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Cycle of Change: Latino and Mexican Identities

The socio-economic impacts of the Great Depression destroyed many families in America. In 1920, inequality and poverty raised to great heights. An inherently unregulated and unstable economy gave rise to greatest economic contraction ever seen in the history of America. About forty to fifty percent of the population was living in poor, ill-nourished, and ill-housed conditions (*America’s Struggle against Poverty in the Twentieth Century - James T. PATTERSON - Google Books*).

The scope and nature of the economic collapse were unprecedented. Many people started to believe that the reformist agendas will help to cope with the economic damages. For softening the economic impacts on people, President Roosevelt and other congress Leaders presented two “New Deal” programs. However, the new Deal Programs did not serve all the communities equally. The communities were served according to the race and occupations (Davis).

The non-citizens and the unauthorized citizens did not get any assistance from the programs of New Deal. The agriculture and the domestic workers were barred from getting unemployment allowances and social security benefits. Hence a large number of Black people, Mexican population, and other minority populations were disqualified from the benefits of the New Deal.

# The Recruitment and Deportation among Mexicans during Great Depression

Before 1900s, the migration levels in Mexico were low. The United States and the Mexican government had agriculture based economies. About 90 percent of the Mexican population lived in farms and villages. During the programs of modernization by Porfirio Diaz, the population of Mexico increased by the beginning of twentieth century. The modernization programs changed the old systems of labor and land. The System of Transportation and means of communication improved, which resulted in the development of mobile communities (*Immigration, Repatriation, and Deportation: The Mexican-Origin Population in the United States, 1920–1950 - Brian Gratton, Emily Merchant, 2013*). Millions of people lost their lands to monopolies of rich agriculturalists, which in turn resulted in new patterns with increased levels of migrations. The economic changes compelled the Mexican people to migrate to Mexico. The changes in the US immigration legislation at federal level and the development in the American South West made laid the grounds for the migration of the Mexican people to the North. The American companies sometimes also transported the Mexican workers directly across the American borders to work in the plants and factories. However, Mexican immigrants were not allowed to stay. They followed the circular migratory patterns between the US and Mexico, followed by the agricultural harvest seasons in the region. The Mexican immigrants moved easily across the borders, and hence the border only existed in the vivid imaginations of the immigrants. In these whole process colonies of Mexican laborers were established in America. The First World War further increased the labor demand in the country (*Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s - Francisco E. Balderrama, Raymond Rodriguez - Google Books*).

# Mexican Communities in the Great Depression

From the years of 1910 to 1930, the Mexican Immigrants constituted five to thirteen percent of the American population (*Created by Camtasia Studio 8*). The federal and local authorities of America promoted repatriation and deportation to counter Mexican poverty. During the years of 1930 and 1933, the high rates of Mexican deportations were a continuation of the Hoover administration policy. This policy targeted the Mexican immigrants' groups only.

The level of volunteer departure of the Mexican immigrants during the Great Depression is also a highly debated point in the historical literature. Some scholars believe that a large number of Mexican immigrants repatriated voluntarily. However, other scholars maintain that such migrations resulted from intimidation in a systematic manner, harassment, and culturally inappropriate practices by the welfare workers of the country (Fox). The estimated number of people who were repatriated and deported ranged from 331,717 to 1,000,000 (*Immigration, Repatriation, and Deportation: The Mexican-Origin Population in the United States, 1920–1950 - Brian Gratton, Emily Merchant, 2013*). However, most of the history scholars maintain that more than forty percent of the deported and repatriated Mexican immigrants were US Citizens, and their rights were violated because the US citizens cannot be deported legally. The deportations affected the Mexican immigrant families who were too old or young, sick, or were not able to care for themselves.

# The Impacts of Bracero Program on Mexican Laborers

Thousands of Mexicans were imported by the United States as labor to work in farms, termed as Braceros. In 1942, the United States of America and Mexico signed agreements known as Braceros Programs. The Braceros Programs aimed to replenish the agricultural laborers of the United States that was absorbed by the defense plants and armed forces. Mexican President Manuel Avila Camacho wanted to strengthen his ties with an advanced country like America with the help of the Braceros Program (*Bracero History Archive | Teaching*). He believed that the unskilled labor of Mexico was an inferior race that should attain advance qualities and skills by working with advanced countries like the United States (Lee et al.).

The Bracero Program increased the trends of gender and racial inequality in the US and Mexico. Mexican Rural labor was considered as a race with low cultural and intellectual level and hence worthy of being subjected to exploitation in both Mexico and America. The men of rural Mexican labor took the work of women for granted and hence maintained the gender inequality along with racial inequality (CsuDHTVlive).

# Conclusion

The United States should not carry on the programs like Bracero Program in the future because these kind of programs exploit the laborers of the poor countries based on racial differences. These programs result in increases in racialization and dehumanization phenomenon.

# Works Cited

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