated some capital, gained work experience, and possessed intelligence – qualities and conditions Mexico needed for its development – and who also had the will and desire to become small landowners. The ministry proposed to offer them land at low cost, to be financed on easy payment terms, located in "healthy climes," and near railway lines or close to populated areas with buying power."[57]

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[55] Ibid., p.13.
[56] Ibid., p. 19
[57] Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso, *They Should Stay There: The Story of Mexican Migration and Repatriation During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), p. 19-

As the Mexican Revolution entered the Constitutionalist phase under President Venustiano Carranza (1917-1920), the Mexican government became concerned that Mexican citizens might be drafted for U.S. military service and arranged for their repatriation. An "immigration office" was opened in Ciudad Juárez and the Ministry of Agriculture and Development requested that those returning could "bring in their personal effects duty free."[58] Further, the ministry also worked to create "colonization projects" so that repatriates might return in greater numbers as "settlers."[59]

The mayhem, danger and violence of the conflict convinced tens of thousands of Mexicans from all over the nation to flee northward. As many as 25,000 Mexicans made for the border and whether legally or "illegally," these immigrants were "genuine refugees." Most demographers and scholars agree that about 1 million Mexicans crossed the border into the U.S. between 1900 and 1930.

The outbreak of World War I through to the Great Depression brought a huge wave of Mexican immigration to the United States. Initially welcomed due to wartime labor shortages (especially in agriculture), many Mexican males worked with enforceable contracts.[60] From 1917 to 1921, 72,000 Mexicans swelled Southwestern and Midwestern rural fields as temporary contract workers, while thousands more Mexican migrants

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20, and Mercedes Carreras de Velasco, *Los Mexicanos que devolvió a la crises, 1929-1932* (Mexico City: Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, 1974), p. 45.

[58] Ibid., p. 20.

[59] Ibid.

[60] George C. Kaiser and Martha Woody Kaiser, editor, *Mexican Workers in the United* States (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), p. 127-131. Southwestern growers pressured the U.S. Secretary of Labor to exempt Mexicans from the head tax, the literacy tax mandated by the Immigration Act of 1917, and arranged for unique contract-labor provisions for Mexican workers U.S. labor shortages in agriculture reached almost emergency proportions when over one million Americans were drafted into the military, which enticed non-conscripted whites and blacks away from agricultural jobs to urban employment. see also, Lawrence A. Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), p. 45-48.

worked without papers, documents or contracts. They also found work in meat packinghouses, restaurants and factories in Midwestern and Eastern cities. By 1918, the contract-labor programs expanded and included non-agricultural workers. During the two years that the United States engaged in the Great War, 72,000 Mexican workers were admitted to work in industries, "critical to the war effort."[61] However, until the 1920s, most Mexican workers remained in the agricultural rural areas.[62]

In Mexico, the upheaval of the Mexican Revolution, and the Cristero Rebellion in the central-western area of the nation (1926-1929), accounted for even more northward migration.[63] The Cristero Rebellion took place mostly in the states of Jalisco, Michoacán, Durango, Guerrero, Colima, Nayarit and Zacatecas.[64] The most recent scholarship has examined both U.S. and Mexican sources and claims that annual Mexican "illegal" immigration during the 1920s was estimated at around 100,000 people per year (this figure failed to include legal entry). Demographic sources in Mexico (The National Statistical Agency) estimated that 331, 602 Mexicans from 1925 to 1934.[65] Of these people, 26 percent listed agriculture as their primary occupation, 23 percent were wives of emigrants, 19 percent were children of the emigrants or "minors without occupations,

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[61] Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso, *El primer programa bracero y el gobierno de México, 1917-1918* (Mexico City: Colegio de San Luis, 1999), p. 10-20.
[62] Lawrence A. Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), p. 48.
[63] Jean A. Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion: The Mexican People Between Church and State, 1926-1929* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2008). The Cristero Rebellion was a populist, Christian reaction to the Mexican Government's attempt to restrict the influence of the Catholic Church. The Cristero Rebellion played itself in a few battles and isolated violence in Western Mexico. For the Hollywood version, I half-heartedly recommend, "For Greater Glory/La Cristiada," starring Andy Garcia and Eva Longoria, 2012.
[64] Lawrence A. Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), p. 85-87.
[65] Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso, *They Should Stay There: The Story of Mexican Migration and Repatriation During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), p. 14.

and the remaining 22 percent were listed in "other categories of work."[66] As the surging U.S. economy called for even more Mexican workers in urban and rural areas, more Mexican families populated the barrios of San Antonio, El Paso and Los Angeles. Again, these Mexican communities became labor-distribution centers, especially for much-needed Mexican laborers recruited to the rural Southwest and Midwestern states.[67]

In the 1920s, U.S. employers contemplated ways to ensure a more stable and steady immigrant work-force. Sugar-beet growers in the Midwestern states and Colorado began to hire extended Mexican families for fieldwork. Keeping families together brought stabilization to the workforce.[68] In Texas, cotton growers incorporated Mexican women into a system of family tenant farming that soon relegated these women and their children to low wage work. Consequently, Mexican men accompanied by their families, tended to stay and work for low wages as well.[69] During the 1920s, family immigration became a normal pattern of Mexican immigration to the United States. Although almost 70 percent of "legal" immigration to the United States was comprised of Mexican men, many wives and families entered "illegally" to avoid entry fees and preserve family cohesion.[70]

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[66] Ibid., p.14.
[67] Ricardo Romo, *East Los Angeles: History of a Barrio* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).
[68] Paul Taylor, "Mexican Labor in the United States; Migration Statistics." p. 237-255 in Carl C. Plehn, Ira B. Cross and Melvin M. Knight, editors, *University of California Publications in Economics*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1929, and Dennis Nodín Valdés, *Al Norte: Agricultural Workers in the Great Lakes Region 1917-1970* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991).
[69] Rosalinda M. González, "Chicanas and Mexican Immigrant Families 1920-1940: Woman's Subordination and Family Exploitaion." P. 59-83 in Lois Scharf and Joan M. Jensen, editors, *Decades of Discontent: The Woman's Movement 1920-1940*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983.
[70] Lawrence A. Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), p. 82.

Also during this decade, the influential Mexican anthropologist, Manuel Gamio, published information on Mexican immigrant communities in the United States. His research was based on immigrant postal remittances (money orders) sent to extended family networks in Mexico. Gamio concluded that most Mexican migrants planned to return to Mexico.[71] Paul Taylor, an economist who studied Mexican immigrant labor patterns in the 1920s and 1930s, argued that the decline in winter remittances to Mexico signaled seasonal patterns of agricultural work and the desire of Mexican immigrants to settle permanently in the United States.[72] Still other studies concluded that by the 1920s, family immigration surpassed individual male migration and that more and more family groups were attracted to large U.S. cities.[73]

However, by the mid-1920s, contractions in the U.S. economy and rising unemployment numbers prompted revaluations of American immigration policy. Beginning in 1919 and through 1922, a deportation campaign targeting Mexican workers was in place. The administration of General Álvaro Obregón was faced with relocating 100,000 conationals. Obregon was successful in the repatriation of more than 50,000 Mexicans. Obregon's administration covered the repatriates traveling expenses and relocated the many thousands to their villages of origin to their villages in Mexico. It was during this time that Eduardo Ruiz, the Mexican counselor official in Los Angeles

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[71] Manuel Gamio, *The Mexican Immigrant: His Life Story* (New York: Dover Publications, first published 1930 by the University of Chicago Press, 1971), and Mauel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States*, (New York: Dover Publications, first published 1930 by the University of Chicago Press, 1971).

[72] Paul Taylor, "Mexican Labor in the United States; Migration Statistics." p. 237-255 in Carl C. Plehn, Ira B. Cross and Melvin M. Knight, editors, *University of California Publications in Economics*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1929.

[73] Ricardo Romo, *East Los Angeles: History of a Barrio* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), and Devra Anne Weber, *"Raiz Fuerte:* Oral History and Mexicana Farm Workers." *Oral History Review*, 17: 47-62.

was given the duty to oversee and evaluate "the situation of Mexican nationals in the United States."[74] Obregon's government essentially financed all aspects of this repatriation project and created a separate Repatriation Department within the federal government.[75] Obregon made it possible for thousands of compatriots to comfortably return to Mexico. However, these exigent circumstances resolved and the matter was no longer considered a crisis point.

In the United States, the Border Patrol was established in 1924 and some U.S. Congressmen called for limits on the entry of foreign nationals that culminated in the Immigration Act of 1924. Attitudes toward Mexicans became more polarized as businessmen advocated for more laborers and lenient entry restrictions, while nativist politicians led by Congressman John C. Box (D-Texas) introduced legislation that would curtail the influx of Mexican workers and their families. The American Federation of Labor sided with Congressman Box's efforts.[76]

During 1927-1928, the SRE's response to the many Mexican who sought repatriation funds was that it could no longer provide financial assistance. Instead, the agency informed them of a Mexican worker program that would utilize repatriate labor for those who would dedicate themselves to farming on Mexican public lands (SRE 1928 b, 855). This plan promoted the return of the best prepared laborers who could farm successfully and utilize the techniques they had learned in the United States. However, the SRE didn't have money for transportation, nor could it "identify any suitable parcels

[74] Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso, *They Should Stay There: The Story of Mexican Migration and Repatriation During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), p.20-21.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., 14.

of land."[77] This was a particularly "nagging issue" because anthropologist Manuel Gamio had long advocated that successful repatriation would extol the qualities of the repatriates, and that they would be of great service to the Mexican nation.

> He (Gamio) believed that they would help educate the Mexican people and would leave their imprint on Mexican culture. In his judgement, the time that migrants spent in the United States had given them useful experience in agriculture and industry. They had learned to use machinery and modern tools and had acquired discipline and good work habits. In addition, Gamio believed, they had made more subtle character strides, rising to a higher level of culture and learning to modulate their temperament and save money. For Gamio, the return of these people boded well for Mexico.[78]

Further, Gamio believed that repatriates from the U.S. represented a prosperous life and good work habits. Through *nucleos progresistas* (centers of progress), the general Mexican public would "come to each other's aid as they had done in the United States". Gamio reasoned that the Mexican Government had a singular opportunity to instill amongst millions of uneducated and unskilled Mexicans a solution to Mexico's problems. The repatriates learned modern farming and irrigation techniques and had "stored up" many agricultural techniques and good money-saving and money-making habits. Gamio's proposals and suggestions seemed to establish a low cost opportunity to infuse and rejuvenate the Mexican economy. Even President Francisco Madero noted that the best repatriation occurred when it was, "composed of the better element of Mexicans."[79] Another leading intellectual expressed a similar viewpoint. Alfonso Fabila, a social anthropologist affiliated with the World Worker's House wrote, *El problema de la emigración de obreros y campesinos*- that government must repatriate

[77] Ibid., 21.
[78] Ibid., 23.
[79] Ibid.

laborers (especially mechanics and agricultural workers), "the better elements who had developed expertise in fields and industries then unknown in Mexico."[80] However, some Mexican leaders worried that once in Mexico, repatriates could become rebellious types, as well as competitors with other Mexicans in the job market. There was also the notion that those repatriates who failed to reintegrate successfully would make their way back to the United States and criticize the repatriation efforts. In fact, Quijano Aguilar, the Mexican Consulate official in Denver Colorado, stated that the government's repatriation funding was wasted since most repatriates eventually returned to the United States. The Mexican Counsel in San Antonio, Texas, Enrique Santibáñez criticized the Mexican government's efforts and claimed it added nothing to the market place, nor to the improvement of national production, "because his compatriots failed to learn any type of skill that could be useful to Mexico, and that repatriation could move forward only when the country reached a highly advanced level of organization. "[81]

By decade's end, the grinding economic duress of the Great Depression triggered deportation and repatriation drives. Amidst the "The Brown Scare," as many as a half a million people, many that were legal permanent residents, undocumented immigrants and U.S. citizens of Mexican descent, were "sent back" to Mexico.[82] According to the U.S. National Archives and Professor Abraham Hoffman, approximately, "423,026 Mexican nationals, in a mass movement that lacked any advance planning or control, made their

[80] Ibid., 24.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), p.126.

way back to Mexico."[83] These deportees and repatriates included increased numbers of women and children which reflected the 1920s trend toward family immigration.[84] In 1931, municipal and county governments (especially the Los Angeles County Charities and Public Welfare Department) along with relief organizations ended public welfare to Mexican families and even paid for these many families to return to Mexico. Led by President Herbert Hoover's, Secretary of Labor, William N. Doak, U.S. Immigration Agents pursued their objective with zeal: to detain and eventually expel migrant workers.[85] Mexicans gathered their belongings, packed their cars and trucks and boarded trains for the border.[86]

As the economic effects of the Great Depression widened, Mexican repatriation was no longer sporadic or "simply the object of study and analysis." Certainly by 1929, the Mexican government was required to act and support the stream of its exiled nationals. From 1929 until 1923, the Mexican government received thousands of requests from repatriates for money. A difficult and perhaps insurmountable task of relocation was presented to a range of government agencies: the SRE, the counselor service, the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit (SHCP), and the Ministry of the

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[83] Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso, *They Should Stay There: The Story of Mexican Migration and Repatriation During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), p.15.
[84] Mercedes Carreras de Velasco, *Los Mexicanos que devolvió a la crises, 1929-1932* (Mexico City: Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, 1974), p. 45, Carreras de Velasco stated that between 1931 and 1933, two-thirds of deportees were women.
[85] Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso, *They Should Stay There: The Story of Mexican Migration and Repatriation During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), p.15.
[86] George C. Kaiser and Martha Woody Kaiser, editor, *Mexican Workers in the United States* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), and Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974). In Los Angeles, welfare agencies promoted the repatriation drives. Mexican mutual-aid societies provided assistance to the repatriates, protested raids and boycotted businesses that refused to hire Mexicans. See also, Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995).

Interior. Even though the U.S. and Mexico are neighboring countries, planning for the repatriates' was very difficult. Mexican government aid had to employ the use of its national railways, establish negotiations and cooperation from American railroad companies and locate jobs for those who returned. These agencies also had to plan for settlements and housing for the returning conationals.

Mexican consulate offices in the United States were given the task of facilitating transportation. These officials and minor officials provided the "nuts and bolts" of the return trips. They did fundraising and often obtained transportation vouchers (secured by Mexican American charitable organizations and benefactors). To their credit, they also gave out information about job prospects in Mexico.

> From July 1930 to June 1931, the Mexican government together with committees set up by the consulates and individual Mexicans acting on their own, underwrote the cost of repatriation for 60,207 men and 31,765 woman, or 91,972 Mexican nationals in total, the majority of them from Texas and California. The corresponding total of people repatriated in the following year-July 1931 to June 1932- was 124,894, or more than one-third higher. In this latter period, the government's outlay for food relief alone was 73,404 pesos.[87]

By now, a full-fledged crisis and the largest repatriation of people in history, the Mexican railway industry allowed for special discounts at the border, accepted donations, and in some cases even allowed free passage to repatriates. The Mexican Customs Administration (a unit of the SHCP) exempted duty fees on personal belongings brought into Mexico. At the international border, the Mexican government, as well as local charitable organizations set up cafeterias and shelters for the thousands returning to

[87] Ibid., p.25.

Mexico. Assistance was afforded to thousands of Mexican nationals, the majority of whom were hungry, peso-less, and destitute.

By the onset of Abelardo Rodriguez' presidential appointment to office (September, 1932-1934), the repatriation problem had reached "crisis-level" for the Mexican government. Rodriguez, along with the Interior Ministry, created the National Repatriation Committee which institutionalized the concept of repatriation into Mexican society. The Committee (*El Comité de Repatriación*) envisioned that repatriates would work in agricultural colonies (*colónias*) as a form of "self-settlement." Thus began discussions about the establishment of repatriate colonies in the Mexican states of Guerrero, Sonora, Sinaloa, Chihuahua, Baja California, Coahuila, Veracruz, and Oaxaca.

By 1940, the Mexican immigrant population decreased to half of what it was in 1930. Mexican immigration to the United States has been assigned to a group of "economic" migrations which, like the Mediterranean migration to Western Europe and the Rhodesian migration to South Africa, occurred as a result of disequilibrium between two neighboring regions. To most migration researchers no other explanation seems more plausible to explain movements of people from "less developed" to "more developed" regions. A description of two important theories on international migrations must be presented as background to a more detailed examination of the Mexico to U.S. migration.

CHAPTER 3

MEXICAN IMMIGRATION THEORY THROUGH THE EARLY 1930S

The Push- Pull Theory of Migration

The push-pull theory of migration stated that the combined "push" and "pull" forces in the sending and receiving countries, respectively, were the main imputes for migrations across international boundaries. Economic migrations motivated by "push-pull" factors, occurred because there were vast economic advantages in the country of destination when which compared to the country of origin, acted as a magnet for both legal and illegal immigrants.

The Mexican economy throughout the twentieth century was essentially, state regulated capitalism. In such an economy the benefits of industrialization usually accrued disproportionately to a small upper income sector and a slightly larger "middle sector." Therefore, although Mexico slowly entered the "middle income" category of nations, it continued to endure massive and widespread poverty.

The migration of lower-income Mexicans to the U.S. accordingly represented for the Mexican government, a "safety valve" to reduce the possibility of internal problems that arose from unequal distribution of income and the existence of a surplus labor force. The "push" factor leading to Mexican migration is quite clear. Mexico in the 1920s and 1930s continued to be an underdeveloped country, if development included the goal of raising the living conditions of the Mexican people. Unemployment rates in Mexican cities that bordered the U.S. consistently remained at the 30% to 40% range. Underemployment became a way of life, with many farmers working only an average of

100 days per year. For many decades in the twentieth century, the minimum wage in Mexico's border cities was never more than one-third of the minimum wage across the border in the U.S. Proponents of the "push-pull theory" argued that as long as this economic imbalance persisted between the two bordering nations, the flow of immigrants would continue.

The second reason for out-migration is attributed to a willingness of employers in the receiving country to hire foreign laborers due to those industries' inability to attract domestic workers at prevailing low wages. This side of the equation became known as the "pull" factor. A large surplus of foreign labor has been identified as a major force of many developed nations. It is not surprising that the major "pull" factor in Mexican immigration to the U.S. was the availability of low-wage employment in the U.S. and the active efforts on the part of U.S. employers to secure access to this labor.

However, authors and proponents of the "push-pull" explanation of migration differed over the main structural conditions leading to immigrations from Mexico. Some emphasized the "push" factors as the root of the problem while others believe that the "pull" factors are the major underlying motive for out-migration.

Scholar Richard Fagen stressed the need for, "very large scale and carefully designed programs of rural development and job creation" in Mexico to make the North and Central plateau of Mexico, "at least minimally attractive to the tens of thousands of new job seekers who enter(ed) the labor market."[88] Advocates of such development stressed the worthlessness of any other policy, especially any other American policy,

[88] Richard R. Fagen, "The Realities of U.S.-Mexican Relations," Foreign Affairs (July, 1977), p.689-690.

when trying to curb migration from Mexico. In other words, the Mexican migration flow became a natural consequence of the imbalance between the two economies and could not be stopped unless the imbalance was corrected.

Usually the proponents of this line of reasoning imply that the U.S. made attempts to solve the problem at its root. They believe that U.S. support in the form of capital, technology and revised tariff schedules was essential because of America's desire to keep Mexico economically dependent on the United States.

In opposition to the view that the "push" factors leading to migration are stronger than the "pull" factors, was the view, usually attributed to Massachusetts Institute of Technology Professor Michael Piore, that the major force in initiating and maintaining migrant flows was the developmental process in the industrialized region. By his view, the demographic and economic pressures in underdeveloped areas were by themselves insufficient to initiate or maintain migrations movements. The evidence according to Piore rested on the fact that "such differentials have existed for long periods of time without generating migration."[89] Migrants, in this view, are seen as "temporary sojourners" who dislike the industrial regions and are only interested in accumulating enough savings to return to their country.

The receiving country initiated the flow by creating the jobs which were attractive to migrants, while it often maintained the flow through deliberate recruitment by industrial and agricultural employers or agents. One implication of this reasoning was

[89] Michael J. Piore, "Undocumented Workers and U.S. Immigration Policy," Paper presented at the Latin American Studies Association Conference, Houston, Texas November 4, 1977, p. 10.

that existing characteristics of migrant jobs were in some way critical to the socioeconomic system of the receiving country and these jobs would not be improved because there was already a steady and controlled access to low-cost labor. Society then could be expected to look for other means of maintaining the labor supply (such as deliberate recruiting methods). According to Professor Piore, "in the process, the society may actually seek to curtail the upward mobility of other domestic groups filling those jobs."[90]

Dependency Theories

The "dependency" school in political science and economics suggested an interesting global perspective on immigration and the role of capitalism in these movements. Dependency scholars argued that underdeveloped areas of the world had been historically linked to the developed world in an unbalanced relationship, usually to the detriment of less-developed countries. The "dependentistas" believed that the main function of the world "periphery" has been to enhance the economic development and well-being of the "core" areas. The dependency relationship had its roots in the early Mercantilist periods and persisted through Colonialism, Imperialism, and Neo-Colonialism. The "dependency" school placed the migration phenomenon in the context of an exploitative historical domination of the "periphery" by the "core".[91]

The "dependentista" advocates believed that the scarcity of labor (usually unskilled) in the developed countries was an important characteristic of societies in the

[90] Ibid., p.12.
[91] See entire issue of "International Organization," Vol. 32, Number 1 (Winter, 1978), This issue is devoted to dependency theory.

advanced stage of capitalism. Consequently, when traditional colonial rule was abandoned, labor, the object of exploitation, was transferred to the "core" itself through the importation of foreign workers.[92] This applied particularly to those industries, like agriculture, which could not export themselves abroad. At the same time, the search for new sources of low-cost labor was achieved in other industries by exporting production to wherever such labor was found. Therefore, the historical function of labor immigration paralleled the "Neo-Colonialist" practices of multinational corporations and served mainly to defend the rate of profit by the increased supply of cheap labor.

In sum, the "dependency" theorists placed an enormous emphasis on the "pull" factors of migration, but went a step further by making the process appear to be a conspiracy of sorts by the receiving country to maintain and perpetuate the dependency relationship between itself and the sending country. The "push" factor, often in the form of surplus labor in the sending country, was described as the, "result of the low accumulation of capital and allied economic backwardness due to the sending country's past formal and informal dependence on imperialism."[93] Therefore, the migratory mechanism was designed to achieve not just the balance between supply and demand of labor (as the "push-pull" theory claimed), but the perpetuation of a dependency relationship between the "periphery" and the "core."

Overview of Economic Theories

[92] Marlos Nickolnakos, "Notes Toward a General Theory in Late Capitalism," "Race and Class," XVII (May, 1975), p.8.
[93] Ibid., p.8.

What evidence is there that the forces at work behind the migration flow from Mexico to the U.S. were of the "push-pull" nature? How did the "dependentista" interpretation apply to Mexican immigration to the U.S.? To be sure, both views make arguments which fit the facts of migration from Mexico; however, they also made strong assumptions that do not.

"Push-pull" theorists regarded the example of Mexican immigration as a perfect case of the "push-pull" forces at work: the Mexican "illegal alien" entered the U.S. primarily to obtain employment and escape poverty for themselves and their families, and U.S. employers often sent agents to Central Mexico to secure "a good group of illegals, ready to work." To the extent that capital attracted labor and labor attracted capital, it is true that the migration phenomenon was "natural." In the Mexican case, the proof of this became obvious. However, the "push-pull" theory was not by any means, a complete explanation.

One clear example of the deficiency of the theory in explaining international migrations in general and the Mexico-to-U.S. immigration in particular, could be made by comparing rural to urban internal migrations across international borders. As in international migrations, internal rural to urban migrations are motivated by the forces of supply and demand. But unlike international migrations, rural to urban migrations cannot be effectively deterred without either massive coercion (South Africa) or, in its absence, insurrection. International migrations on the other hand, can and have been effectively deterred because there were laws governing, controlling, and enforcing compliance at national borders. Legal immigration was defined, and in this manner, influenced the

conditions under which migration occurred and created a politically controlled and limited market.

When problems in controlling or enforcing compliance occurred, as they did in Mexican migration to the United States, it was usually due to anomalies in the law. In the case of Mexican migration, the anomaly is in the fact that the United States encouraged an almost "case by case" application of laws which amounted to a set of contradictory tenants. The most profound was the example of laws that made it illegal to seek employment in the U.S., but not illegal for an employer to hire an "illegal alien."

The major criticism of an economic "push-pull" theory is that it did not consider that migrations which occurred across international boundaries were controlled, regulated and monitored by policies on both sides of the border. A major assumption of this theory was that the immigration process obeyed the laws of demand and supply and that the response to demand and supply is immediate. Indeed, the history of United States immigration policy toward Mexico is one in which American policy consistently made exceptions for Mexican workers to enter the U.S. for employment purposes. Therefore, while "official" U.S. immigration policy continued to be obscured in "quotas," the unofficial position toward Mexico always managed to be a workable one which made emergency accommodations for wartime requirements and peacetime booms.

As stated above, the flaw in "dependency theory" is that unified action existed among those in the "core" (the industrialized countries) and in the United States. The actions of the "core" kept the "periphery" economically dependent. However, close observers of the American political system noted that power disaggregated and dispersed

among many interest groups. Though the system of checks and balances at the national agency level had not always worked to prevent single actors or groups from exerting influence over policy, the mechanism had not quite collapsed to allow global conspiracies to take its place. In many other respects, it is difficult to argue against some of the precepts set forth by "dependentista" theorists either because there is insufficient evidence to disprove them or simply because the evidence seems to stack up on their side.

The first of their arguments which has proven so difficult to disprove is the argument that capitalism, by its very nature, requires a "link" to other markets, especially a dependent market. The dependency and linkage of the Mexican market to the United States can hardly be denied if by dependency we mean a high measure of sensitivity to external forces. However, by this definition, rich nations are dependent on the poor, at least for export markets, investment outlets and for sources of raw materials. The "dependentista" school emphasized only the negative aspects of the dependent relationship between rich and poor. Benjamin Cohen, a scholar of international relations, noted that dependency implied an irreversibility of the dependent relationship.[94] Mexico has always needed to export to the United States in order to continue its "growth pattern," whereas, the opposite is not necessarily true or "a given."

A second argument of the "dependentistas" stated that having reached a certain level of capitalist development, unskilled labor became a scarce factor of production. They argue that a combination of government "disincentives" to work (such as "relief" programs) coupled with the greater expectations of workers for better jobs prevented

[94] Benjamin Cohen, *The Question of Imperialism: The Political Economy of Dependence*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan U.K., 1973).

would-be domestic unskilled laborers from taking low-wage jobs in which they could have earned an equal amount or less than that which they could receive by "living on charity.

Unemployment due to natural causes (such as illness or shifts in types of employment) coupled with unemployment due to the displacement effect of "illegal aliens," created serious public reaction. From this situation and from extensive media coverage (beginning in the 1920s), the general public's position became that immigrants threatened the U.S. economy by displacing native-born American workers in the job market. The debate over whether immigrants were an asset or a burden to the U.S. economy became the subject of many studies and several reached opposite conclusions. The "dependentista" argument claimed that the lack of skilled labor was peculiar to the stage of capitalism that the United States was in. It raised an interesting economic question because if true, it explained why the U.S. had been so "dependent" on Mexican labor, and for so long.

Another related "dependentista" argument pertained to the domestic sphere. Accordingly, even in internal U.S. matters, economic interests always prevail over other interests. The notion that economic transactions occurred in a real-world situation without much government intervention, stemmed from laissez-faire and "the invisible hand." Adam Smith's idea of this "invisible hand" concluded that unbridled pursuit of individual self-interest automatically contributed to maximization of the social interest. Accordingly, the government's role, assumed to be passive, interfered in private business only to the extent that its intrusion was damaging to society. While no one argued that

strict conventional laissez-faire existed in any contemporary society, the assumption of the "dependentistas" is that government sanctioned all business actions and favored its own interests over other concerns. In the "dependentista" view, immigration from Mexico occurred mainly as a result of the capital's need for cheap labor and the process of laissez-faire was assumed to be "at work." Policy then, in this view, had a complimentary effect, strengthened the position of business, or was altogether nonexistent.

Policy, whether complimentary to business interests, non-existent, or contrary to business, has been essential in stimulating migration from Mexico, and influential interest groups continued their a major role in this process . The question of interest group influence on policy formation became of crucial importance. Author Grant McConnell and an observer of "private organizations" observed that the "attack on the system" which characterized the "dependentista" argument had been:

> (A) stock-in-trade of radical dissenters for much of our history. This kind of explanation is partly the result of a craving for simplicity, for reducing the diversity of things to clear-cut moral issues on which clear-cut judgments could be passed. In one way or another, "the system" was rarely considered that normal and to be expected web of institutions and relationships by which men are governed and their work is given meaning. The idea was, that there existed a coherent, carefully thought out and coordinated achievement of a singularly gifted and selfish band of plotters.[95]

What do we answer to the "dependentista" claim that capitalist governments made deliberate decisions to safeguard the interests of capital? Only the unfolding of events surrounding the role of interest groups in the formulation of U.S. policy can adequately

[95] Grant McConnell, *Private Power and American Democracy*, (New Knoph Press, 1967), p.35-36.

answer this question. The interplay of interest groups and policy formation had been an important component of U.S. immigration policy toward Mexico. However, a dependency explanation, whatever its truths, became insufficient to explain why U.S. policy toward Mexico had been different from its policy toward the "peripheral" world. The answer can be weeded out by an explanation of the interest groups historically involved in the issue of Mexican immigration.

Political Theories

Most of the debate over Mexican immigration assumed the accuracy of economic explanations of migration regarding the flow of people from Mexico to the United States. Sometimes the political explanations assumed a secondary role in the discussions. Public discussions in both countries inevitably led to controversial discourse regarding domestic conditions in the other country. American scholars reacted to Mexico's customary indictment of the U.S. for her economic problems by turning the dependency theory around and charging that Mexico's political system was in a state of, "perpetual corruption and inequity…the principal determinant of Mexico's problems."[96] Similarly, Mexicans charged the U.S. government with overriding concern in maintaining the interests of capital, and that U.S. policy allowed American agribusiness to hold undocumented Mexican workers in conditions of peonage.[97]

A Theory of Foreign Policy Decision Making

[96] Private Interview with F. Arturo Rosales, Tempe Arizona, May 2015.
[97] Ibid.

Of course, immigration is a phenomenon that should be examined from an international perspective. However, in the case of U.S. - Mexican migration, attention was mainly focused on the domestic effects, particularly in the United States. Nonetheless, the relevance of migration to foreign policy is major. First, the U.S. (and most other receiving countries) became signatories to multi-lateral agreements on refugees. Second, the United States fostered a worldwide respect for human rights, which included the right to immigrate. Third, important bilateral agreements were established with the major immigrant sending countries.[98] Its relevance to foreign policy brings us now into the realm of decision-making in foreign policy.

One widely accepted theory of citizen involvement in foreign policy distinguished between "intellective" and "social" processes of foreign policy decision-making.[99] The intellective process of decision making provided fewer access points to citizen participation than did the "social" process. Whether a decision tended to be resolved through "intellective" or "social" processes depended on the size of the decision-making group and on their perception of the weightiness of the task. Most issues pertaining to foreign policy were of the "intellective" type, primarily because it remained an issue that did not directly touch on the personal lives of citizens, and secondarily, because the core of decision-makers became tightly-knit and concentrated at the highest levels of government. If a decision involved many decision-makers who, in turn, listened to their their advisors, it was mainly through the "social" process, no matter how much

[98] U.S. Departments of Justice, Labor and State, Interagency Task Force on Immigration Policy, Staff Report (Washington, DC,: Government Printing Office 1979), p..283.
[99] James N. Rosenau, *Public Opinion Foreign Policy*, (New York: Random House, 1961), p.99-100.

importance was attached to the decision. Thus, "social" process decisions involved groups of the non-governmental type.

Yet, decisions that pertained to immigration required a much wider decisional system, and the number of people, for example, that the U.S. President received advice from included advisors in the State, Labor, Agriculture and Treasury Departments. However, in the formulation of immigration policy, Congress mandated overall jurisdiction. Thus, the possible access which interest groups or interested parties had in the case of immigration policy became hundreds of times greater than for diplomatic or security decisions in foreign policy. Since the legitimacy of their concern became more obvious, interest groups became part of the decisional system.

In the case of Mexican migration, the issue has been dealt with both as a foreign policy concern and as a domestic issue. This tendency competes with the overall effect of legislation. Consequently, the foreign policy decision makers do not emphasize efforts to correct discrepancies in the law and practice of immigration, claiming that the matter is not their responsibility. Likewise, Congress shirks from its responsibility on the domestic side. In essence, the degree of disaggregation characteristic of immigration policy has the effect of obscuring responsibility.

As pointed out above, the issue of Mexican immigration has significant attributes of a foreign policy issue. However, to the public, it is historically been treated as a domestic issue. One of the major factors in making immigration a domestic concern has to do with the lack of any mechanisms at the international level to resolve disputes regarding immigration. The second factor that keeps the immigration issue more in the

domestic sphere is that it affects the lives of many U.S. citizens. These citizens then form specialized groups with special demands to which Congress must be responsive to.

Regarding the issue of Mexican immigration, the influence of these groups has loomed large. In particular, organized labor and agribusiness have played important roles. Any simplistic theory about international migrations, therefore, would not be relevant in this brief discussion of Mexican immigration. These group access points to the decision makers are many and varied and have an immense influence on policymaking. Because of the disaggregated nature of power in this instance, it is essential to examine the phenomenon of Mexican immigration from an interest group perspective.

Bureaucratic Politics Theory

The bureaucratic politics model of analysis treats U.S. policy as the product of, "a series of overlapping and interlocking bargaining processes within the American system."[100] A strict bureaucratic approach would examine U.S. government agencies, its tasks and duties, and relations with the other agencies comprising the entire governmental scope. This mode of analysis has been successfully used as an alternative explanation to dependentistas or radical theories. Recall that to dependentistas, U.S. government action appear to be the result of "a single entity (the U.S. government) assumed to be capable of having ideals, perceiving interests, reacting to events, laying plans, having purposes, making decisions, taking actions and following policies just as might an incorporate

[100] Abraham Lowenthal, "*Liberal, Radical and Bureaucratic Perspectives on U.S. Latin American Policy: The Alliance for Progress in Retrospect,"* "Latin America and the United States: The Changing Political Realities, ED. By Julio Cotler and Richard P. Fagen (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1974), p.229.

individual."[101] What the bureaucratic alternative attempts to show is the opposite: that a given U.S. policy emerges from the interplay of these bureaucratic actors.

The bureaucratic approach is not a static model. It implies an intensity of activity between and among the bureaucratic actors not characteristic of routine relations. Almost by definition, it applies to crisis issues to which only the rapid, informed and sophisticated expertise of the top levels of government can respond.

The issue of Mexican immigration escaped easy categorization, but one of its most important characteristics was the fact that it was not a "crisis issue." A true "crisis issue" is one which, not having been planned, usually demanded the attention of those most able to arrive at an immediate solution or response. As a "non-crisis issue," immigration never warranted special or immediate attention. In fact, it was historically considered as one of the lowest priorities in Congress. Therefore, the opposite aspects of a crisis usually characterized the immigration issue.

Immigration and the particular "problem "of" illegal Mexican immigration became characterized in the 1960s and 1970s by immense public and special interest group participation and by relative inactivity in higher levels of government. In the 95th Congress (January 3, 1977-January 3, 1979) more than 65 bills relating in whole or in part to "illegal aliens" were introduced in response to the proliferation of public and interest group concern over the issue.[102] Certainly since that time, a general state of

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[101] Ernest R. May, *"The Bureaucratic Politics Approach,"* "In Latin America and the United States: The Changing Political Realities, ed," by Julio Cotler and Richard P. Fagen (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1974), p.229.
[102] Joyce Vilet, "Analysis and Summary of Immigration and Related Legislation Introduced in the 95th Congress," Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, January 19, 1979.

confusion about the immigration issue has existed among the general public and congressional leaders because of the extreme politicization of the issue. However, interest group politics seems to "call the shots" regarding policy decisions in Washington, D.C. and explaining the immigration flow from Mexico. The power to influence the Mexican migration issue has become so dispersedly allocated among various interest groups, that a strict bureaucratic approach does not seem appropriate.

If neither the push-pull theories, or the dependency theories, nor the bureaucratic or the foreign policy approaches seems to accurately fir the intricacies of the Mexican migration issue, how can one explain the almost 170 year old process? Gilberto Cardenas, a scholar of U.S. immigration toward Mexico described it as something with no particular pattern:

> Mexican aliens in the United States have entered at the behest and through the active solicitation and encouragement of many of the same economic interests that today proselytize for their expulsion and exclusion through the rigorous application or change in immigration laws. For example, serving as open invitations to Mexican migration have been bracero type programs throughout the twentieth century, allow-ing commuter aliens and utilization of illegals. In these forms, Mexican aliens have been told that their labor is welcomed by the U.S. and they have responded accordingly. The "illegal alien" problem is therefore one whose seed has been planted time and time again by the U.S. when it has been in need of Mexican labor. When expediency better serves, however, immigration laws have been administered and changed in response to a problem perceived as having been created by illegal aliens, when in fact it is largely of the United States' own making.[103]

Whatever orderliness can be made out of the inconsistent immigration policies, it is clear that it will not lie in a simplistic explanation of the types discussed above. The

[103] U.S. Congress House Committee on the Judiciary, "Illegal Aliens: Analysis and Background by the Library of Congress, Committee, #5," (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1977), p.49.

explanation and especially the interplay of interest groups and policy is now where this analysis now turns.

The "Pull" Effect of a Special Policy Toward Mexico

In this section, I examine the history of Mexican immigration in the context of U.S. immigration policy from the beginning of the twentieth century. What was U.S. immigration policy in general? What was U.S. immigration policy toward the Western Hemisphere? Is there a link between the present illegal alien flow of migrants and past U.S. policy Mexico? What are the effects of U.S. policy on Mexican immigration? The following analysis attempts to show that U.S. immigration policy toward Mexico, and at the beginning of the century, the crucial absence of policy has been inextricably tied to what is now an established pattern of migration from Mexico to the United States.

The southwest United States, including the states of Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, and California, was taken by the United States following the U.S./Mexico war of 1846-1848. Under the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, codified on February 2, 1848, all Mexican citizens living within the ceded territory were to become citizens of the United States if they did not leave the newly acquired territory within one year. Most elected to remain on the land of their ancestors. Many believed that their land was only temporarily "occupied"[104] During the remainder of the nineteenth century fewer than 30,000 Mexicans immigrated into this region, even though a relatively open border prevailed until the early part of the next century.

[104] Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America* (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1972), p.29.

In 1882, the U.S. enacted its first measure to restrict immigration – a measure providing "for a head tax of 50 cents and barring admission of convicts, mental incompetents, and persons otherwise considered likely to become public charges." All immigration laws since have kept these general provisions.

Most early immigration laws, such as the Chines Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Japanese Exclusion Act of 1906 tended to address people coming from Asia and Europe. The Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in response to a large increase in Chinese immigration which began after the 1850 famine which struck the Canton region of China. Their large presence in California was particularly unfavorable to large numbers of native workers who settled in California due to the discovery of gold. In contrast, the doors were wide open for willing Mexican workers who began to replace Asian labor.

The pattern of sparse Mexican immigration significantly changed in the early twentieth century. Between 1910 and 1930, an estimated 750,000 Mexican immigrated to the United States.[105] It is generally agreed that the short-term "push" factor in this immigration was the extreme violence that accompanied the Revolution in Mexico between 1910 and 1919. The expansion of the railroad network in Mexico greatly facilitated northward immigration from the Central Plateau region of Mexico.

The immediate "pull" factors leading to immigration was the immense agricultural expansion that occurred throughout the American Southwest and the domestic labor shortages that occurred during the First World War. In particular,

[105] Vernon M. Briggs, Jr., *Mexican Migration and the U.S. Labor Market*, Studies in Human Resources Development, February , 1975(: University of Texas Press), p.6.

improved methods of irrigation as well an increase need for agricultural products by a rapidly growing population served as an imputes for increased immigration from neighboring Mexico. Demand for Mexican labor further increased as a result of the internal U.S. migration of poor white and black laborers to the Northern region of the U.S.; passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act which created a shortage of Chinese "coolie" labor; and passage of the Immigration Act of 1917 which further curtailed the entry of European immigrants.[106]

A much more selective immigration legislative act was also passed in 1917. In that year, an act was adopted which included the earlier exclusions of certain "undesirable" aliens and also barred the entry of immigrants from an area known as the "Asiatic Barred Zone." Additionally, the Act required that immigrants be able to read and write English and it also set up a system of deportation for aliens who entered the U.S. illegally or committed certain crimes. The highly controversial literacy test functioned as an immense barrier to entry.

The main piece of legislation that dominated the immigration issue in the twentieth century became known as "the National Origins Quota System," a measure which was not extended to immigrants from the Western Hemisphere. Adopted in 1924 and continuing in effect until 1965, this law was based on a system which set for each nationality a quota consistent with the percentage of foreign-born of that nationality residing in the United States in 1920. Prior to this law, all restrictions on immigration

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[106] Wayne Cornelius, *"Mexican Migration to the United States; Causes Consequences and U. S. Responses*, Migration and Development Study Group, Cambridge, Mass., July 1978(Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978), p. 14-15.

had been qualitative rather than quantitative. That is, there had been no restrictions on the number of aliens who could enter, provided they met certain criteria. This act assigned no-transferrable quotas on Eastern Hemisphere countries, with a total limit of approximately 150,000 per year. These restrictions however, were not extended to the natives of the Western Hemisphere thus, the Act of 1924 had relatively little impact on those crossing the southern border.

Although Mexican immigrants were still subject to general eligibility requirements, countless exceptions were made to facilitate their entry. For example, at the insistence of grower associations and industrial companies, Mexican immigrants wishing to work in the sugar beet fields, on railroad gangs, and other contract labor jobs, were granted exceptions from the literacy test and head tax imposed by the Immigration Act of 1917.[107]

Encouraged by the exceptions granted them and the continued prosperity of the 1920s, Mexican immigrants continued their treks northward until the process was abruptly reversed in the 1930s. The economic recessions that followed the First World War set in motion a movement (especially in the Southwestern United States) to "repatriate" Mexicans working and living in the region. That economic considerations were the motivating force for the massive repatriation drives was indicated by the fact that little else seemed to matter,

> The fact that many of these people had married American citizens, or were eligible for citizenship but had not formally completed the immigration process

[107] Ernesto Galarza, *Farm Workers and Agri-business in California, 1947-1960* (Notre Dame:, University of Notre Dame Press), p.27.

> was no barrier to those who believed it was necessary to reduce the regional labor pool. Numerous whites from the "dust bowl" areas of Texas and Oklahoma were pouring into the agricultural labor market in California, making a new source of cheap labor available.[108]

The massive repatriation campaigns that followed were the first large-scale efforts to apprehend "illegal aliens." Although the repatriation drives affected aliens of a number of ethnic groups residing in the United States, the group most affected was composed of Mexican aliens and United States citizens of Mexican descent. The idea was widely promulgated that aliens held good-paying jobs and by ridding the country of these people, native-born Americans would take these jobs and unemployment could be curtailed. On January 13, 1931, The Los Angeles Times quoted Los Angeles County Supervisor, John R. Quinn:

> If we were rid of the aliens who have entered this country illegally…our present unemployment would probably shrink to the proportions of a relatively unimportant flat spot in business.[109]

The repatriations (sometimes referred to as "deportation campaigns") coincided with the worst depression in U.S. history (truly an international economic spiral). As such, repatriation became a nationally approved necessity. Those who might have thought it unfair to "send back" those workers that the United States desperately needed during the First World War were noticeably silent during this process. However, perhaps this reversal in policy should have been foreseen, for between the United States and Mexico, the "special relationship" had been built on temporary and reciprocal economic

[108] Briggs, "Mexican Migration," p.6.
[109] Quoted in Vilma S. Martinez, "Illegal Immigration and the Labor Force," a paper presented at the Symposium on Immigration Issues and the Law, San Antonio, Texas, October, 2006, p.7.

necessity. Up to this point, the U.S. need for labor and Mexico's need for American capital constituted the stabilizing mechanism between the two countries.

For many farmers and ranchers in the Southwest, cheap Mexican labor was a commodity worth defending. They needed those Mexican laborers and fought hard to prevent any regulation of the flow. When Congressman John C. Box, a representative from East Texas, introduced a bill to amend the 1924 Immigration Act and shut down the flow of Mexican immigrants, the farmers and ranchers flexed their political power. The proposed bill was never enacted. Congressman John N. Garner (also a Texas Congressman) spoke for the farming and ranching interests:

> Mr. Chairman, here is the whole problem in a nutshell. Farming is not a profitable industry in this country, and in order to make money out of this, you have to have cheap labor…In order to allow landowners to make a profit on their farms, they want to find the cheapest labor they can, and if they get the Mexican labor, it enables them to make a profit…That is the way it is along the border…[110]

Foreign policy considerations in Congressional and Executive debates often swirled around the issue of an imposition of a numerical ceiling on immigrants from the Western Hemisphere. In the 1920s, those who attempted to restrict immigration from the Western Hemisphere were unsuccessful due to the strong state Department opposition led by Secretary of State, Frank Billings Kellogg:

> The vital factor in defeating the restrictionist cause was the opposition of the State Department. Appealing to the traditional ideal of Pan-Americanism, a principle which was to develop into the Good Neighbor Policy in the next few years, the officials of the State Department presented a powerful case against Western Hemisphere restrictions. Thus, it was the considerations of foreign policy, based

[110] U.S., Congress, Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Migrant and Seasonal Powerlessness, Hearings Before a Subcommittee on Labor and Public Welfare, U.S. Senate Reprint Publication, 1969, p.76.

> on a long-standing idea, that prevailed over the previously dominant ideas of race and nationalism to halt the restrictionist surge.[111]

Proponents of restrictive immigration argued that immigration was a domestic issue and that it was foolish to consider other countries' views in the determination of U.S. policy.

An October 1976 issue of Readers Digest contained an article by the then-Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Leonard Chapman. The Commissioner recited the decades-old rhetoric and the charges aimed at "illegal aliens." He described the situation as, "critical…threatening to become a national disaster."[112] Chapman estimated their numbers to be at 8 million and claimed that together they were, "milking the U.S. taxpayer of $13 billion annually by taking jobs from legal residents and forcing them into unemployment; by illegally acquiring welfare benefits, public services and by avoiding taxes." Certainly, this 40-plus year-old opinion piece mirrored the general and widespread sensationalism of public sentiment that had been around since the 1920s.

The various "deportation and repatriation rounds" that have scattered the history of Mexican immigration to the U.S. has been a source of extreme resentment in Mexico, yet have rarely accomplished much in "keeping the illegals outs." While the roundups of the 1930s were considered numerically successful and helped to reassure public concern over the economy, the inevitable always followed: again, there arose a need to turn to the Mexicans for cheap labor. After the Depression of the 1930s, World War II brought a renewed interest in Mexican labor (The Bracero Program). The long-term explanation

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[111] Ibid., p.43.
[112] Leonard Chapman, Jr., "Illegal Aliens: Time to Call a Halt," Reader's Digest, October, 1976, p.189.

for the cyclical pattern of demand for Mexican labor appeared to be economic: periods of greatest migration coincided with times of trouble in Mexico or with boom years in the United States. The short answer is largely one of political interest group pressure on immigration policy.

If one imagined an "open border" in which only the "push-pull" forces were the only mechanism regulating migration movements between the two countries, what would the differences be between those conditions? Certainly, the continued demand for cheap labor would attract millions across the border. Yet in this "open border" scenario, would these laborers return to Mexico or settle in the United States? Studies done at Harvard University by Wayne Cornelius showed that amongst families with a history of migration to the U.S., temporary migrants to the U.S. outnumbered those who settled permanently in the U.S. by a margin of 8 to 1.[113] Cornelius argued that the only attraction that the U.S. held for Mexican aliens was the job market. Accordingly, if there was an "open border" policy, Mexican migrants would continue to enter the U.S. on a temporary/seasonal basis.

However, even forty years ago the opposite view, posited by President Ford's, "Domestic Council Committee on Illegal Aliens" (1976) and then Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Professor of Economics, Michael Piore reminded us that in the initial stages of migration, mostly young, single males settle in the "host" country. Over time, however, the young male workers tended to be joined by their families.[114] The formation of "family migration" created a broader array of "impacts" to the U.S. education system, healthcare and housing considerations.

[113] Cornelius, "Mexican Migration," p.25.
[114] U.S., Congress, "Illegal Aliens," p.48.

Cornelius observed that the main difference between these two views is that the latter was based on observations derived from the U.S. experience with European immigration in the early part of the twentieth century. Cornelius pointed out that proximity has much to do with the "permanency" of migrants, but that this point of view alone didn't determine if given an "open border," that Mexican migrants would choose to return to Mexico. The backlog of applications of Mexican citizens seeking permanent residency in the U.S. disproved that argument.

However, there has traditionally been something special about the migration flow from Mexico to the U.S. What is different about this migration is not that these particular groups of migrants behave any differently from other groups of migrants throughout U.S. history, but that policy regulating this group has always differed from immigration policy applying to other countries. In this respect, Gilberto Cardenas wrote that:

> Since 1918, the Department of Labor, the Department of Agriculture and the State Department, operating under various mandates and in conjunction with American interest groups, have involved departmental policies and practices that have effectuated specific migration patterns of Mexican nationals and Mexican labor on both sides of the border. These migration patterns have taken various forms – be they legal immigration, bracero, commuter or illegal - and they are sufficiently interrelated to be considered as part of the overall United States immigration policy toward Mexico.[115]

From the history presented here, it is clear that economic "push-pull" factors have not been the sole determinant of the pattern of established migration between Mexico and the U.S. Would the mere economic "push-pull" factors have accomplished the successful negotiation of a program for Mexican laborers? Were the various bracero programs just

[115] Ibid., p.48.

the result of an organized, determined effort by growers to institutionalize a system that guaranteed controlled and ample access to Mexican labor.

In the transborder context, it is also helpful to include a discussion of "networking" or "social networking" which views Mexican migration as an ongoing social process. Recent scholarship explores a continuum in the complicated migration process which includes "geographic, social and historical interconnections between the two countries."[116] In the case of Mexican migration to the United States, the process has long been attributed to a search for a better life, prior journeys within Mexico, actual arrival in the United States, and how the course of integration into the new country is guided by, "the shadow of the homeland." Resultant settlement patterns in the U.S. are also influenced by these factors and help expose the complexity of immigration, "as a process, rather than an event."[117]

More than other foreign-born populations, Mexicans are above all, economic immigrants. They came to the United States because of the grinding poverty in Mexico and throughout the decades have sought to improve their economic conditions. Compared to other immigrants and to Mexican Americans, Mexican immigrants have much lower educational, occupational and income levels.[118] In 2004, statistical information revealed that only 31 percent of Mexican immigrants completed high school training, only 6 percent were in professional or managerial occupations, 31 percent were in the laborer occupations and almost 35 percent lived below the poverty level, the

[116] Raquel R. Marquez, and Yolanda C. Padilla, *"Immigration in the Life Histories of Women Living in the United States-Mexico Border*, Immigrants and Social Work, The Haworth Social Work Practice Press(Volume 2 , No. 1/2, 2004).
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.

highest rate of any foreign-born population.[119] The precarious economic situation of the Mexican immigrant has been an important aspect of their overall migration experience. In order to find how social networking has influenced where immigrants choose to live, "feminist theory conceptualizes migration as a survival strategy and more closely examines the effects of labor market trends on households and their concomitant strategies for survival in the face of disadvantage."[120] Recent studies of female migration to the U.S.-Mexico border indicate that movement across the border by men has always been closely related to work, while women's travel is more frequently associated with family. Therefore, female migration experiences have been motivated by traditional familial concerns, and their new economic roles in America.

The borderlands environment or the "Frontera," is a connecting point between the United States and Mexico. Rather than separating the two countries, the U.S./Mexico borderlands is a regional entity that, "encompasses two peoples, two countries, two languages and everything that falls in between, and at the border, these two halves meet and interact as one, or a transborder region."[121] This idea of regionalism encompasses business dealings, norms, practices and family ties from both sides of the border. The Frontera region is a transnational community that also brings undesirable factors to its inhabitants such as, "social and political isolation within their own countries, and the brunt force of a divisive, international boundary."[122] Yet, the interconnected aspects of

[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.

the immigration experience and the struggle for economic advancement also help explain the historic social relations of the region.

Along the border and even further north, the mechanism for agribusiness expansion and industrial profits banked on the labor of the poor and unskilled Mexican workforce (especially Mexican women). Collectively, the Mexican immigrant was kept in cyclical poverty (due to language, limited educational opportunities and racial/ethnic barriers). The borderlands became a successful economic region because of the abundant and cheap Mexican labor force that continually occupied the lower rungs of the economic and social ladder. In recent years, various points along the U.S./Mexico borderlands are the most accessible destination points for those who are trying to relocate from the Mexican interior.

> From the macro-level, global events, such as the integration of capital-intensive industrialization into Latin American economies, have increased inequalities in countries like Mexico. Furthermore, gender inequality for Mexican women has been heightened by urbanization and industrialization, key issues that have spurned women's migration from Mexico's interior to the borderlands. Women moved to the border seeking to improve their lives… (p)ay at these plants (*maquiladoras*) is relatively good by Mexican standards, but the high costs at the border offset the few gains the women earn. Poverty runs high where newcomers settle, and the region's infrastructure struggles to meet the demands of a constant influx of arrivals. Often, migrating to the U.S. side of the border is the next step for these women. What women who settle on the U.S. side find, are that they face similar conditions as they attempt to integrate into their new communities.[123]

In the face of these challenges, some women hesitated to move north to the Frontera region. Many expressed the positive aspects of remaining in Mexico, such as, the maintenance of Mexican voting rights, access to the Mexican social security system and the freedom to move about freely in Mexico. However, as in prior decades, women and

[123] Ibid.

families began to achieve limited "institutional integration" into U.S. society, "did occur in that their children attended local public schools."[124] School attendance allowed women and families to gain limited, but important access to public and social organizations within the context of elementary and middle school educational programs (geared toward the children, but based on volunteerism and parental involvement…an important aspect of social networking).

This most fundamental aspect of social involvement (parental participation in school programs) leads to heightened participation in community centers. The taking of English classes, immigration procedure and visa renewal classes, health care instruction, and other additional life-skill classes all serve as "survival strategies," but are also creative and adaptive ways to network and make decisions in the new borderlands environment. Importantly, family issues require input from both men and women and the networking process helps to also express personal, individual successes in the settlement process.[125]

Social networking also helps immigrants negotiate bi-national collaborative efforts designed to assist them in the transborder environment. Two very important social service programs that assist immigrant families (and are transnational in character) are the *United States-Mexico Border Health Association* and *The Colonias Program*. The *United States-Mexico Border Health Association* advises clients/patients along the U.S.-Mexico border through reciprocal medical and technical cooperatives through the dissemination of information and bilateral medical networks, it also supports multi-city

[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.

relationships through its Binational Health Councils. The *U.S.-Mexico Border Health Association* also partners with the public and private sectors. The *Colonias Program* is specific to those immigrants living in *colonias.* The programs' mission is to organize residents and create access to social services. The program is designed to work in partnership with local government, state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, and promotes he active involvement of residents. Furthermore, the program helps residents access health and human services, job training, educational programs, youth and elderly programs, which are available in their areas.

Integration on the border (and in the borderlands) of recent arrivals requires social networking in order to fully adapt into U.S. society. Consequently, specific barriers need to be addressed; legal status, low education and job skills, and access to public and social institutions. Services such as citizenship programs, classes in English as a Second Language, and other outreach programs are important to this transborder, transnational community.

These issues highlight the importance and the necessity to consider policy in a general sense, the influence of interest groups in the formation of policy itself, and the special treatment which Mexican immigration has received in the history of U.S. immigration policy. It is the interplay of these factors and forces, interest groups and policy that I turn to in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

HERBERT HOOVER PRESIDENCY AND IMMIGRATION POLICY

Herbert Clark Hoover was the son of a Quaker blacksmith and brought to the presidency an international reputation as an engineer, administrator and humanitarian. The first president born west of the Mississippi River, (West Branch, Iowa in 1874), Hoover grew up in Oregon and enrolled at Stanford University when it opened in 1891. Hoover graduated as a mining engineer and married his Stanford sweetheart, Lou Henry, also an engineering student. Hoover travelled the world as a mining expert and made his name in Australia before moving his young family to China. He worked for a private corporation and became China's leading engineer. When the Boxer Rebellion broke out in 1900, the Hoovers were marooned in Tientsin for one harrowing month as the city fell under siege. The U.S. Marines called upon his local knowledge as they attempted to quell the conflict. As Lou worked in hospitals, Herbert directed the building of barricades in the city streets and often risked his life saving and rescuing Chinese children.

A week before Hoover celebrated his fortieth birthday in London, Germany declared war on France. The American Consul General enlisted Hoover's help in securing safe passage home for stranded tourists. In only six weeks, Hoover's committee facilitated the return of 120,000 Americans to the United States. Hoover's calm, tactical astuteness and his flair for organization ensured that no Americans were stranded in Europe without travel documents, food and/or money. After the United States entered World War I in 1917, President Woodrow Wilson appointed Hoover as the head of the

Food Administration. Hoover was put in charge of feeding war-torn Belgium which had been overrun by the German army and faced a starvation crisis. His great success was limiting food consumption in the United States without rationing, and supplying badly needed foodstuffs to the Allies in Europe.

Herbert Hoover became a household name in the United States and was firmly established in American politics. He became an international figure and Wilson privately mused that Hoover might become his successor as president. After the German defeat and the Armistice, Hoover became a powerful humanitarian influence on the world scene. As a member of the Supreme Economic Council and head of the American Relief Administration, Hoover organized food shipments to millions of starving central Europeans. His reach even extended to famine-stricken Soviet Russia in 1921, and when criticized for "helping Bolshevism," Hoover responded, "Twenty million people are starving. Whatever their politics, they shall be fed."

Hoover's administrative experience extended well past the Wilson administration and he served as Secretary of Commerce under Presidents Harding and Coolidge. Ever the efficiency expert and a champion of American opportunities at home and abroad, Hoover introduced innovative policies including long-term mortgages that ensured outright home ownership. His swift and decisive efforts to bring aid and comfort to those Americans hit by the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 demonstrated his credentials as, "a man of the people." After Coolidge's decision not to seek reelection, Hoover was riding high and became the Republican presidential nominee in 1928. Always a man of great

hope and resolve, he stated, “We in America today are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of any land.”

Religion and Prohibition dominated the 1928 presidential campaign. Hoover’s democratic opponent, Alfred E Smith was governor of New York, and the first Roman Catholic to be nominated by a major party. Smith was an active, progressive governor and brought about such labor reforms as the 8-hour work day, minimum wage, workmen’s compensation, and state labor arbitration. He also promoted the rights of women and immigrants, cleared slums, extended medical services to rural areas, built schools, hospitals, prisons, parks, and established a state budget system. In an effort to unite “Wet” and “Dry” (anti-Prohibitionists and Prohibitionists) behind him, the Democratic platform promised “an honest effort to enforce” Prohibition while taking no real position for or against it. Smith himself long opposed Prohibition. The platform also dropped the party’s traditional call for lower tariffs and favored reduced taxes, creation of a federal Farm Board to assist farmers and stock raisers in marketing their products, international disarmament agreements, abolishment of executive agreements with foreign powers that circumvented the constitutional requirement of Senate ratification, improved waterways and flood control projects, exemption of labor from antitrust laws, public works projects in times of unemployment, public disclosure of campaign finances and federal aid to education.

Smith defended his Catholicism in a major address in Oklahoma City, but his appeal for religious tolerance did little to allay fears that a Catholic president would become a tool of the Pope. Scurrilous pamphlets distributed without Secretary Hoover’s

knowledge predicted that as president, Smith would annul Protestant marriages and make Catholicism the state religion. The issue especially hurt Smith in the traditionally Democratic South, where Protestant fundamentalism ran deep. Smith's long-standing opposition to Prohibition also alienated the South and West, while Hoover defended the law as "a great social and economic experiment, noble in motive and far-reaching in purpose." Hoover campaigned on the record of Republican prosperity. A GOP circular, though apparently not Hoover himself, promised "a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage." Both candidates agreed on the need to provide relief to farmers, develop water power, maintain the protective tariff, and conduct a non-interventionist foreign policy.

Smith was colorful and quick-witted, celebrated for his brown derby and cigar. Hoover in contrast, was conservative and lackluster. Smith's campaign song, "The Sidewalks of New York," heralded the Democrat's humble origins, although critics noted that Smith enjoyed the support of Herbert Lehman and other Wall Street executives far removed from Lower East Side. The Republican slogan, "Let's Keep What We've Got," warned voters not to tamper with economic success. Noted social worker Jane Addams endorsed Hoover for his record against poverty and for (pro) labor. Labor divided its support between the two candidates. Hoover closed his campaign with a speech in New York City on October 22, 1928, in which he declared that the election offered voters a critical choice between, "the American system of rugged individualism," set in place by Republicans after World War I, and "doctrines of paternalism and state socialism," popular in Europe and advocated by Democrats.

Hoover's landslide election to the presidency over Smith had all the earmarks of great prosperity. Hoover was a reformer who envisioned a partnership between the private and public sectors whereby each entity would support the other and strengthen the economy. To Hoover, all this could be achieved without centralized, federal intervention. He had great plans to continue the economic prosperity that Calvin Coolidge had begun and hoped to ensure world peace through harmonious foreign relations. It was a bitter irony that when Hoover took the oath of office on March 4, 1929, his credentials as the world's most successful relief administrator would serve him so poorly. Within months of Hoover's victory, the stock market crashed, and the nation spiraled into a deep economic depression. The new President's humanitarian genius became almost unnecessary during a time when speculative investment swept the country, for the 1922 through 1929 boom was fed by unprecedented securities speculation.

Hoover surrounded himself with a very capable and renowned inner circle. Vice President Charles Curtis was one-quarter Kaw Indian and was born on Indian land at North Topeka, Kansas and grew up on an Indian reservation. He was an attorney, a U.S. Congressman and Senator. A conservative and faithful party regular, he advanced to Republican whip in 1915 and majority leader in 1924. He was a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination in 1928, but settled for the number-two spot.

Hoover's cabinet was considered the cream of the Republican crop. Secretary of State, Henry L. Stimson had served as war secretary in the Taft administration. He headed the American delegation to the London Naval Conference in 1930 and the Geneva Disarmament Conference in 1932. In response to Japan's invasion of Manchuria

in 1931, he promulgated the "Stimson Doctrine," by which the United States refused to recognize territorial changes brought about by aggression. He later served as War Secretary in the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The Secretary of the Treasury, Andrew W. Mellon was a holdover from the Harding and Coolidge administrations. He continued his pro-business policy popular during the 1920s boom years, but was called into question during the Great Depression. He underestimated the depths of the Depression and was among those who predicted eminent recovery. Promoted from Undersecretary of the Treasury, he helped draft the Emergency Banking Act of 1933 curbing speculative banking practices, which established a temporary deposit insurance program. Secretary of War, James W. Good was Hoover's western campaign manager, but died in office. Patrick J. Hurley served out Good's term. Hurley was also promoted from Undersecretary of War and directed the military confrontation with the Bonus Army in 1932. He dedicated the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in 1932 at Arlington National Cemetery.

Attorney General William D. Mitchell served his full term from 1929 through 1933. He had served as Solicitor General in the Coolidge administration. He reorganized the federal prison system and attempted to strongly enforce Prohibition. Secretary of the Navy, Charles Frances Adams was the great grandson of President John Quincy Adams, and a delegate to the 1930 London Naval Conference. Postmaster General Walter F. Brown expanded airmail service. He was derisively dubbed "High Hat Brown" when it was revealed that he had ordered a government limousine, custom-made with sufficient head room for him to wear a tall silk hat.

Secretary of the Interior Ray Lyman Wilbur upgraded health care and education among Native American people. He also promoted conservation and founded the "Save the Redwoods League." Secretary of Agriculture Arthur M. Hyde attempted with little success to control agricultural surpluses through the Federal Farm Board. Secretary of Commerce Robert P. Lamont served from 1929 to 1932. He also dismissed the stock market crash of 1929 as a temporary glitch that would do little more than, "curtail the buying power, especially of luxuries of those who suffered losses." Lamont's successor, Roy D. Chapin served from 1932 to 1933. He tried unsuccessfully to persuade industrialist Henry Ford to leave his money in Michigan banks, which might have helped them to stay open. Toward the end of Hoover's term, several bank closures in Michigan prompted bank runs in other states.

James J. Davis served as Secretary of Labor from 1921 to 1930. A holdover from the Harding and Coolidge administrations, he encouraged collective bargaining. William N. Doak served as Secretary of Labor from 1930 to 1933. Doak was long active in the "Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen" and pressed for a crackdown on illegal aliens competing for American jobs.

In 1929, the Great Depression hit. Prices soared, and it was revealed that fortunes were pyramided. However, the pyramid was inverted. In October 1929, the pyramid tumbled and crashed from its own weight. Life savings were wiped out and long-standing businesses failed along with their solvent reputations. Widespread unemployment and pathetic breadlines became prevalent nationwide. The Wall Street stock market crash (October-November) was the overt inception of the worldwide Great Depression. Severe

breaks occurred on October 24 when 13 million shares changed hands and on October 29, when 16 million shares were traded. By November 13, 1929 about $30 million in the market value of listed stocks had been wiped out and by mid-1932, these losses increased to $75 billion. The U.S. was mired in the depths of a long Depression. Yet, the Depression was not confined to the United States. It spread all over the world, "like fire eating through tinder."

With all his years of experience, particularly the World War I years, in meeting emergencies and crises, Hoover fought hard to stem the tide of the Depression. Hoover's relief policy opposed direct Federal intervention for those unemployed persons suffering from genuine distress. Instead, he advocated a policy of decentralized work relief. In October 1930, he formulated a relief program that called for Federal leadership of a national voluntary effort by agencies operating on a self-help basis in state and local communities. Hoover's object was to "preserve the principles of individual and local responsibility." On December 2, 1930, Hoover requested an appropriation of $100-$150 million for the construction of public works. Still un- able to offset the deepening Depression, Hoover created national emergency relief organizations. In spite of these efforts, unemployment rose to 10 million in 1932 and Hoover approved the "Relief and Construction Act." One year before, in the summer of 1931, Hoover announced his famous moratorium - a suspension of payment on all war debts for a year. However, U.S. banks were closing and foreign nations were taking their gold out of America. To offset this, he recommended to Congress the creation of the "Reconstruction Finance Corporation," with a capital of $500,000,000 and the authorized power to borrow $1,500,000,000 more. He also created the Farm Board to aid farmers who desperately

needed relief. While these measures did some good and alleviated some suffering, the momentum accumulated by the spiraling descent of the world's markets could not be counteracted.

President Hoover advocated an economic recovery plan based on the assumption that government loans to banks and railroads would check deflation in agriculture and industry and ultimately restore the levels of employment and purchasing power. On December 8, 1931, Hoover proposed to Congress the creation of a government lending agency with authority to issue tax-exempt bonds and with wide powers to extend credit. The Senate (on January 11, 1932) and the House (on January 15, 1932) passed the measure establishing his "Reconstruction Finance Corporation," which was capitalized at $500 million and authorized to borrow to the extent of almost $2 billion more to provide emergency financing for banking institutions, life insurance companies, building and loan societies, railroads, and farm mortgage associations. The RFC was also empowered to extend capital to government-owned corporations. The measure was signed by President Hoover on January 2, 1932, and within six months it had authorized a total of $1.2 billion in loans to about 5,000 life insurance companies, agricultural credit corporations, and other financial institutions. However, as the Depression deepened, and unemployment rose to over 10,000,000, President Hoover approved the "Relief and Construction Act." This act extended the scope and the functions of the RFC and authorized it to incur a total indebtedness of $3 billion. The RFC was empowered to provide $1.5 billion in loans for the construction by state and local agencies of public works of a self-liquidating character, and to furnish $300 million in short-term loans to states unable to finance the

relief of economic hardship. The act also broadened the powers of the RFC to assist agricultural businesses.

On July 22, 1932, President Hoover recommended that Congress pass the "Federal Home Loan Bank Act." This act established a five-man Home Loan Bank Board and created a series of streamlined banking institutions for home mortgages that provided services similar to that provided for commercial interests by the Federal Reserve. It established eight to twelve banks set up in different parts of the country with a total funding capital of $125 million. Eligible for membership in the program were building and loan associations, savings banks, and insurance companies. The measure was designed to reduce foreclosures, stimulate residential construction (and thus increase employment), and encourage home ownership by providing the procedures for long-term loans, payable in installments.

At President Hoover's almost exasperated request, the American Red Cross appropriated $5,000,000 and began a collection of $10,000,000 more for direct relief, but despair and gloom had settled over the country. Even the "Great Humanitarian" could not lift the malaise. Hoover tried to use government leadership to stimulate recovery through voluntary methods. He urged businesses not to cut payrolls, labor not to ask for higher wages, and farmers to practice "crop control." He also announced that while keeping the budget balanced and currency sound, he would cut taxes and increase spending on public works, such as the Hoover Dam, constructed on the Colorado River.

When Hoover asked Congress to enact his unprecedented program, the giant federal loan agency (the Reconstruction Finance Corporation) to aid businesses, help for

farmers facing mortgage foreclosures, banking reform, state loans in order to feed the unemployed, further expansion of public works, and a drastically increased governmental economy, he knew that the program had a difficult course ahead. With a hostile Congress dominated by Democrats and progressive Republicans, the legislative branch only slowly passed part of the measures and Hoover, never one for political maneuvering, would not budge or waiver from his principles,

> "I was convinced that efficient, honest administration of the vast machine of the Federal government would appeal to all citizens. I have since learned that efficient government does not interest the people so much as the dramatics."

While proposing his positive program to fight the Depression, Hoover reiterated that caring for the homeless and hungry must be primarily a local and voluntary responsibility.

> "If we start appropriations of this character, we have not only impaired something infinitely valuable in the life of the American people, but have struck at the roots of self-government."

Hoover's opponents in Congress roundly criticized him and made him the scapegoat for the Great Depression. His position led his critics to conclude that he chose to distance himself at his country's time of need.

The Crash caused businesses to close down and as unemployment soared, thousands of borrowers defaulted on their loans. Americans lost their homes and shanty towns (ironically named, "Hoovervilles") appeared throughout the nation as the homeless desperately searched for low-budget housing. Hoover attempted to enact financial measures that would help the hardest hit. However, he always maintained that the disenfranchised in a community were not the federal government's responsibility, but the

responsibility of local government. President Hoover announced that while he keeping the federal budget balanced, he would cut taxes and expand spending for public works. The causes of the Great Depression included: (1) A chronic surplus in agricultural products had been depressing farm prices. (2) Lack of credit restraints, especially in the securities industry, where stocks could be purchased on a 25 percent margin and spurred a ferocious round of speculation. (3) High tariffs discouraged world trade. (4) Acceleration of corporate profits at the expense of higher wages stunted purchasing power.

By the spring of 1930, 4 million people were unemployed; the figure more than tripled by 1933, the worst year of the Depression. The national unemployment rate peaked at 25 percent in 1933. Some 25 percent of all banks in the United States failed during 1929 through 1932. Farmers were among the hardest hit as crop prices (already depressed), fell another 30 percent during 1930-1931. Compounding the problem were dust storms in the Midwest and Southwest that blew away the top soil of entire farms, forcing thousands to abandon their barren fields in an aimless exodus, portrayed in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath.*

Hoover and his advisors failed to grasp the enormity of the Depression. In March of 1930, Hoover declared, "All the evidences indicate that the worst effects of the crash upon unemployment will have passed in the next 60 days." Two months later, Hoover expressed confidence that, "the worst was over." Hoover limited government assistance to business, believing that such aid would eventually "trickle down" to the people. He refused to engage in massive programs of direct federal aid to the unemployed. Instead,

he established the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, which by the time Hoover left office had loaned nearly $2 billion to ailing banks, insurance companies, and other financial institutions as well as to businesses and state governments. As the crisis deepened, Hoover became the symbol of the Depression. At public appearances the man once hailed as the Great Humanitarian for his war-efforts drew rude jeers. The homeless huddled in makeshift dwellings of cardboard and scrap metal and called their shanties, "Hoovervilles." Newspapers came to be called "Hoover blankets." Empty pockets turned inside out were dubbed, "Hoover flags" and jackrabbits slaughtered for food were, "Hoover hogs."[126]

Within the narrative of vast unemployment during the Great Depression, there is a widespread but unfounded myth that President Hoover ordered the deportation or repatriation of large numbers of Hispanics, primarily Mexicans, during his administration. The popular misconception is that he "ordered" the deportation and /or "repatriation" of tens of thousands of foreign workers. "Deportation" is the legal process for formally expelling a non-citizen of the United States; "repatriation" is a term that refers to various methods for persuading or forcing individuals to leave the country outside of the legal process. Hoover allowed his Secretary of Labor, William Doak, to initiate "repatriation drives," there is no evidence that Hoover formally took such an initiative. Matthew T. Schaefer, an archivist at the Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch, Iowa recently stated that, "President Hoover never issued a statement, executive order or proclamation ordering the deportation of illegal immigrants."

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[126] William A. Degregorio, *The Complete Book of U.S. Presidents*, (New York: Barricade Books, Inc., 1993), p.473.

A viral email circulated last year (2017) and since debunked by the organization, factcheck.org claimed that as President, Hoover ordered the mass deportation of all illegal aliens and other immigrants as a means to make jobs available for Americans during the Depression. This is simply not true. During Hoover's presidency, immigration quotas already existed as provided by the Immigration Act of 1924. Those quotas did not apply to Mexico or any other country in the Western Hemisphere. This was due to the fact that many U.S. business interests (especially in agriculture) needed "near-by" Mexican workers to complete seasonal labor demands. The Hoover administration did support the deportation of criminal illegal migrants. Statistical information kept by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (part of the Department of Labor at that time), revealed that the total number of deportations was around 72,000 during President Hoover's four years as President. An additional 49,000 immigrants left "voluntarily" rather than try their luck at a deportation hearing. Therefore, according to this "official record," approximately 121, 000 people were deported or induced to leave during Hoover's term.

The years of the Great Depression saw an exodus of many people of Mexican heritage. Some of these people were U.S. citizens. Perhaps as many as 400,000 Mexicans and Mexican Americans left the U.S. during the Depression because of dwindling job prospects and their fear of federal immigration officials. Sometimes these officials used questionable tactics to encourage out-migration. A report to the 1931 Wickersham Commission described immigration officials who detained those whom they thought were "aliens," whether lawful or illegal, without any arrest warrant or court sanctioned search documentation. Importantly, it was the Hoover administration that

appointed the Wickersham Commission and brought many abuses to the light of day. Many of these questionable and objectionable actions were carried out by state and local officials, labor unions, and even private employers. However, according to historian Marian Smith, "There is no evidence that Herbert Hoover ordered the deportation of illegal aliens."

In the late 1920s, about 60,000 people entered the U.S. annually from "non-quota" countries, primarily Mexico and many of them stayed for years (The 1924 Immigration Act established strict quotas for immigration from Europe, Asia and Africa, but did not limit immigration from North or South America). As long as migrants had a visa and a job, they could stay as long as they wished. Any migrant without a valid visa could be deported at any time, and any migrant, temporary or permanent, could be deported if they became a public charge. Local law enforcement agencies were the primary means for apprehending illegal immigrants, and the burden of proof was on the migrant to show a valid visa and employment confirmation. The Labor Department's Bureau of Immigration was responsible for issuing official deportation warrants, and in most cases paid for the deportee's transportation out of the country.

There was an important loop hole, if migrants left the country voluntary, there were no repercussions and they could return in the future, but if they were officially deported and returned to the U.S., they would be denied a visa and could be charged with a felony for attempting illegal entry. As a result, law enforcement at all levels encouraged or even forced non-citizens (and even citizens of foreign heritage) to

"repatriate" to their country of origin rather than "take a chance" with a deportation hearing.

As unemployment climbed during the Great Depression, most U.S. citizens believed that jobs and charity should be reserved for "native-born" Americans, and that "non-citizens" should return to their home countries. State and local law enforcement, with the encouragement of the Bureau of Immigration, stepped up their efforts to apprehend criminals and public charges for deportation, which resulted in modest, tough well-publicized increases in official deportations. Official deportations to all countries were 16,631 in 1930, 18,142 in 1931, and 19,426 in 1932.

President Hoover's only official action was to eliminate inward migration by reducing the number of visas to almost zero, on the grounds that most applicants would likely find no work and become public charges. As the Depression worsened, private businesses and industry often took matters into their own hands. In Detroit, auto makers fired many of their Hispanic workers, including legal migrants and even American citizens of Hispanic descent. Without jobs, many chose to leave the country rather than "roll the dice" a deportation hearing. In other parts of the country, state and local officials began considering large-scale "voluntary repatriation" projects to reduce the financial burden on local welfare and charity organizations.

The specifics varied, but the results were the same: illegal immigrants and even legal migrants left the country "voluntarily" and in large numbers. In some cases, they left after being threatened or detained by local law enforcement or Bureau of Immigration officials. Others were alarmed by anti-immigrant rhetoric or hostile community attitudes.

Sometimes, local or state governments, or even private charities, would pay the transportation costs for the repatriates to leave the country. The largest such repatriation project took place in Los Angeles, organized by the City of Los Angeles with the cooperation of the Department of Labor and Los Angeles County officials. In 1930 and 1931, tens of thousands of Mexicans were rounded up and put on trains, often with their American-born children and shipped to and across the border. Los Angeles County estimated that the cost to send one train-load of 6,000 Mexicans back to Mexico was about $77,000, but if they stayed, unemployment relief would have cost the County about $425,000 per year.

Some of the out of work repatriates actually welcomed the opportunity to return to their home country. Others were unaware of their rights or lacked the means to defend themselves at a deportation hearing. By and large, the Mexican government was eager to bring workers back to Mexico, paid for their transportation from the border to the interior, and supported charitable organizations that helped repatriates find jobs in Mexico.

Hoover's Secretary of Labor, William Doak, was much more enthusiastic than the President about repatriation and used every means at his disposal to encourage repatriation projects like the one in Los Angeles. Some historians have suggested that the Immigration Bureaus' activities were unscrupulous, unfair or even illegal, but at the time they were very popular with most Americans, and no serious legal challenges were raised. While true that the President could have told Doak to back off, but it would have

ignited a political firestorm. Hoover's critics and even his supporters would surely have accused him of taking jobs and unemployment relief away from "real American citizens."

In total, perhaps ten times as many people may have left the country "voluntarily" during the Hoover administration than were officially deported, but because the departures were "voluntary," an accurate estimate is impossible to determine. President Hoover believed that the Federal government's role should be limited to prosecuting official deportations and enforcing the laws limiting legal immigration. In his address accepting the Republican Presidential renomination in 1932, he stated, "I favor rigidly restricted immigration. I have by executive direction, in order to relieve us of added unemployment, already reduced the inward movement to less than the outward movement. I shall adhere to that policy."[127]

For Mexicans, the late 1920s and the early 1930s became especially difficult times. Nativist sentiments emerged in the press, in Congress, and in cities and towns all over the United States. Massive unemployment brought out the worst fears and privations in the American populace, and much resentment was directed toward Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans. Francisco Balderrama noted the difficulties,

> Like other ethnic minorities serving as laborers for industry and agriculture, Mexican nationals and American citizens of Mexican descent were especially hard hit. They faced not only unemployment, but also legal obstacles and prejudice which further restricted their opportunity to work. Mexican nationals were categorically denied assistance because of a 'citizens only' policy, while

[127] https://hoover.blogs.archives.gov/2016/0804/Hoover-on-immigration/ Accessed October 3, 2017

> Mexican Americans were also frequently refused help by public officials who did not recognize their citizenship.[128]

Mexican workers became the first to be laid off from their jobs, and especially during the first years of the Depression, thousands became unemployed. Any advancement of their collective "standard of living" while employed in the United States was eradicated and a thing of the past. Professor Abraham Hoffman wrote,

> In an age where neither the United States nor Mexico provided any meaningful supervision for laborers recruited by large companies, the Mexican worker might find himself stranded in a town whose mines had closed or laid-off during a slack period in railroad maintenance or harvesting. When this occurred, Anglo Americans were quick to complain about the presence of Mexicans on local relief roles.[129]

Many U.S. relief agencies disparaged unemployed Mexicans as unnecessary and burdensome. Often Mexican workers were denied access to these relief agencies and not given relief money for food purchases. In many parts of the Midwest and Southwest, these stranded Mexican immigrants found themselves hundreds of miles from the Mexico border. By the early 1930s, Congressional leaders intent on immigration restrictions failed to secure additional immigration quotas as amendments to the Immigration Act of 1924. However, they did achieve partial victories as the U.S. State Department began to enforce the provisions of the Immigration Act of 1917. This process was achieved through cooperative consular officers in Mexico who began limiting the number of visas granted to Mexicans. President Hoover was amenable to these measures as a convenient way to appease restrictionist Congressmen without initiating a quota on Mexico which would be perceived as an affront to the Mexican government. In addition, the

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[128] Francisco E. Balderrama, *In Defense of La Raza: The Los Angeles Mexican Consulate and the Mexican Community, 1929 to 1936.,* Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982, x.
[129] Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans In The Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), p.33-35.

Immigration Act of 1929 made illegal entry into the U. S. a misdemeanor, punishable by a $1,000 dollar fine or a year in prison. The Immigration Act 1929 gave the U.S. government the ability to carry out "federal deportation campaigns" which were at first directed against all foreigners who were in the U.S. illegally.

As the federal deportations intensified, repatriation programs were initiated by private and public agencies in efforts to send Mexicans, "back to Mexico." The objective of reducing unemployment for "native-born" Americans soon led to events that became unrelated to that goal. Questionable tactics by immigration officials and relief workers (to convince Mexicans to return to Mexico) included the dissemination of false legal information and contradictory administrative policies that sparked controversy in some U.S. newspapers and angered government officials in Mexico.

Hoover's Secretary of Labor, William N. Doak made headlines when he announced in January of 1931 that "400,000 Aliens (are) in U.S. Illegally"- Only 25 Per Cent Can Be Deported, He Informs Senate, and Six Years Would Be Needed to Do So." The Washington Post's reporter Edward T. Folliard wrote of Doak's ambitious plans and concerns,

> There are about 400,000 aliens unlawfully abiding in the United States, Secretary of Labor W. N. Doak has notified the Senate. He submitted the estimate in response to a request contained in a Senate resolution adopted early in December.
>
> The resolution, introduced by Senator Hayden (Democrat), of Arizona, was in the interest of America's unemployed, the thought behind it being that if aliens could be deported faster, there would be more jobs for Americans.
>
> Regarded from an employment standpoint, Secretary Doak's report to the Senate is not very encouraging. He estimates that only about 25 per cent or 100,000 of

the aliens are deportable, the remainder, for one reason or another, being beyond the deportation provisions of the immigration laws.

And while Secretary Doak doesn't say so, it stands to reason that a good percentage of the 100,000 are themselves out of work, or else earning a living through crime.

Moreover, it would take nearly six years to get rid of the 100,000 aliens at the rate deportations are now being carried out, the number last year having been 16,631. This number, Secretary Doak tells the Senate, represents a maximum of the results which can be accomplished with the present appropriation and immigration force.

With an increase in the appropriation and the force Secretary Doak's said, the number of deportations might be boosted 25 per cent, or to a total of approximately 20,000 the first year.

In his report, Secretary Doak points out that prior to 1921, when the first quota limit law went into effect, there were few incentives for aliens to come in without permission. Up until then all aliens, with the exception of certain Oriental peoples, could gain entry if they were able to meet the physical, mental, moral, and economic tests. Consequently, those who did come in unlawfully were Orientals and the diseased, the illiterate and the criminals.

The quota law of 1921, with its limitation on the number of aliens that could come from each country, provided the incentive that lead thousands to come in illegally. The quota law of 1924 was even more drastic than that of 1921.

Since 1924, Secretary Doak said, the number of immigration officers along the borders and at the seaports has been increased, with a reduction in the number of aliens who have gained illegal entry.

The number of aliens who come through Mexico and Canada has been materially reduced, he said, as has the number who desert ships at American seaports. The number of these ships' deserters, he said, is slightly less than 11,000 a year.

The number of aliens who come in as visitors and then stay here unlawfully was estimated by Secretary Doak as from 5 to 7 per cent.

Responding to the Senate's invitation that he recommend changes in the immigration laws that would facilitate deportations, Secretary Doak suggested that field officers be allowed to sign warrants for the arrest of aliens. At present, he alone may sign such warrants, and the result is that many aliens who have been located by the field officers manage to escape pending the arrival of a warrant.

He also made these recommendations:

> That the law with respect to burden of proof be clarified so as to permit the deportation of certain classes of undesirables, anarchists and the like, who now are safe just so long as they can show that they came in lawfully.
>
> That the law be amended so that alien criminals may be deported for crimes other than those involving moral turpitude, which now is the sole ground for deportation.
>
> That the department be authorized to prosecute deportation cases in the judicial district in which the alien is located, rather than being forced to remove him to the district in which he gained entry.
>
> That the law covering the harboring of aliens be made more drastic so as to reach those persons, though having had no part in bringing the alien in, yet have knowledge of the aliens unlawful act and help to conceal him.
>
> With regard to deporting aliens connected with organizations advocating the overthrow of the United States Government, Secretary Doak pointed out that the Fish committee now has this problem under consideration.[130]

Secretary Doak's charisma on this issue was remarkable and even ridiculed by Washington D.C. elites who referred to his zealous behavior as a "gladiatorial spectacle." His infectious, sensationalism supercharged his agents and they raided public places, communities, and homes from Los Angeles to New York City. Some media outlets began to criticize Doak's policies.[131]

Charles P. Visel, the Chief of the Los Angeles Committee for the Coordination of Unemployment Relief agreed with Doak's high-profile tactics. Visel suggested that Doak begin his immigration raids in the Mexican and Mexican American "barrios" of Los Angeles and southern California. Visel's objectives were more focused on the removal of illegal Mexican immigrants (along with Mexican Americans) and their expulsion to Mexico. Visel's modus operandi was to use scare tactics to get his desired

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[130] "400,000 aliens in U.S. illegally, Doak says by Edward T. Foliard, *The Washington Post:* January 6, 1931: ProQuest Historical Newspapers, The Washington Post (1877-1991), p.1.
[131] Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans In The Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), p.38-39.

results, an effective way to ease the unemployment crisis in the region. Through press releases in Los Angeles newspapers, Visel targeted the illegal immigrant population and informed them that deportation campaigns would begin on January 26, 1931. The print media savored Visel's rhetoric and the announcements created substantial anxiety within the Los Angeles Mexican and Mexican American community.

Francisco Balderrama noted the culture of fear within the Hispanic community,

> The relationship between the Los Angeles "colonia" and the Anglo American community became explosive with the …deportation and repatriation drives. Many southern Californian Mexicans and Mexican Americans had already returned to Mexico and others were planning to leave in an effort to secure employment. In 1931, the federal deportation campaign and the Los Angeles County repatriation program, the former aimed at illegal residents and the latter at relief recipients, unleashed a mass exodus to Mexico.[132]

La Opinión, the most influential Spanish language newspaper in the Los Angeles region, editorialized that the deportation campaigns were specifically aimed at those of Mexican descent and ignored illegal aliens of other nationalities in the region.[133] The situation reached an apex point midafternoon on February 26, 1931, when three dozen Los Angeles policemen, reenforced by federal immigration agents, encircled a downtown plaza in Los Angeles. The authorities detained 400 people at the scene. Five Chinese, one Japanese, and eleven Mexicans were placed in custody. The next day, nine of the Mexicans were released. *La Opinión* further reported that Mexican immigrant associations spoke out against the raids and provided legal advice.

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[132] Francisco E. Balderrama, *In Defense of La Raza, The Los Angeles Mexican Consulate and the Mexican Community, 1929-1936*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982), p.15-18.
[133] Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), p.47-49.

The Mexican Consular official in Los Angeles, Rafael de la Colina lodged his ardent protest. However, de la Colinas' excoriation of the federal and county strategy was unsuccessful in curtailing the exodus from California to Mexico. Colina however, narrowly interpreted his diplomatic duties. He kept his superiors informed and solicitated pledges of fair treatment from U.S. officials. Colina was also handicapped by his Mexico City superiors. Perhaps a protest from the Secretary of Foreign Relations might have stopped the massive raids.[134]

The deportation campaigns in Southern California accomplished voluntary repatriation to Mexico amongst Mexicans and Mexican Americans. The Comité Mexicano de Beneficencia (a Los Angeles relief organization), helped finance the return trip of many to Mexico. The Mexican government also help repatriate those who expressed a voluntary desire to return.[135]

Mexico officially stated that the government would help the repatriates once they arrived back in Mexico. Indeed these announcements convinced many to return.[136] Many Mexican officials endorsed the repatriation policy that began under the administration of Álvaro Obregón.[137] Meanwhile, the assistant chief of the Border Patrol in McAllen, Texas, John Peavey, had achieved great success in capturing thousands of

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[134] Abraham Hoffman, "Stimulus to Repatriation: The 1931 Federal Deportation Drive and Los Angeles Community," Pacific Historical Review 42, (May 1973): p.214-216.
[135] Francisco E. Balderrama, *In Defense of La Raza, The Los Angeles Mexican Consulate and the Mexican Community, 1929-1936*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982), p.18-21.
[136] David Silverman and George Kiser, "Mexican Repatriation During the Great Depression," Journal of Mexican American History 3 (December, 1973): p.149-151.
[137] Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), p.33-37.

undocumented Mexicans in the lower Rio Grande Valley.[138] In his study of repatriation from Texas, R. Reynolds McKay noted that repatriation had increased during,

> the latter part of 1931 and coincided with the aftermath of the federal deportation campaign so highly publicized in Los Angeles and elsewhere, and the beginnings of the organized repatriation programs in that county and across the nation. The Los Angeles campaign, however, was actually an extension of an intensive, well-organized, and effective campaign that had been in operation in Texas since the summer of 1928.[139]

The effort to drive out undocumented agricultural workers had begun in the lower Rio Grande Valley, and soon expanded to San Antonio and Houston. In Houston, deportations were not as prevalent as in Los Angeles and the Mexican immigrants there did not experience the initial grip of the Great Depression. This was due to Houston's booming oil industry, which provided availability of greater job opportunities. Houston's proximity to the Gulf of Mexico and the construction of oil refineries in the 1920s and 1930s somewhat shielded Houston from the initial downturns in the U.S. economy. Slowly however, the Great Depression worked its way to the Houston area and unemployment numbers began to rise. As in other regions throughout the United States, attention became razor-focused on the Mexican and Mexican American population and the competition for jobs.[140] Similar nativist feelings that took place in Los Angeles began to manifest in the Houston area and immigrants families were barred from benefits from public relief assistance and relief agencies.

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[138] R. Reynolds McKay, "The Federal Deportation Campaign in Texas: Mexican Deportation From the Lower Rio Grande Valley During the Great Depression," Borderlands Journal 5 (Fall, 1981): p.95-97.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Thomas H. Kreneck and Marilyn D. Rhinehart, "In the Shadow of Uncertainty: Texas Mexicans and Repatriation in Houston During the Great Depression," Private Papers of F. Arturo Rosales.

In the Texas State legislature, relief funding was all but depleted since the requisite appropriations bills had failed. The legislature also failed to pass a state constitutional amendment which would have issued bonds in order to fund relief agencies in the state. The Houston Chronicle reported on May 8, 1933, that the state coffers could only provide a few more days of financial support. Basic necessities for the increased number of unemployed persons cast a shadow over Houston and the situation darkened for the Mexican immigrant population as they were the first to be denied.[141]

During the tough times of the Hoover Administration, destitute Mexican families could usually rely on mutual aid societies and Catholic and Protestant religious organizations for food assistance and shelter. Many preferred these organizations over public entities because they thought government sponsored aid organizations would expose their whereabouts and make them more susceptible to the repatriation process.

Conditions in San Antonio were about equal to those events that transpired in Houston. Deportations, repatriations, mass unemployment, nativism, and disqualification from assistance programs impacted the San Antonio "colonia" as well. The Great Depression affected millions in the United States, however, many Mexicans and Mexican Americans felt the humiliation of being systematically singled out, denied public aid, and deported to Mexico.

Karnes City, Texas, located in Karnes County was an area where many Mexican workers and their families gathered prior to deportations or voluntary repatriation to Mexico. In that area of Texas, and with the assistance of the Mexican Consul of San

[141] Ibid.

Antonio, hundreds of families were organized into caravans, composed of automobiles and trucks for the exodus back to Mexico. On October 18, 1931, the first such caravan left for Nuevo Laredo, Mexico.

By the summer of 1931, the economy in South Texas was in the full grip of the Depression. Hundreds of Mexican Americans and Mexicans lost their agriculture jobs. Thousands more were evicted from their lands as tenant farmers. Whether they were born in Mexico or the United States, many of these Hispanics were caught in the economic crash. If they were lucky enough to find other farm work, the wages were lower than ever, and almost impossible to live on. These exigent circumstances were heightened by the fact that many of the aforementioned relief agencies (even religious relief associations) had no offices or distribution centers in rural areas. Also, the U.S. Immigration Services undertook large scale operations to find undocumented Mexicans throughout the South Texas region.[142] Given these circumstances, many Mexican families hoped conditions would improve once they arrived in Mexico.

Fundraising became an effective way to help ease the burden of financing return trips to Mexico. With most of the proceeds going toward the effort, movie theaters presented films and variety shows to assist in the repatriation process. The Mexican Consul in Harlingen, Texas arranged with local movie houses to fundraise for penniless repatriates. Most theater owners only kept "twenty-five percent of the door" to offset

[142] Ibid.

their expenses. Such fundraising efforts were made in other South Texas communities and greatly helped those stranded families that awaited repatriation to Mexico.[143]

The crisis of the Depression hit the Texas coal mining industry as well. In Wise County (north Texas), the Bridgeport Coal Mines employed hundreds of Mexicans. Dependent on Mexican laborers, most mining operations in Texas came to an almost complete shutdown in the early 1930s. Mexican miners and their families faced almost complete financial ruin due to increased unemployment.[144]

> After January 1931, the mines were operated intermittently; however, most Mexican miners remained with Bridgeport, where they averaged two days work each week during 1931. By the end of July many of the miners and their families were experiencing financial difficulties. In an effort to alleviate the situation, the Mexican Consul from Dallas, Juan E. Anchondo, met with the miners to discuss the possibility of their returning to Mexico.[145]

In December of 1931, the coal miners and their families began leaving Bridgeport in cars, trucks and on trains. Unlike their repatriate counterparts in Karnes City, these people departed southward in smaller groups and not in caravans. Most of the Mexican miners left Bridgeport for Mexico by January, 1932.

The same unfortunate scenario played out in several Southwestern mining communities in the Southwest. Once prosperous copper and silver mining districts in Colorado, New Mexico and Colorado became ghost-towns as these production centers came to a standstill. Only a fortunate few kept their jobs in Globe and Miami, Arizona while the rest voluntarily repatriated to Mexico. The case of the Miami, Arizona mining

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[143] Eduardo Hernández Cházaro, To Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE), October 14, 1931, Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (AHSRE).
[144] R. Reynolds McKay "The Impact of the Great Depression on Immigrant Mexican Labor: Repatriation of the Bridgeport, Texas, Coal Miners," Social Science Quarterly 65 (June, 1984): p.352-355.
[145] Ibid., p.356-358.

district of Inspiration Copper Company worked with the Mexican Consul and the Comisión Honorífica Mexicana to cover gasoline and oil costs for out of work, stranded laborers.[146] These events played out in the mining districts of Silver City, New Mexico and Silverton, Colorado as well. Of course, the demand for copper, coal, and silver had declined to record lows.

The economic crisis affected urban centers as well. In Tucson Arizona, many Mexicans and Mexican Americans traveled to California in search of better opportunities. Like many others in the Southwest, the choice became waiting out the Depression or repatriation to Mexico. In Phoenix, Arizona, and in the surrounding Salt River Valley, thousands of Mexicans and Mexican Americans sent back to Mexico as a part of federal deportation efforts between 1930 and 1932. Many in this group opted for voluntary repatriation back to Mexico.[147] Interestingly, Mexican nationals from Baja California joined repatriates from California and Arizona and did so by entering the United States. This was the only way to get to Mexico's interior by train, since there was no railroad connecting Baja to the rest of Mexico. This was an arduous task to accomplish in 1931 and 1932, but the U.S Bureau of Immigration supervised this immigrant flow through Nogales and El Paso.

California sent the largest number of repatriates back to Mexico. The Southwestern states accounted for the second largest number, but the Midwestern states

[146] La Prensa, January 17, 1932.
[147] Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), p.121-125.

were the most successful in the removal of Mexican families from the relief rolls.[148] The well-worn rationale that Mexican and Mexican American workers were a burden to relief assistance and were to blame for mass unemployment had played well in the Southwest and in Southern California. But in the Midwest, the nativist alarm rang strong and was added to the mix to auger fear and push for Mexican repatriation.[149] In East Chicago, Illinois and Gary, Indiana, the executives at Inland Steel and U.S. Steel supported the repatriation process. In 1932, Horace A. Norton, the superintendent of U.S. Steel's Gary plant and the President of the Gary Chamber of Commerce remarked that,

> The kindest thing which could be done for these people would be to send them back to Mexico. They do not assimilate and are unhappy here. They want to go back and Mexico welcomes them. I personally know that no Lake County industrial concern made any effort to get them to come here. The majority just drifted in.[150]

Superintendent Norton denied that U.S. Steel had recruited Mexicans to the Gary plant through labor contractors sent to Mexico.

Chicago railroad executives laid off thousands of Mexican employees. Consequently, the Mexican Consulate in Chicago struggled to arrange for train tickets, food, and gas money for those impoverished Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans hoping for passage to Mexico. La Cruz Azul Mexicana, the Mexican counterpart of the American Red Cross, provided some assistance but it was woefully

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[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Raymond A Mohl and Neil Betten "From discrimination to repatriation: Mexican life in Gary, Indiana during the great depression," Pacific Historical Review 42 (August, 1973): Private papers of F. Arturo Rosales.

inadequate. Due to the harsh winter climate, the problems of transportation and basic provisions for the repatriates were intensified.[151]

In Detroit Michigan, similar attitudes from corporate, local, and civic leaders did not bode well for Mexicans and Mexican Americans. A Michigan social worker described the condition of these people in 1930,

> On October 10, 1931, Mexicans left. It was the Detroit Department of Public Welfare, in cooperation with the Mexican government that made their return possible. The Welfare Department paid their fares to the Mexican border, and the Mexican government undertook to do the rest.[152]

Thousands of Detroit's Mexican residents returned "back to Mexico" as they were fired from their jobs in the steel and automotive industries. As in East Chicago, Gary, and in Chicago proper, Detroit executives endorsed Mexican repatriation. They had forgotten the contributions these workers made during World War I, when they filled jobs in the auto industry created by the military's call to service. Also, Mexican labor was paid substandard wages and they were often used as strikebreakers.

For the thousands of repatriates, a new start in Mexico, and even the vaguest promises of land granted from the Mexican government signaled a second, and perhaps a third chance for prosperity. The return trip, though difficult, was not the biggest obstacle. It was the uncertainty of their future, once they arrived in Mexico. The American writer, Robert N. McLean summed up their situation with melancholy,

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[151] Ibid.
[152] Norman D. Humphrey, "Mexican Repatriation from Michigan Public Assistance in Historical Perspective," Social Service Review 15 (September, 1941): p.498-503.

He goes because of the economic depression. For months he has listened to the patter of people who brought him, assuring him that there would soon be work for everyone. As he has hungered and waited, he has seen municipality after municipality pass ordinances restricting work on public improvements to citizens. He has always known that if he became a citizen, he would still be a Mexican in the eyes of everyone except his own consul, whose help and protection he would immediately lose. He has seen social pressure brought to bear upon corporations to fire Mexicans and hire Americans. Once (he) was needed, and had a welcome; now he gets the cold shoulder everywhere. His heart is sick, and he wants to go home. (H)e is going home drawn by the land hunger in his heart.[153]

[153] Robert N. McLean, "Goodbye, Vicente!," Survey 66 (May, 1931): p.180-185.

CHAPTER 5

THE REPATRIATE EXODUS TO MEXICO

The most efficient method of repatriating Mexicans was via American railways. Secretary of Labor William Doak, a long-time member of the Brotherhood of Railway Men and used his influence with U.S. railroad companies to initiate large repatriation drives using commercial passenger trains. This was especially important from distant embarkation points in the Midwest. Doak's connections with railroad executives facilitated his campaign to send Mexicans back to Mexico in significant numbers. In fact, trains were used throughout the United States to transport individuals and families to the southern border and sometimes into the Mexican nation itself. The process was a sensational one and many newspapers throughout the United States covered the boarding and tearful sendoffs of Mexican American families and Mexican immigrant families who for one reason or another, were compelled to make the return trip. Editors, reporters and other journalists found many examples of painful goodbyes that "tugged at the heartstrings" for some, but for others, the reports of Mexican departures were welcomed and enthusiastically supported. A social worker who was concerned about the fate of the repatriates wrote,

> By chartering special trains, Mexicans were transported to the border at an average cost of fifteen dollars a person. This low price, which includes food, was made by cooperation with railroads. By the end of 1932, 1,500 Mexicans had been sent from Michigan, and lesser numbers went back from other nearby states. Most of these removals were made as voluntary repatriations. In the winter of 1933 it was estimated that $75,000 to $100,000 would have been expended in the removal of several thousand Mexicans under the repatriation plan.[154] Throughout the Midwest, Mexicans left in huge numbers. Nearly 50,000 repatriates were on

[154] Norman D. Humphrey, "Mexican Repatriation from Michigan Public Assistance in Historical Perspective," Social Service Review 15 (September, 1941): p.500-504.

> the move in 1933 from Mexican population centers in Chicago, Illinois; Detroit, Michigan; East Chicago, Indiana and Gary, Indiana. The advantages to travelling by train were many. Fewer incidences mechanical failure and breakdowns compared to automobiles and trucks, and of course, the journey to the border could be accomplished in a matter of days not weeks. The streamlined railroad process cut gasoline, oil and food costs for those who opted to return and for those who had no transportation, the train trek eased fears and apprehension about what could have been an arduous journey.

The Mexican consul in Chicago, Illinois, Rafaél Aveleyra, worked with the *Union de Sociedades de Caridad* (a local association of charity groups) and was able to procure train tickets for those wishing to return. Letters of "free passage" were generated from Aveleyra's consular office so that the repatriates could negotiate connecting train travel within Mexico. Through consular efforts, the *Delegado de Migración de Mexico* (The Migration Delegation of Mexico) helped secure these rail connections to pueblos and villages which reunited repatriates with family, friends and potential employers. Hundreds if not thousands of repatriate travelers took full advantage of these consular efforts, and as a result, the huge human convergence at cities such as El Paso and Nogales reached almost insurmountable proportions. The Mexican government and the Mexican railroad companies were not prepared to handle the thousands of repatriates now waiting at the border. Consequently, the consular offices of Rafaél Aveleyra were instructed by the Mexican government not to distribute anymore free passage letters.

There was also confusion and long waiting lines in the Chicago and Chicagoland area as hundreds waited for the train passes and/or letters of passage from Aveleyra's office. Even when he was prohibited from distributing more passes and letters, the hopeful travelers were encamped at and around the Mexican Consulate offices. For

some, this long wait was the start of a "hardship journey" and as they waited their collective situation only became worse.

The International Institute in Gary, Indiana was also able to obtain free passage for Mexicans who repatriated themselves voluntary.[155] In the summer of 1931, *The International Institute* claimed that hundreds of repatriates had already left Gary, Indiana in trucks, cars, and some even on foot,

> …a goodly proportion of those remaining in Gary would return to Mexico if it were financially possible…many who have no savings and have no work or prospects of any, are very anxious to leave before another winter sets in.[156]

The *Institute* further noted that because there were so many people traveling, the trucks were "standing room only." The organization mentioned that because of the overcrowding in one of the many trucks, a traveler was squeezed out, fell to his death. This fatal accident occurred before the vehicle made it to the border. After that, the *Institute* focused on obtaining free train transportation from the *Council of Social Agencies* in Gary, Indiana.[157]

In Gary Indiana, a community-wide repatriation program was founded by several organizations that included businessmen, who wanted lower tax rates, city and town officials who hoped to lower the costs of relief, nativists who wanted to rid the region of Mexicans, and the membership of the International Institute who along with their Mexican and Mexican American client base, envisioned new economic opportunities in

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[155] Raymond A Mohl and Neil Betten "From discrimination to repatriation: Mexican life in Gary, Indiana during the great depression," Pacific Historical Review 42 (August, 1973): Private papers of F. Arturo Rosales.
[156] Ibid., p.379-382.
[157] Ibid.

Mexico. However, by the end of 1932, private funding sources for the repatriation effort were effectively depleted. In spite of this funding shortfall, business leaders, civic organizations, working class professionals, and rich citizens of Gary, Indiana came up with a plan to continue the repatriation process,

> In May, 1932, Calumet township trustee Mary Grace Wells (whose office had responsibility for public assistance), announced a plan to transport all of Gary's remaining unemployed Mexicans back to Mexico. Based on similar practices elsewhere, the Wells plan urged local business to provide her near-bankrupt office with repatriation funds. In turn, the business interests would be reimbursed with "scrip" which they could use to pay local taxes with. Businesses would lose nothing, and as Wells pointed out, 'it will mean a great savings to the township.'[158]

Due to the success of the Wells Plan, the *International Institute* was able to distribute more letters of free passage to repatriates. So many that Consul Aveleyra begged Mary Wells to curtail her repatriation funding activities until the bottleneck-crisis at the border could be alleviated.[159]

Indeed, the disorder at the border created a deteriorating and deepening situation in Ciudad Juárez and other urban centers. Ciudad Juárez became the largest and most active repatriation depot and *The New York Times* reported in 1931 that, "twenty-six Mexicans died in Ciudad Juárez from pneumonia and exposure and many tragic accounts have reached here regarding the condition of the repatriate groups." Stories of repatriate abuse and apathy began to circulate. Temporary housing for male and female repatriates was often nothing more than livestock corrals without roofing. When the rains came, often thousands of people were herded into warehouses and/or custom houses. *The*

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[158] Ibid.
[159] Rafael Alveleyra to Mary Grace Wells, Calumet Township Trustee, Lake County, Indiana, June 9, 1932 AHSRE, Private papers of F. Arturo Rosales.

Survey, a left-leaning social justice and welfare magazine, described women who were warehoused and felt lucky to have shelter and were able to gather individual beans off the floor that had fallen from stored sacks.[160]

The sheer numbers of repatriates milling about at border depots prompted Mexican consular officials like Rafaél Alveleyra to complain about "well-meaning" civic leaders like Mary Grace Wells. Mexican consular officials surmised that nativism was the guiding philosophy behind many regional repatriation programs. Therefore, Mexicans were repatriated, not because they were public charges, but because they were Mexicans. Perhaps the eagerness demonstrated by business and community leaders in Gary, Indiana provided all the proof needed to Mexican officials that nativism was indeed the root core behind the repatriations. The *Gary Post-Tribune* reported that,

> Repatriation advocates raised transportation money through a "stag party" featuring gambling and other attractions. The Knights of Columbus provided facilities for the occasion. Housewives and others who might object to all the men in town devoting a part of this night to community uplift, will be urged to make the sacrifice as a civic and patriotic duty, and proceeds will go to a worthy cause that of unofficially deporting Mexicans from Gary, to reduce the amount of relief for the poor.[161]

Other Midwestern cities, such as East Chicago, Indiana and Detroit, Michigan witnessed the success of Gary, Indiana and began repatriation programs of their own. Community and business leaders in East Chicago, were quick studies to Gary's repatriation program. In short order, thousands of East Chicago's Mexican population

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[160] Raymond A Mohl and Neil Betten "From discrimination to repatriation: Mexican life in Gary, Indiana during the great depression," Pacific Historical Review 42 (August, 1973): Private papers of F. Arturo Rosales.

[161] Rafael Alveleyra to Mary Grace Wells, Calumet Township Trustee, Lake County, Indiana, June 9, 1932 AHSRE, Private papers of F. Arturo Rosales.

boarded trains to Mexico.[162] In Detroit, the famous Mexican muralist/artist, Diego Rivera was working on commissioned pieces paid for by the Detroit Art Institute. Sympathetic to his compatriots'' misfortune, he advised them to "go home."[163] Rivera made his announcement in several area newspapers that was his ardent desire that all Mexicans in Detroit return to "Mexico Lindo." Rivera founded the *League of Workers and Peasants of Mexico*, whose mission it was to organize and financially assist Mexicans in the Detroit area.[164] The world renowned artist contributed at least $700 of his own money to pay for repatriate train passage back to Mexico. In addition, The *League of Workers and Peasants of Mexico* worked to secure funding of the repatriate settlement colony at the Hacienda de la Burga near Zihuatanejo in Guerrero, Mexico. *The League of Workers and Peasants* purchased agricultural tools and other supplies to begin their new lives as colonists and settlers.[165] The *League of Workers and Peasants* claimed success in their repatriation efforts and insisted that their efforts did not portray the repatriates as "job steelers and/or scapegoats for the Depression.

The mass exodus went through Texas. Caravans crossed into Mexico at border stations and depots located in Del Rio, McAllen, Eagle Pass, Brownsville, Laredo, and El Paso. The repatriates streamed into the Mexican border towns of Villa Acuña, Reynosa, Piedras Negras, Matamoros, Nuevo Laredo, and Ciudad Juárez. Deaths, illness, and crowded living spaces plagued the repatriates at these unprepared borders stations and thousands flooded into the border cities looking for food and shelter. The 1932 Karnes

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[162] Francisco A. Rosales and Daniel T. Simon, "Mexican Immigrant Experience: East Chicago, Indiana, 1919-1945," Indiana Magazine of History, 77 (December, 1981): p.345-347.

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[164] Ibid.

[165] Mercedes Carreras de Velasco, *Los Mexicanos que devolvió a la crises, 1929-1932* (Mexico City: Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, 1974), p. 65-70.

City caravan that made their way toward Laredo, Texas, became infamously known as one of the most onerous and difficult treks en route to Mexico. That particular port of entry had never experienced such a vast movement of people through its city and through its international gates.[166]

Although exact numbers are difficult to ascertain, Mercedes Carreras de Velasco estimated that perhaps as many as 800 families or 4,000 individuals were a part of the Karnes City southward caravan. This mass movement of repatriates was a direct result of the deepening economic conditions in South Texas. The spiraling downturn in cotton prices brought lay-offs and firings to Mexican and Mexican American workers. Without any other available employment opportunities, the thousands of affected unemployed workers and their families believed their only course of action would be to walk to Mexico (a two-hundred and fifty mile journey). News of the Karnes City caravan reached the Mexican Consul in San Antonio, Texas, Eduardo Hernández Cházaro.

Consul Hernández Cházaro relayed several dispatches to the Mexican authorities and asked them to provide urgent assistance to the Karnes City caravan, which was limping and struggling toward Nuevo Laredo. However, the Mexican government's policy denied financial assistance until the repatriate caravan reached the Mexican border. Hernández Cházaro quickly pled for emergency financial assistance within the community. Part of this effort was his call for citizens to donate their cars and trucks in order to transport repatriates to Laredo/Nuevo Laredo.[167]

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[166] Ibid., p.95-103.
[167] Ibid., p.95-103.

The *Comisión Honorífica* adopted Hernández Cházaro's call for transportation assistance in Donna, Texas. In a remarkable gesture, the executives of the Laredo Bridge Company allowed the caravan to cross over the international bridge to Nuevo Laredo, free of charge. By this time, the Karnes City caravan had become the largest collection of vehicles used for the purposes of repatriation. The Karnes City caravan took over two months to reach its destination. Among the tragedies that occurred, was the death of a man who was killed while changing a truck tire. The truck collapsed on him. His burial service in Hebronville, Texas, was attended by hundreds of Karnes City caravan members. On a more positive note, five babies were delivered by midwives along the way, in three Texas towns.[168]

On October 28, 1931, the caravan arrived in Laredo, Texas. Throughout that afternoon, trucks, tractors, trailers, and automobiles crowded with repatriates, made their way into the border city. The repatriates exited the vehicles provided by volunteers on the American side. Along with their suitcases and bundles of clothing, some had kitchen utensils and agricultural tools. R. Reynolds McKay wrote,

> Volunteers moved among the returning Mexicans with water and food for adults, and milk for the babies. All appeared weary and exhausted from their 250 mile trip, from interior Texas… Large sacs of food, designated to provide the self-expatriates for their journey south into interior Mexico… were distributed by citizens here.[169]

After crossing the international bridge into Nuevo Laredo, the Karnes City caravan members entered a city teaming with repatriates from Gary, Indiana, East Chicago, Indiana, Detroit, Michigan, Chicago, Illinois, and many cities in Texas,

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[168] Ibid.
[169] R. Reynolds McKay, "Texas Mexican Repatriation During the Great Depression," p.375-380.

including Bridgeport. These many thousands of people stood in long lines, while Mexican authorities processed them, and arranged connecting train transportation to their villages, cities, and pueblos. Others, who were less fortunate tried to hitchhike in order to make their way back to remote rural communities in the Mexican interior.

Many of these repatriates sought employment in Mexico's nascent irrigation projects under construction in the states of Sonora, Chihuahua, Hidalgo, Durango, Aguascalientes and Coahuila. Interestingly, many were asked to help colonize resettlement "*colonias*" in the hinterlands of Mexico, where few towns or cities existed in Baja California, Guerrero, and Oaxaca. The irrigation projects and the resettlement "*colonias*" were holdovers from the presidency of Álvaro Obregón and his repatriation policies from the early 1920s.[170] These Mexican projects had the potential to employ thousands of Mexican repatriates.

Of course, repatriates also returned from the American states of Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado. Although the number of repatriates was far fewer from these other areas, Mexican people from these states entered Mexico through border crossings in Texas. El Paso, Texas was one of the busiest border crossings regions, but thousands from Arizona and California also returned through Douglas, and Nogales, Arizona, as well as through Agua Prieta and Nogales, Sonora.[171]

Repatriates from Arizona found themselves in Chihuahua, Ciudad Juárez, Sonora, Agua Prieta and Nogales. These people represented all areas of the state, including

[170] Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), p.34-40.
[171] Ibid., p.118-125

Phoenix, Tempe, Tucson, the Salt River Valley and the mining districts of Globe-Miami and Jerome. Those from more expansive regions such as New Mexico and Colorado, entered Mexico at Ciudad Juárez. They came from the mining districts of Silver City, New Mexico, the agricultural communities of southern Colorado, Silverton, Colorado and the urban center of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Newspapers in Mexico reported that the condition of the repatriates crossing into Mexico from Nogales, Agua Prieta, and Ciudad Juárez was deplorable. However, the Mexico City newspaper, *Excelsior* wrote that food was at least distributed to families and individuals as they applied for employment and/or waited for transportation into the Mexican interior. The hunger issue was a predominant, painful and recurring theme that Mexican newspapers reported on almost daily. Destitute caravan members asked for public charity, begged in the streets, and even ate plants in city parks. Although the Mexican government tried to get repatriates to locations where they could most likely find employment, the effects of the world-wide depression had hit Mexico hard, and job opportunities were few and far between. Newspaper articles reported that the situation worsened every day, and as they competed with other Mexican workers for few jobs, the situation would soon became intolerable.[172]

The newspaper *Excelsior* reported that deportations and repatriations were conducted in the most deplorable ways. The reporting alleged that repatriates were imprisoned, beaten and robbed of their personal possessions. In addition, the newspaper claimed that false information was often disseminated to the repatriates about Mexico's

[172] Excelsior, March 24, 1931, Newspaper Articles on Repatriation, Biblioteca Miguel Lerdo de Tejada (BMLT).

"stronger economy," available land, and improved social conditions. *Excelsior* editorialized that roadways, bridges, and other infrastructure south of the frontera were in terrible condition, and in serious need of repairs. These conditions made it very difficult for repatriates who attempted the return trip by truck or automobile. In some Excelsior editions, the reporters and editorial staff even suggested that repatriates turn back.[173]

The Mexican and Mexican American community in Phoenix was almost 45,000 strong. Of this number, almost 6,500 voluntarily returned to Mexico. Local charities were tapped out of financial resources, and this accounted for much of the voluntary repatriation.[174] Most of the Mexicano laborers had once enjoyed agricultural jobs in the Salt River Valley area that surrounds Phoenix. The economic conditions in Phoenix paralleled those that took place in south Texas. The steady decline in cotton prices forced growers in Phoenix and the Salt River Valley to greatly reduce their labor force.

At the time, the southward route from Phoenix and the Salt River Valley through Tucson afforded only three possible paths to the repatriates. They could either travel toward Nogales, Douglas or El Paso, crossing open desert terrain with few stops for water and nourishment. This was an incredible obstacle to those who were traveling on foot. Disorientation played a major role, as the hot, dry environment in both the desert southwest and northern Mexico was often dangerous and perilous. In Chihuahua, Bachimba Canyon was an area where caravans of repatriates often had to leave personal belongings behind, or on the side of the road due to the peril of traversing the canyon.

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[173] Excelsior, April 9, 1931, Newspaper Articles on Repatriation, Biblioteca Miguel Lerdo de Tejada (BMLT).
[174] Cardoso, Mexican Emigration to the United States, p.143-146.

Excelsior reported on April 25, 1931, that the dangerous conditions caused outright madness amongst the travelers.[175] Of course, travelers from the Tucson area traversed the same routes as those from Phoenix, and the Salt River Valley, as they made their way to El Paso, Douglas and Nogales.

Due to the declining demand for copper and other raw materials, Inspiration, Kennecott and Phelps-Dodge laid off thousands of Mexican workers. Those who worked in the mines of Globe and Miami, were essentially forced to Mexico and traveled through miles and miles of mountainous, curved roads, as most of the mining districts are located in elevated regions. The documentary "Los Mineros," produced by The American Experience, for the Public Broadcasting System, depicted Mexican miners who travelled in broken down trucks, loaded down with all their worldly possessions.

Relocated miners from New Mexico and Colorado endured similar situations. They also left due to firings and lay-offs, due to decreased production demands for silver, copper and other raw materials. *Excelsior* reported that these repatriates made their way from Silver City New, Mexico east toward Las Cruces, and then southward toward El Paso/Ciudad Juárez. Those traveling from Albuquerque travelled south from Las Cruces to El Paso.

Mexican workers from the silver mines of Silverton, Colorado, and others who were fired from their jobs in the sugar beet industry in southern Colorado made the journey back through Albuquerque and Las Cruces to El Paso. The seldom travelled

[175] Excelsior, April 15, 1931, Newspaper Articles on Repatriation, Biblioteca Miguel Lerdo de Tejada (BMLT).

roads were hazardous, and the conditions proved very dangerous. Heavy snow and icy roads were often encountered in dilapidated vehicles that had unsafe tires. *Excelsior* also reported that repatriates succumbed from pneumonia or by freezing to death. Of course, many others died in automobile accidents when their vehicles slid off icy roads, or collided with other vehicles.

Some, who planned to enter Mexico through the Arizona routes to Douglas and Nogales, made their way into the interior of northern Mexico along the Pacific coast. If they were lucky enough to make the journey to cities such as Guaymas, Mazatlán and Guadalajara, they might find employment in the tourist industry or continue through to Chihuahua, San Luis Potosí and Monterey. Excelsior began reporting that the arrival of repatriates began causing resentment amongst the general public due to the competition for jobs in the cities of Monterrey, Guadalajara and Chihuahua. Articles to this effect appeared in the April 4, 1931 and April 12, 1931 editions. The April 4 article reported that 200 repatriates had arrived the night before and were given a full-course meal. The repatriates were also reportedly promised jobs in local agricultural industries since the area had experienced surprisingly good profits at that time of year.[176]

U.S. and Mexican train companies were fully at work and in the business of transporting repatriates. The Missouri Pacific, Southern Pacific, St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railroads maintained busy schedules all over the southwest and in northern Mexico. In New Mexico, Colorado and Arizona repatriates were whisked back to Mexico on the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe Railroad lines. The heightened railroad

[176] Ibid., April 4, 1931.

activity began to cause dangerous conditions and congestion on the tracks themselves, especially when the U.S. railway system began to converge on the smaller, less maintained Mexican train system.[177]

However, the most sensational repatriation stories came from the California region. On April 25, 1931, Excelsior reported that, "the pendulum of migration which took Mexicans northward during the Mexican Revolution, had now swung southward."[178] Furthermore, the Mexican Consul official in Los Angeles, Rafaél de la Colina was quoted as saying that approximately 3,000 families (nearly 15,000 individuals) had asked for assistance from the Consul to repatriate. Unemployment was the major reason they listed for their decision to return to Mexico. As the end of April 1931 approached, over 35,000 had left southern California for the return trip to Mexico and in the four prior to this staggering number, an additional 5000 individual had also made the decision to voluntarily repatriate themselves "back to Mexico."

Excelsior also reported on the many fund drives launched to aid the repatriates on their exodus. Several articles appeared that expressed the need for between $10,000 and $20,000 in donations (quite a hefty sum to ask for during the initial throws of the Depression!)[179] Toward the end of April 1931, approximately 1,150 people left Los Angeles for Tucson and on through to Tucson. They took advantage of almost $18,000 in donations that had been collected for the repatriate cause. Secretary of Labor William Doak and Charles Visel had succeeded in their efforts to rid the nation of thousands of

[177] Ibid., 12.
[178] Cardoso, p.14-20.
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Mexican immigrants through scare tactics, American unemployment concerns, nativism and threats of deportation hearings.

Thousands of other agricultural workers from California's rural areas such as the Imperial Valley and the San Joaquin Valley also left for, "a better life" in Mexico. The reasons were the same, the downturns in agricultural production that befell Mexican laborers in the Texas cotton industry and in the mining districts of the greater southwest. Caravans formed from all reaches of California as hundreds departed for "la patria." The entry points through Mexicali and Tijuana experienced heavy traffic as did the crossings at Douglas and Nogales, Arizona and the saturated border cities of El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. As they arrived in Mexico, the repatriate population had resettled from almost all parts of the United States (the Midwest, Southwest and California). They then began their search for employment opportunities and renewed connection with family members. However, the mass movement of conationals presented vast and immense political challenges for the Mexican government. Resettlement colonies and integration of repatriates into the lackluster Mexican economy became priorities for President Abelardo Rodríguez, his inner circle, and his administration.

CHAPTER 6

PRESIDENT ABELARDO L. RODRÍGUEZ AND THE REPATRIATION COMMMITTEE

The repatriation drives reached their highest levels in 1931 and 1932.[180] According to Mexican government statistics (*El Departamento de la Economía Nacionál*), from 1930 to 1935, 345,839 Mexicans were sent back to Mexico from the United States. President Rodríguez and his interim government encountered many challenges, as the government attempted to bring the repatriates back to their villages and pueblos in Mexico. However, the most difficult issue was how to reintegrate these workers and their families into the Mexican economy. In 1931, former President Pasqual Ortíz Rubio stated that it was not the federal government's responsibility to find work for the repatriates. Ortíz Rubio's position was that it was local government's responsibility to find work for these people. Further, Ortíz Rubio stated that the federal government's responsibility ended with the transportation of the repatriates to their cities and towns.[181]

General Abelardo Rodríguez took power from Ortíz Rubio in 1932, and initially hoped to follow his predecessor's position on the repatriate issue. However, by this time, thousands of repatriates were streaming back to Mexico, and the Rodríguez administration faced tremendous pressure. Rodriguez, himself a provisional governor of Baja California, expected that the governors of Mexican states, as well as private organizations and influential private citizens, would help the government address the

[180] John S. Little, U.S. Vice-Consul to U.S. Department of State, March 12, 1935, National Archives (NA), Record Group (RG) 59, File 311.1215/76.
[181] Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), p.148-155.

repatriation issue.[182] Also during that year, the former anarchist Enrique Flores Magón communicated to President Rodríguez that he would be willing to participate on a committee (a "congress") to discuss general repatriation issues. In his communication to President Rodríguez, Flores Magón included a newspaper article describing the tragic tale of return to Mexico by Macario Reyes, his wife and five children. The Reyes family was abandoned in the Mountains of San Luis Potosí by an angry bus driver, because Macario had no more money to pay him for the trip. Before the family was able to walk out of the mountain pass, one of the small children died from exposure.[183]

By 1932, the Mexican press had turned highly critical of the government's handling of the repatriation issue. The press criticized the government's failure to provide transportation for the repatriates, and their failure to resettle them. Of course, Mexico experienced the same economic downturns of the world-wide Great Depression, which severely limited its ability to deal with the returning repatriates' unemployment and their housing needs. The leading newspapers in Mexico, including *Excelsior* and *Universal* frequently published negative articles regarding the deplorable condition of repatriates in Mexico, as well as the condition of Mexicans in the United States. The print media often condemned the government's inaction, and challenged Rodríguez to initiate more effective programs and pressured him to take charge of the situation.[184]

President Rodríguez and his administration received hundreds of letters from destitute immigrants in the United States, and all over the world, asking for financial

[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid.

assistance in order to repatriate. The repatriates requested employment, railroad and/or airline fare, and any available land. In one such letter, the Zamarripa family asked President Rodríguez for travel funding due to the racist attitudes they experienced in Illinois. A more elaborate request came from an El Paso married couple who wanted the government to provide them with not only a tract of land, but a "small, but comfortable house."[185]

Both President Rodríguez and President Hoover struggled with the severity of the economic downturns brought on by the world-wide Depression. In Mexico, Presidents E. Portes Gil (1928-1930) and Pasqual Ortiz Rubio (1930-1932) found the crisis too insurmountable to initiate any real results. When President Rodríguez assumed power, he (like Hoover) hoped that the private sector would assist the government to deal with the many and varied issues that confronted the government. In Washington D.C., President Hoover,

> (Hoover) called for an expansion of state and local relief programs, and urged all who could afford to give more to charity… Hoover rejected classical economics. Indeed, many laissez-faire theorists attacked his handling of the Depression… Numbers of "liberal" economists, on the other hand, praised the Hoover program… Hoover resisted proposals to shift responsibility from state and local agencies to the federal government, despite the fact - soon obvious - that the lesser governmental bodies lacked the resources to cope with the emergency, … Unfortunately the Depression was drying up the sources of private charities, just as the demands on these organizations were expanding. State and municipal agencies were swamped at a time when their capacities to tax and borrow were shrinking… (Hoover) set up a committee to coordinate local relief agencies, but insisted on preserving what he called 'the principal of individual and local

[185] Alma S. Eulalia to President Rodríguez, January 1932, Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), file 244.1/15.

> responsibility'… for the federal government to take over relief would 'lead to the super-state and real liberty would be lost.'[186]

Hoover's committee, the President's Emergency Committee for Employment (P.E.C.E.), was formed in the fall of 1930 when unemployment was only at 11 per cent. The objective of P.E.C.E was to rally charitable organizations to greater action and asked Hoover and Congress to increase spending for public works. However, in 1931, P.E.C.E. was replaced by another commission-type entity called POUR (The President's Organization on Unemployment Relief). Some progress was made in expanding, improving and coordinating relief efforts, but unemployment continued to rise. Hoover had signed a public works initiative, The Wagner-Graham Stabilization Act, and funding did begin to trickle down. Yet, the Act never received the sizeable appropriations needed for a complete attack on the unemployment numbers. By 1931, the Congress was still adverse to federal relief of any kind and even the National Council of Social Workers refused to endorse federal relief principles. President Hoover held firm to his economic policy and to the concept of a balanced budget and Congress almost passed a national sales tax. As the Depression continued, Hoover slowly changed his mind and argued for higher excise taxes on luxury goods and higher income taxes on the rich. Hoover also claimed that increased estate taxes were crucial for an economic recovery and resultant, Revenue Act of 1932 included most of Hoover's "reforms."[187]

In frequent conversations with the late Professor F. Arturo Rosales, he commented that President Rodríguez (and his two presidential predecessors) might have

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[186] John A. Garrity, *The American Nation: A History of the United States Since 1965*, (NY: Harper and Row, 1983), p. 650-651.
[187] Henry F. Graff, *The President's A Reference History*, (New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1996), p. 421.

emulated Hoover's policies as they turned to local and regional leaders (governors) and to the private sector for help with the repatriate situation. Further, Hoover's creation of the P.E.C.E and the POUR predated the formation of the National Repatriation Committee (El Comité de Repatriación) and La Campaña de Medio Millón (The Half-Million Peso Drive). Professor Rosales often speculated that Rodríguez and his inner circle may have watched the American president very closely as they contemplated these two quasi-governmental agencies.

Primarily, the Comité de Repatriación was organized as a way to re-settle repatriates from the United States. La Campaña de Medio Millón was established as a fundraising arm under the Comité's supervision. The conceptual framework was that both entities would work together to establish two colonies in the Mexican states of Oaxaca (Pinotepa Nacional) and Guerrero (El Coloso) self-sustaining, agricultural communities. The Comité and The Campaña presented their aims and objectives as a part of a national campaign to assist repatriates, but also wanted to deflect mounting criticism pointed directly against President Rodríguez and his inner circle. The Mexican press and political opponents used the repatriation issue to attack the Rodríguez presidency. As the Comité and La Campaña rolled out to accomplish their important work, critics thought the project was too ambitious and could never really provide employment for the thousands of repatriates that had now arrived in Mexico.

Professor Rosales stood by his analysis that the two entities were essentially illusory. The founding of the Comité and the fundraising efforts of La Campaña (for the purposes of establishing the resettlement colonies) for a while pacified the press and

labor leaders who envisioned only lackluster results. The first order of business was to find solutions to the border transportation crisis. Theoretically, collected funds would be used to alleviate the repatriate congestion in cities such as Ciudad Juárez and Nuevo Laredo. Mexican trains would take repatriates to the new resettlement colonies constructed in the interior provinces of Mexico. Unfortunately, though was not a smooth process, but it did help repair the administration's image, if only in terms of laudatory rhetoric.

Even the governors of the Mexican states began to exert pressure on the Rodríguez government. Concerned about the "bottlenecks" in border cities, the scant progress made by the federal government allowed Rodríguez and his administration to claim minor logistical victories as some repatriates made it out. Additionally, the government could claim that government funds were not used to alleviate the border crisis since transportation expenses and the resettlement colonies themselves were taken care of through the Comité and La Campaña.

The newspaper, *El Universal* reported on November 24, 1932, that the National Repatriation Committee formed as a result of a meeting held at the Ministry of the Interior (Secretaría de Gobernación) on the previous day, November 23, 1932.[188] On January 9, 1933, President Rodriguez met with the "directors" of the Comité, "held a lively discussion and expressed a keen interest in the Committee's work and made a personal donation of 5,000 pesos to the Chairman of the Comité Federico de la Chica (see photo in Addendum). President Rodríguez hoped to keep a close watch on the Comité's

[188] James B. Stewart, American Consul General to U. S. Department of State, May 9, 1939, NA, RG 59, 311.1215/124.

progress, so two government officials were appointed to the Committee, but "acting in a private capacity." These two individuals were Jorge Ferretis, who was the Secretary General, and Andrés Landa y Piña, who was Director of the Bureau of Immigration. Other members included influential leaders from the private sector. Fernando Sordo represented the Spanish Chamber of Commerce, Luís Ludert y Rul and Alfredo Levy represented the National Chamber of Commerce. Other important members of the Comité were Spanish Industrialist, José González Soto, and Juan B. Amezcua, who was Secretary General of the Beneficencia Pública (Public Charities).

> All of the members of the Comité received this statement from Presidente Rodríguez, I hope that all the authorities and inhabitants of the country will give an example of unity and patriotism, and cooperate with the National Repatriation Committee.

The Comité collected funds from private individuals, industrialists, corporations, newspaper organizations, politicians, diplomats, theater directors, actors, singers, musicians, and government workers. The great Spanish cellist Pablo Cassals performed at the Mexico City Teatro Arbeu as well as the innovative classical Spanish guitarist, Andrés Segovia. Both concerts were advertised that "proceeds would go to the Comité de Repatriación and the Campaña de Medio Millón.[189]

In just six months, the Comité de Repatriación boosted the collection of 250,000 pesos for construction of the two resettlement colonies.[190] Camile Guerin-Gonzalez noted the following,

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[189] March 17, 1933, AGN, file 244.1/15.
[190] Camile Guerin-Gonzalez, "Cycles of Immigration and Repatriation: Mexican Farm Workers in California Industrial Agriculture, 1900-1940," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Riverside), December 1985.

> The land in the two locations was fertile and the water, plentiful. A small group of repatriates from Detroit comprised the first colonists in the program. They settled at Hacienda El Coloso, Acapulco on December 1933, forming a small experimental colony. A larger number of repatriates settled at Pinotepa, Oaxaca. By the end of 1933, 800 repatriates lived at Pinotepa.[191]

José González Soto, the Spanish industrialist and member of the Comité de Repatriación remarked on the benefits of establishing resettlement colonies on coastal lands, especially in the states of Oaxaca and Guerrero.[192] Perhaps González Soto foresaw the great potential of both of these areas that were virtually untouched and undeveloped. He stated publicly that other members of the Comité also saw the tremendous potential of the two areas. The Comité as a whole expected that the Pinotepa colony might accommodate at least 500,000 repatriates.[193]

The Comité planned to sell land to each family on a long-term repayment basis, give them tools, farm machinery, oil, gas, soap, and at the beginning of their stay, food provisions. The Comité would also provide each family three cartons of cigarettes and 1 peso each week. The Comité had spent a large part of its funds on the establishment of the Pinotepa colony, and consequently had few funds to establish other colony.[194]

The repatriates who settled at Pinotepa Nacional, told that all types of crops could be grown at that location. Corn, beans, rice, vegetables and ajonjolí (sesame) proved to be staple crops.[195] The native Indians and blacks who lived there easily cultivated

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[191] Ibid., p.156.
[192] Dwyre to U.S. Department of State, November 29, 1932, NA, RG59, 311.1215/36.
[193] Camile Guerin-Gonzalez, "Cycles of Immigration and Repatriation: Mexican Farm Workers in California Industrial Agriculture, 1900-1940," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Riverside), December 1985, p.156-158.
[194] Ibid.
[195] James C. Gilbert, "A Field Study in Mexico of the Mexican Repatriation Movement, (M.A.Thesis), University of Southern California," May 1934, p.106-110.

bananas, pineapples, mangos and watermelons and other vegetables.[196] However, the newly arrived repatriates, the majority who were from West Central Mexico (via their recent stays in the United States) were not used to a tropical environment. An important repatriation study was conducted by a sociology graduate student at the University of Southern California. James C. Gilbert turned his field work among the repatriates in Mexico into his 1934 Master's thesis. His is a contemporary record with insightful, personal observations.

> Many people died and others left. Sixty people died in twenty days. The insects, disease, and poisonous snakes are very bad there. Lots of paludismo (malaria). Most of the people in the colony got it (contracted the disease)… There was another very bad disease called vómito prieto (black vomitus).[197]

James Gilbert's study included interviews directly from repatriates. However, in his section on the Pinotepa colony (Chapter V, Failure and Success in Colonization), he quoted Dr. Manuel Gamio,

> The trouble is that the repatriados are scattered about throughout all the population. They are not kept together in groups and (have no) opportunities provided for them to use what they know. When they go back among the people of the towns and villages, where there is a somewhat lower level of living than that which they were used to in the United States, they gradually drop back into the old ways and habits.[198]

One of Gilbert's repatriate's interviews spelled out some of the problems at Pinotepa,

> The trouble is that while many of the repatriates know how to work in agriculture, they don't have enough help to get started… They show them the land and say; 'Here is land. You know how to work, so go ahead.' But naturally they go back into the towns where they can get something to eat. Even if they did have tools

[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid.

> and seeds, they would have enough to last them until the first harvest. With practically no money, just land alone isn't enough. Many that come here don't have any other place to go. They don't have any idea of where they are going, or what they'll do. Some families just stayed down at the railway station. What they ought to do for the repatriados who go out to the country, is to give them implements, tools, seeds and food to last them for a year or so.[199]

On page 105 of Gilbert's thesis, he stated that, "(T)he principal objection to this method of providing for repatriados adjustments is, of course, the financial one, for a very large outlay would be needed to care for an appreciable percentage of the numbers arriving. The experiment was made, however, preceded by a nationwide campaign to raise a fund of half a million pesos for the work."[200] Also on page 105, Gilbert claimed he recorded an interview he conducted, "With the president of the Comité de Repatriación in Mexico City, on August 30, 1933,

> The campaign to raise the five hundred thousand pesos which was started late in 1932, and the establishment and supervision of the repatriados colonies was taken in charge by the Comité Nacional de Repatriación, a body which, theoretically, at least, was entirely independent of the government, although the chief of the Departamento de Migración appears to have taken an active part. By the summer of 1933, approximately half of the above mentioned sum had been collected, and two colonies had been started.[201]

At Pinotepa Nacional, insect infestation was a tremendous problem. The colonists were afraid to venture out at night without covering themselves completely and wearing hair nets on their faces and heads. Pinolillo was the name of one of the insects found at the Pinotepa colony. These insects were microbial and made the repatriates itch. The jejens were small black flies with a ferocious bite, while the nihuas ate there way under the repatriates finger nails.[202] At El Coloso colony in Guerrero, the climate was

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[199] Ibid.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.

similar and insect infestation, poisonous snakes, and the constant threat of disease was as treacherous as at Pinotepa Nacional.[203]

In total, the Comité Nacional de Repatriación spent about forty-thousand pesos on farm tools, machinery and tractors for the Pinotepa colony. Fifteen-thousand pesos more was spent on mules and draft animals. The colonists were instructed to clear the tropical landscape using only axes and machetes, while the government organizers worked to install water pumps for irrigation for the crops, and showers for personal hygiene. On a cultural note, the Comité built an open air theater for the colonists to enjoy various performances such as concerts and dances.[204] In a bow to American sports, many of the colonists had learned and played baseball, while living in America, and in short order, a baseball field was added.[205]

Although less developed than the colony at Pinotepa Nacional, the facility at El Coloso colony was also begun in 1932. El Coloso was much smaller and dwelling units had yet to be constructed by the summer of 1933. Some of the same facilities were contemplated for El Coloso, such as water pumps for irrigation, and indoor plumbing for showers. A great advantage to the El Coloso colony was its proximity to the port city of Acapulco, located thirty-five kilometers away. Pinotepa Nacional was located several hundred kilometers south of Acapulco, and located in a remote and less populated area, which made it far less accessible. In the final analysis, neither of these two locations was

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[203] Ibid.
[204] Camile Guerin-Gonzalez, "Cycles of Immigration and Repatriation: Mexican Farm Workers in California Industrial Agriculture, 1900-1940," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Riverside), December 1985, p.157.
[205] Mercedes Carreras de Velasco, *"Los Mexicanos Que Devolvió La Crises: 1929-1932* (Tlatelolco, Mexico, D.F.: Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, 1974).

well suited for colonization, because of the difficult environmental challenges.[206] The combination of the tropical climate, along with disease, insect infestation, and vermin made daily life intolerable. Allegations of abuse by government workers/overseers compelled many settlers to desert Pinotepa Nacional and El Coloso. By May 25, 1934, it was reported that both resettlement colonies were failures (fracasos) and were abandoned.[207]

> The repatriates (colonists) complained particularly about the directors of the Pinotepa Nacional colony, where life had become unbearable since last October for the reason that, on the pretext of imposing discipline, which was unnecessary, the government directors/overseer were accompanied by six armed individuals who insulted and threatened the colonists. They (the colonists) were threatened with severe punishment in the event of any disobedience. Subsequently, all of the colonists decided to abandon the colony and make the arduous twenty-three day journey on foot to Acapulco.[208]

In a special newspaper exposé from Pinotepa, the resettlement colony there no longer existed. Of the five hundred to eight hundred people who founded Pinotepa Nacional, only eight settlers and fifteen overseers remained.[209] According to former colony members at El Coloso, that resettlement colony was also abandoned for many of the same reasons as Pinotepa Nacional.[210]

The failure of the two resettlement colonies was also attributed to the actions of government workers. Their disciplinary policies were inhumane and arbitrary. They

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[206] James C. Gilbert, "A Field Study in Mexico of the Mexican Repatriation Movement, (M.A.Thesis), University of Southern California," May 1934, p.104-110.
[207] Thomas D. Bowman, American Consul General to U.S. Department of State, Division of Mexican Affairs, May 29, 1934, National Archive (NA), Record Group (RG) 59, 311.1215/61.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Thomas D. Bowman, American Consul General to U.S. Department of State, Division of Mexican Affairs, March 2, 1934, National Archive (NA), Record Group (RG) 59, 311.1215/50.
[210] Thomas D. Bowman, American Consul General to U.S. Department of State, Division of Mexican Affairs, May 29, 1934, National Archive (NA), Record Group (RG) 59, 311.1215/61.

gave the colonists only starvation rations and exploited them in hopes of gaining governmental rank promotions and advancement. The forced starvation weaponized the food distribution, and intensified the already tragic conditions for the settlers. In one instance, rather than feeding the settlers, an entire corn crop was used by government administrators to feed their pet pigs.[211] When news and reports of the failure of Pinotepa Nacional and El Coloso reached the Comité de Repatriación, dissension and anger broke out amongst its members. Soon the committee members were mired in mistrust and accused each other of malfeasance, which split the Committee into small factionalized groups.[212]

In order to bring about a semblance of leadership and control over the fracture, President Rodríguez announced on January 14, 1934, that the Ministry of Interior, as well as the Ministry of Agriculture and Development, along with their sub agencies, the offices of Rural Population, and National Lands and Colonization would take over the Comité and the Pinotepa Nacional and El Coloso colonies. President Rodríguez expressed regret for the dissension between committee members, and admitted to his own failure in the administration of the colonies. However, President Rodríguez stridently accused the Comité of "betraying the Mexican people" and their failure to help the repatriates. Any and all funds that remained with the Comité de Repatriación were turned over to the aforementioned government agencies.

[211] La Opinion, June 10, 1934, Newspaper Articles on Repatriation, BMLT.
[212] Thomas D. Bowman, American Consul General to U.S. Department of State, Division of Mexican Affairs, June 15, 1934, National Archive (NA), Record Group (RG) 59, 311.1215/63.

On July 26, 1934, the Mexico City press published the formal dissolution of the Comité de Repatriación.[213] The official decree issued by the President of the Republic formally ended the National Repatriation Committee and La Campaña de Medio Millión. The official actions by President Rodríguez, compelled many members of the Comité to express their dissatisfaction with the Committee's money management ostensibly raised for the betterment of the colonists. Accusations were leveled as directors of Pinotepa Nacional and El Coloso were accused of money laundering and steeling (and reselling) of farm implements, vehicles, draft animals, and even medicine. The press also had many questions about the allocation of the Comité's funds.[214]

The dissolution of the Comité occurred before other planned resettlement colonies were constructed. A third colony was contemplated at Santo Domingo near Magdalena Bay in Baja California Del Sur. The Santo Domingo colony was to serve 1,800 colonists when completed. Other colonies were planned for Cóbano, Colima and Canton de Autlan, Jalisco which were located on Mexico's west coast, and near San Andrés Tuxtla, Veracruz located on the east coast.[215] Additionally, there were other planned resettlement colonies that the Comité envisioned for repatriates, colonists and settlers.

First, in the 1920s, the Mexican government had established the National Irrigation Commission which led to the creation of the resettlement colonies within irrigation projects. This gave Mexican laborers, including repatriates, job opportunities in both hydraulic projects and agricultural work. Second, President Rodríguez

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[213] Thomas D. Bowman, American Consul General to U.S. Department of State, Division of Mexican Affairs, July 27, 1934, National Archive (NA), Record Group (RG) 59, 311.1215/71.
[214] La Prensa, February 10, 1934, Newspaper Articles on Repatriation, BMLT.
[215] Dwyre to U.S. Department of State, May 26, 1933, NA, RG 59, 311.1215/45.

envisioned smaller scale resettlement colonies throughout Mexico, which would support smaller numbers of families. Third, President Rodríguez hoped state governments would also set aside land for resettlement communities.[216]

In his Master's thesis, James Carl Gilbert mentioned the important Don Martin Irrigation Project in the northern states of Coahuíla and Nuevo León. This project began during the administration of Plutarco Elías Calles in 1926.[217] Calles was president of Mexico from 1924 to 1928. By 1931, thousands of repatriates had been employed as laborers at the Don Martín Irrigation Project.[218] These repatriates developed between 30,000 to 56, 000 hectares of irrigated land, where agricultural crops such as cotton, corn, ajonjolí and melons were grown.[219] These works were settled in the recently constructed town of Ciudad Anáhuac, and two adjacent older cities named Rodríguez and Camarón. These three townships were conveniently located near the Don Martín Project.[220] However the reservoir, directly behind the Don Martín Dam filled to capacity only one year after its completion. This lead to the abandonment of Ciudad Anáhuac and greatly reduced the populations of Rodrígeuz and Camarón. Later, during the administration of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940), the population of Ciudad Anáhuac were relocated to Matamoros, Tamaulipas to work at the Bajo Río Bravo Irrigation Project, along with other repatriates from the United States.[221]

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[216] Guerin-Gonzalez, 156-161.
[217] Carreras de Velasco, 120-125.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Ibid.

Many regional Mexican governors had cooperated with President Rodríguez in helping to establish resettlement colonies, and others only offered parcels of land, but no additional assistance. The regional governments of Michoacán and San Luis Potosí did not take part in resettlement endeavors, but the states of Tabasco, Oaxaca, Hidalgo, Chiapas and Nayarit were among those states who fully participated in resettlement efforts by providing agricultural tools to the repatriates. The regional and municipal governments of these states worked with the Mexican government in the construction of roadways and routes in and out of the resettlement colonies.[222]

In November and December of 1932, the secretary to the governor of Guanajuato, Ramón V. Santayo requested that a former military garrison named Sarabia (which was formerly under the control of the Secretaría de Guerra y Marina), be relinquished to state controlled and accommodate the vast of returning immigrants. Guanajuato had received the largest number if returning repatriates and Secretary Santayo wrote that they needed additional land and facilities.[223] President Rodríguez agreed and sent an immediate dispatch to the governor of Michoacán, Melchor Ortega, that the former military garrison of Sarabia had been transferred to the state, and was now available for the steady flow of repatriates that had come to the area between 1931 and 1932.[224]

In Veracruz, the governor set aside 50,000 hectares of land for repatriate resettlement, and the governor of Puebla, ceded 25,000 hectares. The government of Jalisco donated lands at Atequiza y la Capilla in the town of Chapala. In Guerrero, the

[222] Ibid.
[223] Ramón V. Santayo to Prisident Rodríguez, n.d. (c. November 1932), AGN, File 244/5.
[224] President Rodríguez to Melchor Ortega, December 5, 1932, AGN, File 244/8.

state government provided the Hacienda de la Burga, where thirty families from Detroit, Michigan, settled with funds donated in part, by the Mexican artist Diego Rivera. Other states that gave full cooperation to resettlement efforts with agricultural tools and support included Sonora, Sinaloa and Baja California Del Norte. Other colonies were established at San Jose, in the area of Bacún, Sonora and at the Hacienda del Pigar, Sinaloa. Other resettlement communities were established at San Jacinto near Todos los Santos and at Las Palmas Tiajuana, Baja California. Additionally, a repatriate settlement was constructed at Carlos, Ensenada, Baja California Del Norte.[225]

Smaller resettlement colonies supported by the Mexican government were founded throughout Mexico and demonstrated full cooperation between federal government and states governments. In addition, thousands of returning workers chose to live in towns and cities neighboring the settlements and colonies.

Looking back, the establishment of the National Repatriation Committee, along with La Campaña de Medio Millón were difficult projects to bring to completion. Perhaps the members of the Comité really cared about the fates of the repatriates. While it is true that President Rodríguez and his administration supported the National Repatriation Committee at the onset, when negative publicity and news of incompetent administration and abuses were confirmed, Rodríguez chose to dissolve the Comité. It seems logical, that Rodríguez put an end to the National Repatriation Committee due to the failures at Pinotepa Nacional and El Coloso.

[225] Carreras de Velasco, 115-119.

In reality, Mexico provided very few effective solutions to the large-scale problems created by the massive flow of the repatriates in the early 1930s, stemming from the Great Depression of 1929. The idea of resettlement colonies to resolve the repatriate issue in Mexico became more of a hopeful fantasy than a realistic goal. Between 1931 and 1934, only five percent of repatriates took advantage of the colony resettlements. This low percentage supports the idea that resettlement colonies in Mexico were politically motivated by the members of the Comité. The general public had no real confidence in the lofty goals of the Comité, especially after the national newspapers exposed the "fracasos". The public felt that the Comité became fraught with corruption and incompetence. In the end, the public and the repatriates casted a symbolic "vote of no confidence" regarding El Comité de Repatriación. Indeed, many individual state and local officials in Mexico only paid lip service in their efforts to support the resettlement colonies. As mentioned, the mounting pressure from the repatriates themselves, the highly critical Mexican press, the deaths and tragedies associated with Pinotepa Nacional and El Coloso sounded the Comité's death knell.

Initially, there was much fanfare and favorable media coverage that surrounded the incoming administration of interim President Abelardo Rodríguez. Yet during his two-year term in office, the plight of the repatriates, which included deaths, disease and suffering, seemed to take a secondary role. Indeed the "good press copy" surrounding the famous artist Diego Rivera's efforts to help stranded Mexican workers in Detroit, gave his group of repatriates "priority resettling" at the Hacienda de la Burga. On the coattails of Rivera's efforts, another group of repatriates from Detroit were given "priority status," and were expedited in their resettlement at the El Coloso colony. It followed that

whenever the Mexican media publicized a negative image of the repatriation efforts, the government responded only to that concise and particular situation. The elite, often insensitive and incompetent Comité members were thereby able to keep their comparatively lucrative jobs and political stations amid the general "fracaso."

Perhaps both Presidents Rodríguez and Ortiz Rubio became opposed to substantial federal intervention on the repatriation issue much the same way U.S. President Hoover was ideologically obstinate regarding emergency federal intervention during the Great Depression. Certainly, Presidents Hoover and Rodríguez shared the hope that private citizens, industries, corporations, charities, local and state governments would contribute more time, effort and funding to their respective national crises. The incoming presidencies of Lázaro Cárdenas in Mexico and Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the United States attest to sustained federal efforts and budgets in addressing social problems and economic shortfalls. Lazaro was elected resident of Mexico in 1934, and made another effort at repatriation of immigrants from the United States to Mexico. The Cárdenas administration published a decree on March 12, 1935, that the left over funds from the National Repatriation Committee be applied to colonies under construction in Baja California Del Sur. The Cárdenas decree referenced an earlier provision promulgated on February 6, 1935 which delegated the repatriate resettlement issue to the Ministry of Agriculture and Development; Ministry of Finance and Public Credit;

Ministry of the Interior; National Bank of Agricultural Credit and the National Irrigation Commission.[226]

President Cardenas issued plans for the repatriates and with his plans for agricultural reforms in Mexico.[227]

> Cárdenas expressed a positive and genuine concern for the migrants in the United States. Although his attention was focused on the more familiar issues of oil expropriation, reorganization of the National Revolutionary Party (PNR) and agrarian reforms, Cárdenas was also interested in insuring that Mexican Nationals in the United States were not mistreated or persecuted.

Cardenas viewed Mexico as "Mexico Lindo," a beckoning homeland, and with his ferocious national pride, he launched a significant effort to attract Mexican people back to "La Patria" (the mother country).[228] In fact, Cardenas wanted to bring every Mexican residing in the United States. He believed it was Mexico's responsibility to provide for its own people. He was reinforced by the new President's socialist outlook.

> Unlike previous repatriation movements, this was the first to originate (and find a true home) within the Mexican government. In October 1937, the Mexican Autonomous Department of Publicity and Propaganda announced that Mexico intended to repatriate its citizens, before allowing foreigner to immigrate to Mexico.[229]

In the spring of 1939, the Cardenas administration officially began its revamped repatriation colony named the 18 de Marzo located in the region of Matamoros, Tamaulipas, named after the date when President Cárdenas signed the oil expropriation

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[226] John S. Little, U.S. Vice-Consul to U.S. Department of State, March 12, 1935, National Archives (NA), Record Group (RG) 59, File 311.1215/76.
[227] Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), p.148-155.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid.

decree in 1938 (the nationalization of Mexican oil fields).[230] The decision by Cárdenas to establish the *18 de Marzo* colony was influenced by his encounter with former colony members who abandoned Pinotepa Nacional. Cárdenas was campaigning for the presidency and intercepted the ragged repatriates as they made the twenty-three-day trip to Acapulco. This experience affected the future president so deeply that he paid the transportation of the former colony members with his own money.[231]

When he assumed the presidency in 1934, Cárdenas was aware of the failures of the repatriate settlement colonies at Pinotepa Nacional and El Coloso. He had served in the Rodríguez administration as the Secretary of War. The abject conditions that former colony members endured at Pinotepa Nacional and at El Coloso most likely compelled him to address the repatriate issue in his own administration. Cárdenas was determined to make the 18 de Marzo colony succeed.

The Rodríguez administration had funded the National Irrigation Commission and also had started smaller scale construction throughout Mexico. State governments had also given away public land for the establishment of repatriate colonies. However, the Pinotepa Nacional and El Coloso colonias were privately funded by the Campaña de Medio Million. The 18 de Marzo Cárdenas colony was fully funded by the new Cárdenas administration. In fact, it had been incorporated into the Cárdenas agrarian reform program. More and more, the people of Mexico became preferred government programs

[230] Ibid.
[231] Excelsior, May 26, 1934, Newspaper Articles on Repatriation, Biblioteca Miguel Lerdo de Tejada (BMLT).

for the entirety of the Mexican population, and not just the repatriates. Irrigation projects were generally supported by the Mexican public.[232]

The newspaper *Excelsior* reported on April 23, 1939 that the Cárdenas administration would place nearly twenty thousand Mexican families throughout the Mexican Republic. The ministry of agriculture, the bank of Ejidol Credit worked hard to place repatriate families, but their plans were too expensive to reach fruition. Mexican repatriation had reached its peak from 1930 to 1935, and by the end of the Great Depression, a half-million people had been repatriated back to Mexico from the United States.[233] The repatriation of half a million immigrants to Mexico became one of the largest mass movements in history. The cycle of mass immigration and repatriation completed two cycles during the first half of the twentieth century. Mexican immigration to the United States before World War I, and their migratory patterns paved the way for the first cycle of mass immigration and repatriation during the depression of 1921-1922. Of course, this was a small occurrence compared to the second wave of mass immigration and repatriation that played out after the stock market crash of 1929.

The Mexican government's attempts to establish resettlement colonies (El Coloso and Pinotepa Nacional) failed in 1934, and brought about the end of the Comité Nacional de Repatriación and the Campaña de Medio Millón. By 1939, President Cardenas established the 18 de Marzo colonia that only produced limited successes. By then, repatriation had slowed and the world prepared for a second international conflict.

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[232] Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), p.142-146.
[233] James B. Stewart, American Consul General to U.S. Department of State, May 9, 1939, NA, RG 59, 311.1215/124.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The "Comité de Repatriación," formed in 1932 during the administration of interim President Abelardo Rodríguez, brought together Mexican businessmen and government officials to deal with U.S. repatriations of ethnic Mexicans. The Comité attempted to raise 500,000 pesos (the "Campaña de Medio Million") for the repatriates to cultivate Mexico's hinterlands in agricultural colonies ("*colonias*"). However, the Comité's promised delivery of farm equipment, tools, livestock and guaranteed wages came too slowly for the *repatriados* and they sometimes reacted with threats of violence against the Mexican state. Cloaked in post-revolutionary rhetoric, the Comité did not meet the expectations of the repatriate population (or the highly critical Mexican press) and President Rodríguez dissolved the Comité on June 14, 1934. Arguably, the failure of the Comité de Repatriación helped fuel the presidential campaign of Lázaro Cárdenas, but the brief existence of this semi-official committee (during the most intense period of the U.S. repatriation drives) is a relatively unexplored topic and worthy of greater academic attention.

On November 24, 1932, the leading Mexico City newspaper, *El Universal*, reported the formation of a Mexican National Repatriation Committee (The "Comité Nacional de Repatriación"). According to the article, the Chief of the Mexican Migration Department, Andrés Landa y Piña, presided over a meeting (on November 23, 1932) attended by representatives from the Ministry of the Interior (Secretaria de Gobernacíon), the National Chamber of Commerce (Alfredo Levy), the Confederation of Industrial Organizations, the Red Cross, the Central Department of the Federal District, the Public

Charities (Beneficía Pública) and the American Chamber of Commerce.[234] Landa y Piña believed the problem of "numerous indigent Mexican repatriates from the United States" required the immediate attention of a "national rather than official committee."[235] His suggestion to staff the Comité de Repatriación with government representatives and businessmen from the Mexican industrial and commercial sectors met with unanimous approval. The meeting adjourned with the appointment of a provisional, seven-member "Comité" initially responsible for fund-raising, lunch-room and dormitory construction for repatriate workers and housing for the unemployed *repatriados*.

Throughout the 1920s, the Mexican government brought compatriot workers home in reaction to downturns in the American economy. The U.S. recession of 1920-1921 left thousands of impoverished Mexican laborers stranded in *el norte*. President Álvaro Obregón repatriated 15,000 Mexicans and formed the Department of Repatriation within The Ministry of Foreign Relations. Obregón's administration (1920-1924) displayed a genuine concern for Mexican workers and the Mexican consular offices received increased government funding to assist immigrants in *México de Afuera* (external Mexico). Through consular coalition building with Mexican laborer (*bracero)* communities and "*México de Afuera*," mutual aid societies such as the *Comisiones Honorificas Mexicanos* and the *Brigadas de la Cruz Azul* expanded the protective reach of the Mexican government in the United States.[236] The presidential administration of Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-1928) also committed government resources to the

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[234] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Division of Mexican Affairs. *Formation of Mexican National Repatriation Committee* (December 1932), by John S. Littell, Vice-Consul, American Consulate General, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 311.1215/36. Washington, D.C., 1932.
[235] *El Universal*, 24 November 1932.
[236] Jaime R. Aguila, "Mexican/U.S. Immigration Policy prior to the Great Depression," *Diplomatic History,* 31:2 (2007), 218.

Comisiones and the *Brigadas* as the controversy over unrestricted Mexican immigration in America reached a "new urgency."[237] The *Comisiones* and *Brigadas* promoted Mexican nationalism, provided information regarding visas, identification cards, the immigration process and drafted applications for Mexican government assistance.[238] An unsigned document dated February 15, 1928 titled, "Emigration-Immigration-Repatriation," expressed the concerns of Mexican union leaders regarding the mistreatment of expatriate workers in the United States and called for President Calles to promulgate "an organic law to end emigration of Mexican laborers." The document also described that consular delegations traveled to Mexico City, "and requested Government aid and assistance for the repatriation of groups of Mexican laborers and their families in the United States."[239]

In order to maintain political control after the 1928 assassination of president-elect Obregón, Calles appointed himself as "Jefé Maximo" (his *de facto* reign as "chieftain of the Maximato" lasted from 1928 to 1934). The next three presidents (Emilio Portes Gil, Pasqual Ortiz Rubio and Abelardo Rodríguez) owed their two-year interim administrations to Calles. As American unemployment soared during the first years of the Great Depression, ethnic Mexicans in the United States became the scapegoats of the economic crisis and blamed for the inability of many Americans to find and keep jobs.

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[237] Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans In The Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), 24-30.
[238] Jaime R. Aguila, "Mexican Mutual Aid: The Origin of the *Comisiones Honorificas Mexicanas* and the *Brigadas de la Cruz Azul*." The University of Texas of the Permian Basin.
[239] F. Arturo Rosales, Private Papers on Mexican Repatriation, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

President Herbert Hoover's Secretary of Labor, William Doak eagerly attempted to rid America of foreigners and targeted Mexicans in large cities such as Los Angeles, California and Chicago, Illinois. In 1931, Doak claimed that 400,000 aliens resided in the United States illegally and thousands of Mexicans lost their jobs. Pressured to leave by community authorities, Mexicans and their children (many born in America) returned to Mexico.[240] Abraham Hoffman examined the issue of repatriation with a clear and rational approach.

> There is no argument here…that repatriation for many Mexican immigrants was a traumatic experience or that repatriation could also involve coercion, deportation, exploitation and racism. However, to suggest that these elements in equal parts add up to a clear definition of the repatriation movement is to distort its history. Repatriation was a complicated process composed of many factors and nuances, most of which have been unexplored, neglected, omitted, or oversimplified.[241]

Each of the interim Mexican presidents dealt with growing numbers of repatriates from the United States.[242] However, President Portes Gil amicably discussed the repatriations with American ambassadors (Dwight Morrow and Josephus Daniels) and President Ortiz Rubio allowed repatriates to re-enter Mexico with exemptions from custom duties.[243]

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[240] F. Arturo Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1997), 48-49. Also, Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994) "Entire neighborhoods and communities were destroyed…when county and state agencies, with the blessing of the federal government, organized the mass removal of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans from towns and cities all over the United States" (2) and "U.S. authorities…did not simply "return" Mexicans to their home country, but sent many American citizens into exile in a foreign country" (94).

[241] Abraham Hoffman, "Mexican Repatriation Statistics: Some Suggested Alternatives to Carey McWilliams," *The Western Historical Historical Quarterly,* Vol. 3, No. 4 (Oct., 1972), 391-404.

[242] Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in The Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), 174. According to Hoffman's table, U.S. repatriations from 1929 to 1932 totaled 365, 518 people.

[243] Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal, Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 133.

In 1930, the Mexican Migration Service of the Ministry of the Interior (with Andrés Landa y Piña as the presiding official) began negotiations with the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and scheduled annual conferences regarding the transportation of repatriates, the creation of communal colonies for the returned workers and proposed taxes on Mexican private property to fund the "*colonias*."[244] General Abelardo Rodríguez (a former Secretary of War and Navy) assumed the Mexican presidency in September of 1932 and like his predecessor, "expanded the list of articles repatriates could bring in duty free." [245]

Two months later, the newly formed Comité de Repatriación embarked on a campaign to raise a half million pesos for the establishment of agricultural communal colonies for repatriate farmers (the favored project of Landa de Piña). The Comité (under the provisional leadership of Sr. Federico T. De Lachica) enjoyed enthusiastic support in the Mexican press and after six weeks, collected almost 86,000 pesos that included a private donation of 5,000 pesos from President Rodríguez and over 17,000 pesos from government workers and officials.[246] U.S. State Department officials in Mexico City noted a special bull-fight scheduled with famed *matador* Alberto Balderas and radio announcements on stations XEW and XEB that requested public donations to the

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[244] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Division of Mexican Affairs, *Second National (Mexican) Migration Conference* (February, 1931), by Robert Frazier, Consul General, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 812.55 No. 98, Washington, D.C., 1931. In this report to the American Secretary of State, Frazier recounts the conference meeting held in Mexico City from February 2 through 9, 1931 (topics included: "Repatriation," "Emigration," "Immigration," "Tourist Travel" and "Citizenship of Mexican-born Women"). See also *Excélsior*, 9 February 1931 and 11 February, 1931.

[245] Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal, Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 133.

[246] Abraham Hoffman, "*Unwanted Mexican Americans in The Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939*" (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), 138; Excélsior, 10 January 1933.

Comité.[247] American Vice-Consul, John Littell observed the Comité's enthusiastic reception by the Mexican newspapers.

> The campaign is being kept before the public by almost daily articles, coming from all parts of the country, published in the Mexico City press, and Mexico seems determined to do something in the near future for its repatriates from the United States. It is estimated that over 250,000 persons have been added to the population of Mexico since the beginning of 1929 from this source alone.[248]

President Rodríguez received many letters from influential businessmen, politicos, academics, artists, military men, friends and acquaintances who cheerfully sent their contributions to the Campaña de Medio Million.

However, on February 9, 1933, Vice-Consul Littell filed a "voluntary report" regarding the formation of the "Union of Mexican Repatriates" that urged "all Mexican workers' organizations to work for the suspension of the present repatriation campaign, because the economic problems of the repatriates already in the country have not been solved." Littell also wrote that the "Union" wanted to control the number of repatriates "allowed into Mexico," complained that the 500,000 peso campaign "is being realized too slowly" and called for an accounting of the funds collected by the Comité for the repatriates.[249]

El Universal reported that during a February 3, 1933 meeting with the Comité, the "Union" representatives pressed the Comité to distribute the donated funds to the repatriate population. The Comité members rebuffed the idea as an obstacle to

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[247] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Division of Mexican Affairs, *President of Mexico Aids Progress of Repatriation Fund Campaign* (January, 1933), by John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 311.1215/38, Washington, D.C., 1933.
[248] Ibid.
[249] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Division of Mexican Affairs, "*Union of Mexican Repatriates*" *Requests Suspension of Repatriation Campaign* (February, 1933), by John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 311.1215/39, Washington, D.C., 1933.

"permanent relief" and decided the money was better spent on agricultural communities that developed Mexican rural areas and provided employment for the repatriates.[250] The Comité initially announced that the first colony, "to accommodate six hundred families, is to be established in the State of Guanajuato…during the present month with funds already collected."[251]

On the evening of February 15, 1933 the Comité de Repatriación provided the Mexican press with a statement that addressed the concerns of the "Union of Mexican Repatriates" and the public at large.

> This Committee has received numerous congratulations for its decision to disregard any suggestions which are not made directly by the repatriates concerned and therefore avoiding outside intervention of all sorts. Regarding the idea that repatriation must be suspended, this Committee declares that the phenomenon of repatriation has not been provoked by the will of the nation, nor can it be suspended whether we wish it or not.[252]

The Comité also disclosed that the 500,000 peso repatriation campaign already realized 104,742 pesos (deposited in the Bank of Mexico) with 100,000 pesos dedicated to an agricultural community in the State of Guerrero. In addition, the Comité announced a repatriate work project in the State of San Luis Potosí, with the daily wage set at one peso and free railway fare for five hundred repatriates and their families.[253]

By March of 1933, the total collections of the Comité amounted to 154,062 pesos and the establishment of the *colonias* became its singular goal. Much to the delight of President Rodríguez, a March 17, 1933 benefit concert for the repatriate cause ("A Beneficio de los Repatraidos Mexicanos") featured the famed Spanish classical guitarist,

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[250] El Universal, 4 February 1933 and 9 February 1933.
[251] Ibid.
[252] El Universal, 16 February 1933.
[253] Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), 139.

Andrés Segovia (the guitar master was paid 1,435 pesos for his appearance at the Teatro Arbeu).[254]

Abraham Hoffman noted that the Comité heeded the advice of leading intellectual Manuel Gamio who stated that "skills acquired by the repatriates in the United States were lost to the Mexican economy if the *repatriados* were scattered to all parts of Mexico."[255] The Comité also decided that workers sent to *colonias* located in the Mexican interior removed the repatriates from competition with other Mexicans seeking work (the concern of the "Union of Mexican Repatriates") and the distance from the United States kept them from returning to *el norte*.

In April 1933, the Comité established three *colonias*: Colony Number 1, located at El Coloso, Guerrero remained an "experiment" and was perhaps used as a staging area for repatriates on their way to other *colonias.* [256] Colony Number 2, near Minizo, Oaxaca, (known as "Pinotepa Nacional") with its fertile soil, ample water resources and few inhabitants seemed at the onset, a perfect location. In his April 20, 1933 "voluntary report", American Vice Consul John S. Littell explained that 1000 repatriates and their families came to the Oaxaca *colonia* from Mexico City (400) and El Paso (600). Andrés Landa y Piña traveled with repatriates that left from Guerrero and arrived in Oaxaca on the ship, "Bravo" (provided by the Ministry of War and Marine). Littell further noted that a sanitary brigade awaited the repatriates as well as an engineer corps to demarcate

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[254] F. Arturo Rosales, Private Papers on Mexican Repatriation, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.
[255] Ibid.
[256] Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican American In The Great Depression, Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1974), 140-141. Hoffman claims "A group of about twenty *repatriados* from Detroit, Michigan, had arrived at the site as early as December 1932…" See also, United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Division of Mexican Affairs, "*One Thousand Families of Mexican Repatriates to Form New Oaxaca Colony*" (April, 1933), by John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 311.1215/43, Washington, D.C., 1933. Littell describes the Guerrero site as a "concentration point."

land parcels for farming. Palm tree shelters served as temporary housing units for the repatriates.

El Universal reported on the March 15, 1933 meeting between Anastasio García Toledo (Governor of Oaxaca) and President Abelardo Rodríguez.

> Regarding the colonization of his state, García Toledo stressed the necessity for land allotment to the repatriates that was unencumbered by communal claims. He informed the President of the Republic that his state would offer the Comité land free of all liens and without the prospect of any "agrarian problem," on which it would be possible to raise two crops of corn a year. The Governor stated the people of Oaxaca are willing to lend the repatriates (without charge) oxen, draft animals and cattle while they are raising their first crops.[257]

Littell wrote that Colony 2 "will be a test of truth of the semi-official National Repatriation Committee" and whether repatriates trained in the United States can improve agricultural standards, the industrial production of Mexico and the promotion of its national industries.[258] Colony Number 3, designated for construction at Santo Domingo, near Magdalena Bay, Lower (Baja) California prepared for the arrival of 1800 repatriate farmers and Littell listed other planned *colonias* in Cóbano, Colima; Canton de Autlan, Jalisco (located on Mexico's west coast between Acapulco and Baja California) and a future *colonia* near San Andrés Tuxtla, Veracruz on the Mexican east coast.

The Comité formally established Colony Number 2 in May of 1933. Most of the Comité's funds went toward the Oaxaca *colonia* and it was hoped that Pinotepa would serve as an example of progress and administrative success. In August 1933, the

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[257] Excélsior, 16 March 1933 and 18 March 1933.
[258] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Division of Mexican Affairs, "*One Thousand Families of Mexican Repatriates to Form New Oaxaca Colony*" (April, 1933), by John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 311.1215/43, Washington, D.C., 1933. Also, United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Division of Mexican Affairs, "*Statement of Mexican Minister of the Interior Regarding Repatriates' Colonies*" (May, 1933), By John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 311.1215/45, Washington, D.C., 1933.

Ministry of Interior commended Colony 2 in an inspection report that lauded Pinotepa's Provisional Director, Sr. Andrés Landa y Piña (Chief of the Ministry's Migration Department). However, plans for the construction of a school for the repatriates' children came to abrupt halt when Landa y Piña resigned his positions on November 4, 1933.[259] Vice Consul Littell's report of May 28, 1934 (reviewed by Assistant Secretary of State Sayre) describes the total failure of Colony 1 in Guerrero and Colony 2 in Oaxaca.

> It appears both colonies have been abandoned, the reasons given being (1) the arbitrary government thereof and (2) the starvation rations given the colonists. The repatriates complained…of the directors of the Pinotepa Nacional colony, where life was stated to be unbearable since last October (1933)…on the pretext of imposing discipline, the directors were attended by six armed individuals…(and) the colonists…were being threatened with severe punishment in the event of disobedience. They decided to abandon the colony en masse, making a painful 23-day journey to Acapulco. There they lived on the charity of the people and…it was their good fortune that General Cárdenas, Presidential candidate of the National Revolutionary Party…supplied at his own expense, the busses necessary to take them to Mexico City. [260]

The repatriates at Pinotepa also learned that their harvested corn crop went to feed herds of swine instead of its promised distribution to the workers.

The Colony 1 repatriates abandoned their *colonia* for similar reasons and both groups presented their grievances to the Ministry of the Interior in Mexico City in hopes of immediate assistance. Tools, farm equipment and mules never arrived to the repatriates and the workers often resorted to threats of violence in order to provide for

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[259] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Mexican Affairs Division, "*Failure of Mexican Repatriation Colony in Oaxaca*" (February, 1934), by John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group, 311.1215/50, Washington, D.C., 1934.
[260] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Mexican Affairs Division, "*Further Details Regarding Failure of First Two Mexican Repatriation Colonies*" (May, 1934), by John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group, 311.1215/61, Washington, D.C., 1934.

their basic needs.[261] Several repatriates fell ill and some died (due to the hostile, tropical climate) without medicines and food in ramshackle lodging houses between the *colonias* and Mexico City. Those that managed to make the trip hoped the Ministry of Agriculture considered their requests for land parcels near the national irrigation systems. Most of the colonists, farmers by occupation, needed any type of assistance to restart their lives after the failure of the *colonias* under the auspices of the Comité de Repatriación.

Allegations of graft and corruption hounded the Comité almost since its inception and a December 29, 1934 article in *El Universal* reported that unemployed repatriates asked the Ministry of the Interior for a strict accounting of the over 300,000 pesos that the Comité collected in the campaign for 500,000 pesos. On February 9, 1934, the Ministry of Interior issued a statement deploring the dissentions in the Comité and the charges of misuse of funds. After expenses, expenditures and the costs associated with the establishment of the *colonias* at El Coloso and Pinotepa, a balance of 101,407.09 pesos remained in the Comité's account at the Bank of Mexico.

El Universal, a newspaper very critical of the Comité's administration of the *colonias,* published two statements by Rafael González C., a representative of the League of Mexican Workers and Farmers (the organization that the repatriate workers joined at the Pinotepa *colonia*).

> The repatriates worked with all their strength and enthusiasm but it was useless in light of the poor system of administration. Machinery was taken away before the colonists could make good use of it and that *colonia* resembled a slave colony rather a community of free workers. Further, the *colonia* suffered from impoverished conditions.[262]

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[261] Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal, Mexican Repatriation in the* 1930s (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 142.
[262] El Universal, 2 June 1934

> An agent named Manuel Chávez threatened the colonists with a pistol and often said that the life of a repatriate costs only 25 pesos. No machinery or mules ever arrived and the repatriates worked with picks and hatchets. They were told to leave the *colonia* if they didn't want to work.[263]

President Rodríguez dissolved the Comité de Repatriación on June 14, 1934 and turned over its monies and resources to the Ministry of Agriculture and Development.

The decree made by President Rodríguez called for an accounting of the remaining funds left in the Comité's charge and Rodríguez stated that the Comité had not "satisfactorily fulfilled the mission entrusted to it…and its continuance would be contrary to interests of the very people whom it was attempting to help."[264] Rodríguez, anxious to repair the damage done by the Comité's lackluster fifteen months in operation, formed the official, "Mexican Repatriation Board" on July 26, 1934. Outgoing President Rodríguez displayed leadership curiously absent during the Comité's tenure and transferred 110,223.14 pesos and all agricultural implements to the Mexican Repatriation Board.

Rodríguez also resettled the displaced repatriates from El Coloso, Guerrero and Pinotepa, Oaxaca to lands near Rio Verde, San Luís Potosí. He supplied them with provisions and tools that amounted to 5,900 pesos. The President contemplated the upcoming meeting that the Mexican Repatriation Board scheduled with the Assistant Superintendent of Charities from Los Angeles, California, Mr. Rex Thomson and reflected on the repatriates' future.

> These colonies have as their purpose the immediate quantitative and qualitative improvement of the repatriates' condition of life; material, intellectual, physical

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[263] El Universal, 6 June 1934

[264] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Mexican Affairs Division, "*Formal Dissolution of Mexican National Repatriation Committee*" (June, 1934), by John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 311.1215/63, Washington, D.C., 1934.

> and so forth…for which purpose there will be better living quarters, food, clothing and farm cultivation. The purpose attempted is not only that of obtaining the flourishing development of the colonists, but also and principally to make their model of living and working an influence to the farmers of the neighboring regions.[265]

Thomson moved thousands of repatriates to Mexico yet did so with the cooperation of Mexican officials. He believed that large repatriations of large numbers of Mexicans from Los Angeles (over 12,000 Mexican families) "should be handled by a representative of the County rather than be made into an international question…in this manner, responsibility for any difficulties which may later arise will not be attributed to the United States Federal Government."[266] Thomson wanted the Mexican government to resettle the Los Angeles repatriates in a West Coast *colonia* "with a view to future commercial interchange." Thomson also worked out the free railway transportation of repatriates not just to the border, but to the workers' homes in Mexico. His offer of travel assistance was welcomed as a remarkable gesture and in the last months of the Rodríguez administration, it seemed (at least to U.S. State Department officials) that four important benefits might occur: "1) a relief from the burden of thousands of Mexicans in Los Angeles dependent on the charity of Mr. Thomson's agency, 2) the addition to the Mexican population of citizens with a higher standard of living, 3) profit to both countries from commercial interchange, and 4) the further strengthening of good-will between Mexico and the United States."[267]

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[265] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Mexican Affairs Division, "*Formation of an Official Mexican Repatriation Board*" (July, 1934), by John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 311.1215/71, Washington, D.C., 1934.
[266] United States Department of State, American Consulate General, Mexican Affairs Division, "*Interview With Mr. Rex Thompson Regarding Mexican Government Aid To Unemployed Mexicans In The United States*" (May, 1934), by John S. Littell, Vice Consul, Mexico City, Mexico. The National Archives, Record Group 311.1215/55, Washington, D.C., 1934
[267] Ibid.

In an August 23, 1934 letter to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Josephus Daniels, commended the formation of the new Mexican Repatriation Board that "is discussing ways and means of taking care and handling the 12,000 Mexican families in Los Angeles County who are now being supported by Los Angeles Welfare Organizations and whom the Mexican government is endeavoring to bring back to Mexico…and it has been proposed that they be returned gradually…and that idle government lands be colonized with these repatriates."

The Comité de Repatración was not a total failure (as the Mexican newspapers often editorialized). The obvious success was the fund-raising capability of the influential members of the Comité and their penchant for post-revolutionary rhetoric. At the onset of the Campaña de Medio Million, the nation felt a unified duty to provide for the *repatriados*. The combination of businessmen and government officials in the Comité gave the impression of a "societal" rather than a "governmental" responsibility toward those who, for a variety of reasons, found themselves in Mexico. Delegates from charitable institutions, industry, commerce and government ministries gave a public façade of limitless opportunity, unhampered by political favoritism and perhaps the opportunity to raise money in an unrestricted, more "freewheeling" manner.

Since the mid-1990s, a revised narrative has emerged regarding the modern Mexican state and the revolutionary movements that helped shape it. Over the last twenty years, original scholarship has challenged the traditional approaches which included hagiographical descriptions of iconic military chiefs and rebellious heroes. What we have now are more nuanced approaches to that great social upheaval (The Mexican Revolution) and the relationship between raw, empirical data and the more

popular aspects of protest, culture, and revolution.[268] These comparatives present two theoretical constructs regarding Mexico's revolution: revolution from above (state formation) and the other from below (popular culture). Regional studies have become elevated to general national perspectives. The interactions of local villagers with government officials and rebellious agrarian reformers had much to do with the new Mexican state; its legitimacy, popular culture, the importance of religion, and even resistance to the Sonoran dynasty that would dominate Mexican politics from 1920 to 1934.

In this dissertation, I have attempted to show the process of repatriation through U.S. and Mexican governmental policies as well as the human angst it created for the repatriados themselves. As with the recent macro-interpreters of the Mexican Revolution, I also hope to further conceptualize the work of "El Comité de Repatriación" in terms of a transborder, transnational analysis that finds coherence a similar "resettlement community" that lends itself to a localized interpretation of events.

In early November, 2018, I had the good fortune to interview a young woman (in her early 30s) from Puerto Rico who is a "clinician" and at an Immigrant Care Facility (a "state" academy) in the East Valley (Mesa/Chandler, Arizona). Ms. Marie Perez-Torres is a college graduate (Universidad de Turabo in Puerto Rico) who decided to move to the mainland and use her Bachelor's Degree in Social Work to good use. Previously, "Mari" worked with deaf students on the island. Here in the Phoenix area, Mari helps children who have been separated from their parents. She teaches and advises adolescents who in

[268] Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (eds), *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham; Duke University Press, 1994).

age from 12 to 17. Most of the young people are from Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras.

In our 45 minute interview, Mari expressed great pride in her work and the importance of caring for these children. They have many challenges; the language barrier, acculturation to American society, educational disadvantages, and a general sense of apprehension and fear about the future. One of her Mexican students decided to "return back to Mexico" and reunite with his family. The other children are either trying to "connect with extended family members in the U.S." or find "foster living arrangements" here in Arizona and/or other Southwestern states.

The myriad of issues Ms. Perez-Torres faces on a daily basis, truly makes this facility; "a transborder environment in the middle of a transnational issue." She explained that these children come to her workplace from U.S. federal detention facilities and the "Office of Refugee Resettlement." One of her greatest difficulties is trying to communicate with the children who have limited Spanish language skills. She listed a few of the Indian "dialects" that she has encountered: Queche, Mam, Acateco, Kangkobal and Ch'uj. She has been told that these are "Mayan" languages.

Mari's interpersonal skills are very much appreciated by the children. They relate to her because she too came from a distant Spanish-speaking country with no relatives or friends waiting for her here in Arizona. However, she is armed with her college degree and a desire to "make it" in the United States; still the land of opportunity and one of far greater wealth and reward than her native Puerto Rico. Mari expressed no opinion regarding the current political situation regarding migrant caravans, children left on their own, and those teens that came north alone and unprotected. I did not ask her about any

of these realities. She has a job to do and gives the impression that "the shelter" and "other shelters like it" are part of everyday life in what to some might be considered a "new normal" in the borderlands.

After the post-Mexican Revolution fanfare and posturing, the Comité found very little common ground and many questions remain. How many acres did the *colonias* encompass? Compared to the vast numbers of repatriates, why were so few involved in the *colonia* projects? Why were no repatriates involved in the planning of the *colonias?* What explains the violence at the *colonias?* Why were basic items (food, medicine, tools) and farm machinery not delivered to the *colonias?* Were there hidden issues of class that separated the *colonia* workers from members and agents of the Comité? How involved was Plutarco Calles behind the scenes? These are all issues for a larger study (my book on this subject) that must include the presidential administration of Lázaro Cárdenas, an analysis of his socialist agenda, the *ejido* system and how it compared to the apparent inability of the Comité de Repatriación to turn the U.S. repatriations into something positive for Mexico.

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