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# *Historical Roots of Migration in the Age of Globalization*

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## Introduction

Migratory streams to and from Latin America have created human ebbs and flows over a century-and-a-half, since the borderlands were divided by the bi-national boundary between Mexico and the U.S. In truth, what we know as the borderlands, an extended region of changing ecological, cultural and political dimensions, running from the Californias to the Caribbean basin, has articulated the movements of diverse peoples through deserts, mountains and wetlands since long before the nation-state defined North American geography. Archaeologists have reconstructed in fairly precise detail over the last two thousand years different locations of village-dwelling farming peoples and nomadic foragers who alternatively traded, mingled and fought one another for resources and networks of power. Their settlements and technological achievements in hunting, gathering, cultivation, weaving, pottery, and masonry, shaped the landscapes we have come to know as the northern Mexican borderlands.

European invasions of the Americas, beginning over 500 years ago, initiated environmental, economic, and political revolutions throughout North and South America. Successive waves of migrants – both slave and free – from Europe, Africa and Asia, brought new plants, animals and diseases to the ecosystems that Amerindians had created and set in motion new waves of destruction, change, and renewal. Imperial institutions

had a lasting impact on indigenous ways of life, but Hispanic colonial projects were forced to adapt, again and again, to the natural environment and the cultural traditions of the native peoples whose labor and knowledge provided the foundations for the Spanish Empire.

The turn of the nineteenth-century brought the unraveling of Spain's colonial dominion in mainland North and South America. Even before the dramatic events of the Spanish-American wars for independence, Anglo-American traders, trappers, and adventurers made their way to the Mexican borderlands. Many of them sought wealth, land, political status and romance, and not a few formed marriage and business alliances with leading Native American and Hispanic families. These north-to-south migratory flows extended both demographically and geographically the networks of kinship and cultural ties that so characterized the borderlands. By mid-century, even as these social networks deepened, internal conflicts enflamed the politics of Mexico and the United States, leading to civil war in both countries, and turning the borderlands into disputed territories.

The U.S. invasion of Mexico in 1846, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Binational Boundary Commission and the Treaty of the Mesilla (1854), mapped the borderlands and established new political boundaries enforced by military garrisons. Yet, initially, the border existed more firmly on paper than it did on the ground. Bands of Apaches, Diné, Comanches, Kiowas, O'odham and other native peoples migrated over long distances, crossing different sections of the bi-national line. Their migratory paths followed the ecological rhythms of hunting and gathering, to be sure, but they also intersected with Mexican and North American trade routes and military encampments.

Indians, Hispano-Mexicans, and Anglo-Americans sought commodities in weapons, cloth, livestock, bison, granaries, and human captives. Peaceful encounters could, and often did, turn violent, but survival in the borderlands depended on co-existence.

Historical archives help us to reconstruct the social history for the greater U.S. Southwest and the Mexican Northwest. Land titles and marriage records, for example, show us that Mexicans and North Americans intermarried, bought and sold land, and developed a number of ways for distributing water in these arid borderlands. Livestock breeding and herding required seasonal movements north-and-south, east-and-west, creating a kind of migratory capital wealth for Indians, Hispano-Mexicans, and Anglo-Americans. The persistence of landholding Hispanic *Californios* is well known, despite the violence and the rapid influx of migrants following the gold rush of the 1850s. Different rhythms of migration explain the “Mexicanization” of Arizona *after* 1854, as new streams of Mexican migrants reinforced the Hispanic-mestizo demographic and cultural heritage of colonial Pimería Alta.

In New Mexico, co-existence (even if not always peaceful) had sustained the longevity of Puebloan, Diné, and Hispanic populations, and migratory movements from the south strengthened their ties to El Paso, Chihuahua, and the lower Río Grande. New Mexico’s political annexation to the U.S. and its imposed territorial status opened serious conflicts over political representation, language, religion, educational systems and disputed claims to land and water, whose repercussions continue to the present. In the Taos rebellion of 1847, Pueblo Indians and some of the leading Hispano families of Río Arriba conspired to expel the American intruders from their lands and communities.

Migration and immigration, crossing national borders in two directions, play an important role in the complex histories that make the borderlands a distinct region.

Today I will outline the historical context for migratory flows to and from the U.S. and Latin America, through the portal of Mexico, in the light of major political events and economic circumstances. Noting the diverse composition of migrant and immigrant populations, I will turn to the pressures arising from the globalized economy over the last three decades that have increased the northward migratory paths from Latin America and the Caribbean to the U.S. Finally, I will comment on the complex processes of cultural identity that evolve from the demographic and spatial movement of peoples, including issues of citizenship and national affiliation.

#### Migration in historical context: Mexico and the U.S., 1820-1920

Migration is not an issue solely of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, nor is it a phenomenon restricted to the border region. Migratory flows of people within and across national boundaries reflect critical periods of economic and political change in different countries and regions. Their histories have different trajectories, but they intersect in the movements of people who migrate seasonally or permanently from one nation-state to another. A brief view of Mexico and the U.S. will help to illustrate these broad patterns of migration over time.

Mexico's troubled early political formation intensified during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, when internal divisions were compounded by two major invasions from the United States and France. Political struggles principally over church-state relations, regional autonomy vs. the power of the central state, and the privatization of communal lands culminated in the

Constitution of 1857 and the War of the Reform. This armed struggle between rival factions of Liberals and Conservatives led to the French Intervention of the 1860s, pitting the Mexican Republic against a puppet monarchy supported by the Habsburg dynasty and the army of Napoleon III. These two decades of armed conflict saw the rise of state militias and the dislocation of peasant communities in many different parts of Mexico, provoking internal migrations. The French invasion of Mexico produced deep divisions among the Mexican elites, somewhat the way in which the U.S invasion of New Mexico had split the Hispanic elite into pro- and anti-American factions. In a parallel development, the Mexican government established military colonies in Chihuahua, to furnish a barrier against Apache raiding and foraging; these colonists received land for farming and grazing and, later in the century, defended their communal entitlements to land and water against the large land concessions granted to both Mexican and foreign entrepreneurs.

Through this period of severe conflict, the Mexican governing class pursued policies of economic modernization, seeking capital investment – often from abroad – technological innovations, and the commercialization of lands that were held by the church or by Indian communities. These goals were largely achieved during the final two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, under the authoritarian rule of Porfirio Díaz. Railroads, telegraph lines, and mining wealth in the copper lodes of Mexico's north created new industrial cities like Cananea, in Sonora, opened forested hillsides to timber concessions, and allowed Mexican and foreign entrepreneurs to amass landed wealth and commercial fortunes. Mexico, like Argentina, Brazil, and the U.S. during this same period, received immigrants from Europe (principally Spain and Italy), Middle East (Lebanon and Syria) and China, who swelled the population of industrial workers, skilled artisans, and small shopkeepers. In addition, the Porfirian

regime welcomed colonists to “settle” what they considered to be empty lands in Mexico’s far north. Generous land concessions brought communities of Kickapoo Indians, Mennonites and Mormons to Sonora, Chihuahua and Coahuila, adding to the social and ethnic mixture of the Mexican nation.

1910 was supposed to have been a glittering celebration of the centenary of Mexican Independence. But the Porfirian *belle époque* had begun to tarnish due to rural unrest, labor strikes, and external pressures stemming from the international financial crisis of 1907. Mexico’s middle class had grown and prospered, but increasingly chafed under the centralized political control and patronage of Porfirio Díaz. Environmental stress worsened by prolonged drought led to crop failure and loss of livestock, and pushed landless rural laborers to the brink of starvation. A series of regional uprisings enveloped the whole nation in a major revolution, toppling the Díaz regime and leading to new episodes of armed conflict. Two of the most powerful revolutionary movements originated in northern Mexico – as we know from the legendary stories of Pancho Villa – and the U.S.-Mexico border played a major role in the recruitment and supply lines for their military campaigns. The border also provided a conduit for bands of defeated warriors and whole families who fled the violence and upheaval of civil war in Mexico. My husband’s great-grandfather led his family into one of the well-worn migratory routes from Zacatecas to Nayarit and then northward through Sinaloa and Sonora to the U.S. His family stayed in Sonora, however, and joined a new generation of Mexican farmers who settled in the Yaqui Valley. Yaqui Indians, themselves victims of both Porfirian and post-revolutionary regimes, established enduring communities-in-exile in Arizona, maintaining their links to the Sonoran Yaqui pueblos through the ceremonial cycle of Catholic feast days that has become the hall mark

of their cultural identity. The third principal revolutionary movement, the Zapatista agrarian rebellion, was based in Morelos but extended across central and southern Mexico. The military defeat of the Zapatistas in 1916, and their relentless pursuit by the victorious Constitutionalists, spurred additional currents of rural-urban migration in Mexico and from Mexico northward to the U.S.

In the crucible of armed conflict, rival political factions forged a progressive national Constitution, which has endured to the present, and Mexico returned to elective government in 1920. Nevertheless, civil strife erupted during the following decade, largely over religious issues, political succession, and land distribution. The Cristero rebellion, with a strong regional following in western Mexico, divided communities and left many embittered. New streams of Mexican migrants sought shelter in the U.S., moving beyond the border states to destinations in Chicago, Detroit, and other industrial cities of the Midwest. The neighborhoods they established have become the nodes of large networks of families and regional *paisanos*, who maintain strong economic and political ties to their places of origin.

Nineteenth-century U.S. development, as in Mexico, brought unprecedented prosperity, but unevenly distributed wealth and civil war. The major themes of U.S. history – Manifest Destiny and territorial expansion, industrial development and capital accumulation, slavery and sectional disputes, population growth and immigration – are well known. I want to highlight briefly their significance in relation to the major turning points of Mexican history and to the movement of people between both nations. The dispossession of Native Americans and their forced migration, a theme less often cited in textbook histories, had direct consequences for U.S.-Mexico border disputes and the events leading to the



Texas rebellion of 1835, its annexation to the U.S, and the U.S. invasion of Mexico. Kiowa, Apache and Comanche raids, either to obtain livestock, captives and goods or to take revenge for warriors killed in previous expeditions, swept periodically from the Great Plains into Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, and Tamaulipas. Both U.S. and Mexican governments shaped their policies and justificatory rhetoric of border security and territorial defense around the supposed need to “contain” these independent indigenous nations.

The North American invasion of Mexico in 1846-1848, and the annexation of territories extending from California to Texas, opened land and opportunities for mining, large-scale ranching, cotton plantations, commerce, and the advancing grid of railroads. It also intensified the sectional dispute between North and South, slave and free territories, leading to the war between the Union and the Confederacy. The defeat of the secessionist states and their political reorganization under the imposed terms of Reconstruction, gave rise to the legalization of racial segregation and widespread practices of racially focused violence in most of the Southern states. Industrial capital and labor concentrated in the Northern cities, swelled by immigration, contributed to the private fortunes of magnates such as Carnegie, Rothchild, Rockefeller, and Morgan, and turned the U.S. into a capitalist emporium that rivaled Europe. Much of this capital was amassed *in* Latin America, through profitable investments in railroads, copper mines, and petroleum.

The immigration history of the U.S. is often written in terms of European immigrants, coming in ever larger numbers from Ireland, Wales, Germany, Italy, Greece, Russia, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans. My grandparents were part of those migratory flows, leaving Latvia and Russia to begin a new life in New England; their children and

grandchildren later scattered to other parts of the U.S. We should remember, however, as I have noted above, that workers, peasants, shopkeepers, and merchants came to the U.S. from China, northern Africa, and Latin America as well as from Europe. The 1920s are justly remembered for the Great Migration of African-Americans from the Mississippi delta and other part of the south to the expanding industries of Northern U.S. Yet, these internal migrations were swelled by migrant streams moving across both the Atlantic and Pacific and overland from Mexico and Central America.

#### Where the past meets the present: 1920-2000

The histories of Mexico and the U.S. follow particular events in each country, but coalesce around global developments that had major economic and political consequences for both nations: the two World Wars, the Great Depression, and structural changes in banking and manufacturing that changed the demand for labor and services around the world. Within Mexico, we can point to the agrarian and labor policies following the Revolution of 1910, which created landholding *ejidos* and provided basic services and rising standards of living for some sectors of Mexican workers through the mid-1970s. The *bracero* program initiated in 1943 and terminated in 1968, had opened a legal conduit for Mexican agricultural workers to come to the U.S. When it closed, the establishment of manufacturing assembly plants (*maquiladoras*) in the northern Mexican states led to the rapid growth of border cities and transborder flows of people, money and goods between both nations.

How have these developments impacted migration patterns during the last century? Traditional migratory flows involved rural men of working age, originating from north-

central and western Mexico. Their destinations were principally the agricultural fields of California, Texas, Arizona and Illinois, with seasonal stints in the fruit orchards of Washington and Michigan. The northern Mexican states play an important role in migration because of their location on the border with the U.S. They are not necessarily the points of origin for Mexican migrants seeking entry to the U.S., but they serve as the platform for border crossings and receive a large number of migrants deported from the U.S. Central and southern Mexico, representing altogether 15 states, figure more recently in the statistics for migrant labor to the U.S., with significant population flows from Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Veracruz.

During the last four decades, migratory patterns have changed in their magnitude, in the composition of the migrant population, their destinations and their points of origin. In general, as we are well aware, migrants come from all regions of Mexico and settle throughout the U.S. Their presence ranges far beyond the southwest and the large cities traditionally associated with immigrants – Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Miami and New York – to small towns in the Southeast, Northeast and Midwest regions of the U.S. To frame this period, it is interesting to note that in 1961-1970, the annual net flow of Mexican migrants to the U.S. reached 27,500; it increased to 396,000 in 2000-2005. In 2005, persons identified as of Mexican origin living in the U.S. reached an estimated 26.8 million, of whom 10.6 million were born in Mexico. In 1990, Mexicans numbered among the top five national groups of migrants in 23 states; in 2000, Mexicans held this status in 42 states.

The profile of Mexican migrants is changing according to gender, age, household position, and rural/urban origins. Women and children join the traditional cadre of male

migrants in ever greater numbers. During the period 1987-2002, the average number of Mexican women coming to the U.S. remained constant at approximately 460,000 in each five-year period, but their proportion of the national migratory population oscillated between 19 and 26 per cent. Women figured more prominently among migrants from northern Mexico, where they accounted for more than one-third of the migrants, than from the other regions of the country. The average age of the migratory population has increased during the final decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, at the same time that a growing percentage of migrants identify as the son or daughter of the head of household. Statistics captured during the decade 1992-2002 show that increasing numbers of migrants come from towns and cities, especially in northern Mexico, a departure from the traditional model of rural migration and a sign that migrants to the U.S come with at least basic education and urban skills.

Sam Quiñones's new book, *ANTONIO'S GUN AND DELFINO'S DREAM: True Tales of Mexican Migration*, published by University of New Mexico Press, 2007, puts faces and names to some of these statistics on migration. In an interview with Ray Suárez on the *News Hour* July 25, Quiñones spoke passionately about migrants' experiences and aspirations. Against the backdrop of hard choices for poor Mexicans – whether to leave their families in search of better incomes, or remain at home – Sam Quiñones stressed what he has learned in over ten years of interviewing migrant workers and families, men and women: these are hardworking, ambitious individuals who desire wealth *and* to make a difference in their communities of origin.

The difficulties Antonio, Delfino and others encountered in attempting to go home, however, illustrate in vivid colors two important aspects of U.S.-Mexico migratory

flows: the vastly increasing numbers of undocumented migrants and the barriers to their return to Mexico. During 1997-2002, national figures show that three-quarters of the migrants to the U.S. were undocumented. Only northern Mexico showed a significant difference from this picture, where one-half of the migrants had some kind of legal visa or work permit. The enormous military apparatus assembled in U.S. border cities, especially in San Diego and El Paso, has forced migrants to attempt border crossings in ever more dangerous places in the Sonoran and Chihuahua Deserts, at great expense and loss of life. Furthermore, the dangers of crossing and the legal limbo in which undocumented migrants find themselves inhibit their return to Mexico. Circular patterns of temporary work stints in the U.S., which had characterized earlier Mexican migratory populations, have given way to permanent immigration by default, whether or not this was the intention of individuals and families who first seek entry to the U.S. economy.

### Migration in the Global Economy

Three decades of market-driven neo-liberal policies, promoted and enforced by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund and associated with debt-reduction plans, have witnessed the explosion of global migratory movements. “Structural readjustment” in Latin America is linked in the minds of many of its citizens with policy changes that have reduced or eliminated subsidies for peasant farmers and poor urban consumers on basic foodstuffs, dismantled or privatized social services in countries like Mexico and Chile, removed wage supports, and thwarted or stalled the consolidation of state-supported social networks in Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, and Central America. NAFTA has played an important

role in this recent economic history for Mexico, and CAFTA appears to repeat the pattern for Central America.

A recent example of these developments brings us back to the tortilla, a basic food item and symbol of Mexico's material culture and national identity. Soaring prices for maize have caused the price of tortillas to rise in recent months, leading to popular demands for a return to subsidies for corn production and price controls in the market. A recent march of several hundred thousand participants in Mexico City publicized widespread anger over rising prices for tortillas, gasoline, and other basic foodstuffs. The marked increase in the cost of tortillas for direct consumers, leading to hardship for middle- and lower class families, has been linked to sharp increases in the price of corn on the world market sparked by the demand for ethanol as well as to the role of intermediaries and higher fuel and electricity costs in Mexico. The Calderón administration has responded by expediting the importation of white corn (mainly from the U.S.) and proposing subsidies to stimulate higher production in Mexico. At the present time, over one-fourth of the corn consumed in Mexico comes from imported grain, and higher prices on the world market translate into significant public expenditures for this basic subsistence crop. [LADB 24I07]. President Calderón seeks to expand foreign investment in Mexico and protect employment. If he is to accomplish these objectives, his government must respond to pressing problems for the production, distribution, and consumption of food -- the most basic of popular needs.

President Rafael Correa of Ecuador placed policy concerns for employment and social welfare at the forefront of his inaugural address January 15, 2007. Correa pledged an "economic revolution" that would prioritize meeting the needs of the poor over

servicing Ecuador's international debt. Situating Ecuador's international obligations in the context of his country's economy, Correa stipulated that Ecuador's annual debt service of US\$2 billion represents 7% of his country's gross domestic product, an amount he considers too high to pay. His administration will negotiate with Wall Street firms that hold billions of dollars of Ecuadorian debt for new repayment terms and re-examine which parts of the debt are legitimate. President Correa rejected a free-trade pact with the U.S., because he believed it would hurt the economy of small peasant producers. Alternatively, he called for greater integration of "our America," by implication the countries and peoples of Latin America south of the Rio Grande. (LADB Jan 26, 2007)

### Migration and National Identities

These fundamental social and economic issues intersect with the cultural and political demands of indigenous peoples for human rights and representation in Latin America. Regionally based indigenous movements are challenging the constitutional structures of the nation-state. They call into question nineteenth-century traditions of electoral politics based on constitutional principles for a limited electorate of men, property-holders, and literacy. In several key nations, among them Mexico and Bolivia, these movements challenge the modern configurations of nationalism that arose from social revolutions and massive labor confederations which, in turn, forced economic and social elites to open the political process to numerous sectors of urban and rural workers, women, and indigenous communities that had been disenfranchised and effectively excluded from the public sphere. Indigenous activists and communities have turned to the power of the ballot, to mass demonstrations, and – in some instances – to armed revolt to press their demands on national governments

and the international community. Indigenous demands for political recognition, territorial rights to basic resources of woodlands, floodplains, and water, have responded to globalization in at least two important ways: they have protested the results of global trade that seem to threaten their own economies at the same time that they have used the technologies of global communication to command an international audience.

Migrant indigenous communities are re-creating their cultural identities in the host countries through their languages, religious ceremonies, and social networks that bind them to one another and to their communities of origin. Mixtecs of Oaxaca, who figure among the “traditional” migratory laborers as well as increasingly among the newer migrants from southern Mexico, have created settlements in Baja California and in the U.S. Mixtec men and women work in agriculture and in urban settings as vendors and service workers on both sides of the border. They are fusing the different strains or dialects of the ancient Mixtec language into a kind of standard language in use among migrants, in ways that establish their identity in alien and even hostile societies where Spanish and English are the dominant languages.

Globalization has complicated national politics and the meaning of *citizenship* through the power of NGOs with external funding and international linkages, the transnational movements of immigrants, internal indigenous movements, and the political influence of emigrant populations. We are well aware of the economic and political weight that *paisanos*, emigrant communities of Mexicans living abroad, mainly in the U.S., exerted during the last two presidential elections in Mexico. Mexican federal elections now recognize the absentee ballot and, in 2006, the Instituto Federal Electoral invested



impressively to recruit voters among Mexican citizens outside the country. Similarly, it is noteworthy that President Correa of Ecuador has called for a national referendum and a Constituent Assembly of elected delegates, in which three (of a total of 89) would represent Ecuadorians living abroad. Brazil has also begun to register voters among its citizens living outside the country. Equally worthy of note is that recent presidential inaugurations in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador have included separate indigenous ceremonies, recognizing the demographic and cultural importance of Indian peoples in these countries.

### Human Rights and Migration

Fundamental human and civil rights constitute a major theme of social movements in Latin America today. Memories of the brutal dictatorships that suppressed basic freedoms in South and Central America over the last half-century – notably in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, and Brazil – remain strong and inform both the intellectual and the emotional content of social movements at the present time. The following list of human rights, while not exhaustive, is shared throughout the region.

Freedom from arbitrary detentions, torture, and executions.

Security and physical integrity of one's person and home.

Rights to food, housing, health care.

Access to education.

Freedom of movement.

Right to work and a living wage.

Freedom from violence at the hands of repressive governments or criminal elements in society is paramount. Colombia and Mexico are prominent among countries in the region

where violence related to drug traffic and border issues has reached egregious heights and called into question the viability of the national government. We who live in border states are painfully aware of the terrifying serial murders of young women in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, a pattern that has emerged in Guatemala as well. At the same time, federal efforts in Mexico to overturn local police departments and conduct a “war on terror” raise serious concerns about due process and protection of human rights. Equally disturbing are the menacing words and actions of self-styled militias at the U.S. border with Mexico, who command technologies of surveillance and death.

#### What can we do?

We can remind our federal and state representatives that we respect the electoral outcomes of democratic states in Latin America. We can demand that Congress enact humane immigration laws. We can make our voices heard in defense of human rights at the border and, in other regions, as sympathetic and engaged observers. And, we can support the efforts by educators, scholars, and researchers to contribute to civil society, economic development, and nation-building in ways that are linked to migration.

Violence on the U.S.-Mexico border increasingly fills our newspapers and has become an urgent crisis for policy-makers. Undocumented migrants are vulnerable to the cross-fire between rival drug cartels, armed minute-men, and exploitive human smugglers (known as *coyotes*). Border-state governors are keenly aware of the knotty problems linked to the illegal shipments of narcotics and weapons, moving both north and south, and to the clandestine movements of people through the borderlands. The Arizona-Mexico Commission, meeting in Tucson in mid-June 2007 and chaired by governors Janet

Napolitano and Eduardo Boors, of Arizona and Sonora respectively, approved local measures to track the wire transfers of money to smugglers, drug shipments, and stolen vehicles (The New York *Times*, June 16, 2007, p. A9). The concern for border security is genuine among both Mexicans and Americans, and it is essential to bring Mexico into the discussion. Nevertheless, I do not believe that surveillance alone is sufficient. It is necessary to foster a civic network of citizens to protect the basic human rights of migrants and of the communities through which they pass or in which they settle, and to try to find ways to reverse the economic disparities that impel transnational migration.

Literature, plays, and films like *Traffic*, *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* and *Babel* have dramatized the human dimension of borderlands violence and the personal stories of transnational migrants. The spiritual strength of gatherings like this Diaconate Community can, and must, guide us to keep the values of basic human dignity at the forefront of policy discussions and legislative debates on immigration, citizenship and the definition of the nation.

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