


BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

Deportation, Diplomacy, and Defiance: New Research on Mexican Migration

Michael David Snodgrass 

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, History/Global Studies, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA
Email: misnodgr@iupui.edu

This essay reviews the following works:

They Should Stay There: The Story of Mexican Migration and Repatriation during the Great Depression. By Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso. Translated by Russ Davidson. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. Pp. xxvi + 272. \$29.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781469634265. (Original work published in 2007 as *Que se queden allá: El gobierno de México y la repatriación de mexicanos en Estados Unidos, 1934–1940*).

Deported Americans: Life after Deportation to Mexico. By Beth C. Caldwell. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019. Pp. xii + 248. \$25.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781478003908.

Outsourcing Welfare: How the Money Immigrants Send Home Contributes to Stability in Developing Countries. By Roy Germano. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. x + 227. \$33.95 hardcover. ISBN: 9780190862848.

The Deportation Machine: America's Long History of Expelling Immigrants. By Adam Goodman. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020. Pp. ix + 336. \$19.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780691204208.

Defiant Braceros: How Migrant Workers Fought for Racial, Sexual, and Political Freedom. By Mireya Loza. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016. Pp. xiii + 254. \$29.95 paperback ISBN: 9781469629766.

Risking Immeasurable Harm: Immigration Restriction and US-Mexican Diplomatic Relations, 1924–1932. By Benjamin C. Montoya. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020. Pp. xiii + 342. \$55.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781496201294.

Diplomacia migratoria: Una historia transnacional del Programa Bracero, 1947–1952. By Catherine Vézina. Mexico City: Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, 2018. Pp. xi + 404. \$13.99 e-book. ISBN: 9786078508082.

Future historians of migration in the Americas will mark the 1990s as a watershed. In that decade, a demographic revolution, an economic crisis, and its neoliberal solution led millions of Mexicans to migrate to El Norte. Mexico became the world's premier nation of emigrants. Today, approximately one of four ethnic Mexicans reside in the United States, an outcome largely produced by the multigenerational recruitment of labor. Meanwhile, in Mexico, remittances just surpassed oil and tourism as the primary source of foreign income. Less noticed by social scientists is that some eight hundred thousand US-born immigrants now comprise two-thirds of Mexico's vastly smaller foreign-born population.¹ In *Deported Americans*, Beth C. Caldwell observes that more than half are US-citizen children of deportees. Their families' forced migration resulted from another mid-1990s turning point. As millions of Mexicans migrated north, the US Congress legislated reforms that accelerated the mass deportation of unauthorized migrants. Like the books discussed in a recent *LARR* review on migrants in the Southern Cone, the seven titles reviewed here explore the historical and paradoxical processes of recruitment and exclusion, and the causes and impact of return.² While Ben Nobbs-Thiessen's assessment highlights migrant identity formation, this essay foregrounds the role of states and policymaking, and how migrants and their allies embrace or resist top-down programs to manage migration in the context of US-Mexican relations.

Collectively, these scholars explore the intersection of global migrations, domestic politics, and foreign affairs. Several offer new insights into the emergent field of migration diplomacy. Others illustrate the risks of a transnational turn in migration studies that allows the state to fade from view. As one preeminent historian of international migration observes, "no one understands better than immigrants the continuing power of national governments to draw borders and set rules for crossing them."³ These authors—a legal scholar, a political scientist, and five fellow historians—illustrate how migrants and their allies have navigated a century of policymaking by the US and Mexican states. My own research explores a multigenerational history of emigration and return from the perspective of Mexico, one guarded in archives in Mexico City and Michoacán, and collected in my oral history interviews in Jalisco. I integrate the issues reviewed here and assign several of these authors in my undergraduate research seminars on US-Latin American relations, Latinas/os in the Midwest, and global migrations. The review follows a chronological and thematic narrative, beginning with an early setback for anti-Mexican nativists.

Recent histories of US immigration policy challenge a nation-of-immigrants trope with narratives of restriction and removal. With the Immigration Act of 1924, nativists secured the exclusion of Asians and undesirable Europeans. Yet a coalition of diplomats and corporate lobbyists secured an exemption for the Americas. Hundreds of thousands of labor migrants soon arrived from postrevolutionary Mexico, drawing the ire of nativist forces. The latter's congressional allies drafted a series of bills to restrict Mexican entry by assigning a hemispheric quota that would allocate only 4 percent of annual entries to Mexico (and 89 percent to Canada, the decade's dominant sending country). In *Risking Immeasurable Harm*, Benjamin Montoya explains why the restrictionists failed.

He picks up the story in 1927. Congressional efforts to legislate the quota hampered State Department efforts to resolve disputes related to oil interests and property claims. Adopting a "Wilsonian" (7) approach, diplomats avoided a racist quota's "immeasurable harm" to US-Mexican relations by meeting the nativists halfway. State Department

¹ Mexico's National Institute of Geography and Statistics (INEGI) calculates the 2020 figure at <https://www.inegi.org.mx/temas/migracion/#Tabulados> (accessed on May 26, 2022).

² Ben Nobbs-Thiessen, "New Waves of Immigration and Departure in Modern Latin America," *Latin American Research Review* 56, no. 4 (2001): 946–957, <http://doi.org/10.25222/larr.1669>.

³ Donna Gabaccia, *Foreign Relations: American Immigration in Global Perspective* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 2–3.

officials crafted a “perfect compromise” (250) by ordering American consulates to strictly enforce admission guidelines to deny visas to those Mexican labor migrants who bothered to apply. By 1930, the issuance of visas fell precipitously, and that year saw the last restrictive immigration bill die in Congress. Historians of this legislative and intergovernmental battle credit agribusiness and railway lobbyists for defeating the bills.⁴ But Montoya argues that “diplomatic, not economic, considerations explain the bill’s failure” (241). His research contributes an international relations angle to a historiography focused on congressional debates and lobbyists who set the agenda. In *Risking Immeasurable Harm*, readers hear from US diplomats whose consular dispatches illustrate the indignant response of Mexican officials and the Mexico City press. Despite his reliance on English-language sources, Montoya outlines Mexico’s own emigration policy debates. Whereas statesmen and intellectuals disagreed sharply on the potential costs and benefits of migration, they united in opposition to a restrictive American quota aimed solely at Mexico and justified by a denigrating and racist discourse against allegedly unassimilable migrants of “Indian blood” (58).

Montoya’s monograph focuses narrowly on a brief period of policymaking and diplomacy. Readers do not learn about the Immigration Act of 1924, or how and why it exempted the Americas from restrictive quotas. His tendency to call the act of departure “immigration” will confuse some readers and leads to erroneous statements like “Mexico was unwilling to regulate its immigration” (90). In fact, like its Central American neighbors, Mexico did pass racist restrictions against non-European immigrants, albeit with far lesser consequence than North American policy. Extending the global perspective to Europe illustrates another contemporaneous development: interwar bilateral guest worker agreements by which the Germans and French balanced the interests of employers and nativists with the temporary recruitment of Polish, Italian, and Iberian laborers. Both American growers and Mexican policymakers were already keen on a bilateral policy of managed migration. That compromise arrived in 1942 with the Bracero Program. Meanwhile, anti-restrictionists reminded their opponents that Mexican migrants arrived with an intent to return and, if not, the border’s proximity facilitated their expulsion.

In *The Deportation Machine*, Adam Goodman revises our understanding of the mechanisms of removal, and how to quantify and qualify the fifty-six million orders of deportation issued by immigration agents since 1892, when their record keeping began. Goodman’s narrative begins in that decade, when nativists designed their blueprint of removal. His protagonists are the engineers who developed the laws, policies, and agencies that set the machine in motion; the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) operatives who ran it; and the legislators who allocated ever more human resources and technology for its maintenance. In 1996, the “tough-on-crime” nativists of the Clinton years retooled the machine with the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA). That harsh legislation broadened eligibility for removal and set the framework for a post-9/11 era of mass expulsions, whose human consequences are the subject of Caldwell’s *Deported Americans* (below).

Goodman acknowledges his scholarly debt to the historiography on US migration policy, immigration law, and racial nativism. Future historians will appreciate his ninety-page bibliographic survey of the multidisciplinary English-language scholarship in the supplementary endnotes. He balances an extensive use of INS records with court proceedings, oral histories, and the underutilized archive of Mexico’s National Migration Institute. His study complements Daniel Kanstroom’s legal history of the removal impulse that

⁴ Seminal studies include Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the US, 1900–1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1976); and Kathleen Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny: Migrant Labor, Industrial Agriculture, and Imperial Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

underpins US migration policy.⁵ Both authors examine deportation from analytical and critical perspectives and juxtapose a nation-of-immigrants ethos with the ever-present history of expulsion. Yet Goodman emphasizes the “history of removing Mexicans” (6). Their proportion of total expulsions climbed from 50 to 94 percent between 1965 and 1985, an era when apprehensions soared from roughly one hundred thousand to more than one million. He explores the overlapping and evolving mechanisms by which immigration authorities “forced, coerced, or scared people into leaving” (6): judicial removal, voluntary departure, and “self-deportation,” his term for the latter form of return. What really distinguishes *The Deportation Machine* is Goodman’s emphasis on the post-1965 era and less on court-ordered removals than voluntary departures, the INS’s perplexing term for expelling unauthorized migrants without court hearings. One official considered this a “privilege” (71) since deportees faced no punitive costs for reentry. Voluntary departures also reduced costs for the cash-strapped INS and became six times more frequent than court-ordered removals.

Goodman’s six chapters move chronologically and thematically. He welds an institutional framework to a “bottom-up social history” (222) of immigration officials who implement policy and the migrants it affects. Early chapters survey policy origins in the 1890s, the “notorious deportation drives” (39) of the Great Depression, and 1954’s Operation Wetback. Equally controversial were the costly campaigns to ship deportees to Mexico’s interior by air (to Guadalajara) and sea (to Veracruz), a short-lived experiment that set an enduring precedent for today’s private-sector profiteering from migrant trauma. For much of the twentieth century, immigration agents contended that highly publicized raids provoked fearful migrants to deport themselves, boastful claims that readers might consider with caution. The INS’s well-documented intent does not prove an outcome that remains difficult to substantiate. Goodman never distinguishes between a fear-induced act of self-deportation and voluntary return. The latter became commonplace among Italians, Barbadians, and other labor migrants guided by an “ideology of return migration.”⁶ That historical pattern of circularity is integral to Mexico’s culture of migration, among legal and clandestine migrants alike. So, for the latter, was the revolving door of coerced departure and reentry that Goodman acknowledges as “a normal part of many migrants’ lives” (114). He interviewed deportees who experienced dozens of removals. Yet he never ponders whose interests were served by the revolving door, be it employers, the INS, or the determined migrants themselves.

Goodman’s protagonists are principally the immigration officials who engineered and operate the machine, not the Mexican state that cooperates, or the anti-immigrant Americans who applaud it. In his telling, the deportation state “fuels xenophobia” (6). But historical grassroots movements of race-baiting nativists or farm labor unionists lobbied for removal, as Montoya’s and Vézina’s studies document. Goodman highlights the Americans who allied with migrants to resist the machine. He dedicates one chapter to a Los Angeles case in which legal advocates convinced dozens of migrants to refuse voluntary departure. Their courtroom victory set precedents against warrantless INS raids and for the right of detainees to request legal defense to challenge removal. Throughout his study, Goodman introduces a parade of allies who opposed this machine on human rights grounds—Supreme Court dissenters, civil libertarians, progressive journalists—along with Texas cotton growers driven by greed. Come the 1980s, policymakers finally passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which regularized the status of almost three million potential deportees. Goodman finds the IRCA wanting because

⁵ Daniel Kanstroom, *Deportation Nation: Outsiders in American History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

⁶ Caroline Brettell, *Anthropology and Migration: Essays on Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and Identity* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2003), 57–74.

it divided families along lines of legality.⁷ But it offered some hope compared to the subsequent decades, when the IIRIRA expanded the pool of deportable subjects and made judicial removal the dominant means of expulsion. Goodman ends his timely and pioneering study with a sweeping survey of our ongoing era of militarized borders and mass incarceration. Meanwhile, generations of Mexican political leaders developed their own policies in response to both unauthorized departures and the subsequent effects of the United States' deportation machine.

In *They Should Stay There*, Fernando Alanís Enciso explains how a single presidential administration navigated the impact of US immigration policy. Lázaro Cárdenas was the rare president before Vicente Fox to hail from the emigrant heartland of western Mexico. His hometown of Jiquilpan lies between the criollo highlands of Jalisco and northern Michoacán's historic sending communities. His was the first generation to witness emigration and return, which in the 1920s seemed like a short-term response to revolutionary upheaval. In the 1970s, ethnographers from Jiquilpan's archive, which houses the Cárdenas administration papers, recorded the earliest oral histories of the region's emigrants, pioneers who returned from Depression-era Indiana steel towns during Cárdenas's governorship (1928–1932).⁸ His polarizing presidential *sexenio* (1934–1940) followed. Alanís Enciso makes excellent use of the CERMLC archive in this deceptively titled monograph. Neither the president, his advisers, nor the press reports he cites ever claimed that “they should stay there.” In fact, this monograph focuses on policy proposals to bring the emigrants back home.

Alanís Enciso sets the context with a history of emigration from the Porfiriato through the 1920s. Then came the mass repatriation of more than three hundred thousand migrants. Arriving to office, Cárdenas's advisers developed migration policies guided by their “fear of a mass return” (57) of those who remained, which one vastly overestimated at three million. They studied troublesome labor market effects and plotted the founding of repatriate colonies across northern Mexico. Most of this study examines that latter process, as officials investigated sites of settlement and sent delegations to Texas to scout potential recruits. Some migrants clearly expected land and support upon return. Others expressed limited interest in repatriating their US-citizen children, and even less faith in government planners. After all, earlier repatriate colonies in Guerrero and Oaxaca failed miserably. But Alanís Enciso examines the one that succeeded, the “March 18th Colony” near Matamoros. Despite limited tools, decrepit housing, and deplorable health standards, four thousand settlers built a cotton-farming community that “survived to the present day” (192).

This was the Cardenistas' final colonization project. But ongoing feasibility studies proved the state's continued anxiety about renewed deportations. Thus did Mexican consuls plead with Los Angeles officials to limit further removals while using the Spanish-language media to dissuade prospective returnees. But why the fear? It partly stemmed from labor market concerns. But Alanís Enciso emphasizes cultural roots, reflecting “a general resentment that many people in Mexico” felt toward *norteños*, who presumably returned home with superior airs, Americanized children, or possibly criminal backgrounds. He repeats the often stated but rarely substantiated trope of migrants “branded as traitors” (83). Yet, paradoxically, he illustrates the solidarity of Mexican union workers who donated funds to help resettle migrants stranded in northern border towns.

Notably absent from *They Should Stay There* is the perspective of President Cárdenas, who had governed his home state when the Depression-era deportees returned to their local communities. Alanís Enciso finds him “aware of their difficulties” (51) but offers

⁷ Roy Germano documents the IRCA's benefits, as legalized migrants in Iowa facilitated subsequent migrations when agricultural crisis destabilized their hometown in Michoacán (*Outsourcing Welfare*, 40–44).

⁸ Centro de Estudios de la Revolución Mexicana “Lázaro Cárdenas” (CERMLC).

no insights into how the president's personal history shaped his policies on migration or his commitment to an unprecedented agrarian reform program that ideally rooted erstwhile emigrants in their homeland. Today, the settlement of Spanish Republican refugees remains the most well-known Cardenista migration policy. Past historians contrasted this warm embrace of Spaniards with the state's alleged ambivalence toward Mexican repatriates. Some interpret repatriation programs as a patriotic rejoinder to the conservative opposition, even though colonization proposals predated the Republicans' arrival. Alanís Enciso ends with a curious claim that "tenacious resistance" somehow "stymied" (185) Cardenista reforms, an assertion that embittered industrialists and triumphant oil workers would certainly dispute. After all, officials named that "18 de Marzo" repatriate colony for the historic day when Cárdenas nationalized oil. In the end, fewer than one hundred thousand repatriates came home during his *sexenio*, fewer than did so during any postrevolutionary presidential term before or since. That, and the polarizing effects of Cardenista reforms, explains why this became the one decade when migration policy "did not generate any significant debate" in Mexico (188).

The following decades witnessed considerable debate. Indeed, the Bracero Program (1942–1964) became the most controversial policy adopted by Mexico's government during its twenty-two-year cycle. Two authors reviewed here explore the objectives of the Mexican policymakers who negotiated it and the transnational activists and bracero migrants who challenged its shortcomings. In *Diplomacia migratoria*, Catherine Vézina explores the transitory period between the accord's postwar termination and its 1951 renewal, an interregnum of unauthorized entries, aggressive lobbying, and contentious negotiations. Her transnational history focuses less on high-level diplomacy than on the politics of labor and migration in California and Guanajuato. Vézina's impressive sources include foreign ministry archives, gubernatorial papers, and provincial press reports from Bakersfield and León. Among her many contributions is an exploration of why the Mexican government renewed the program and how that process affected Mexico's premier bracero-sending state. She argues that "national economic concerns"—inflation, peso devaluations, balance of payments—"pushed the Mexican government to accept a renovated program despite certain clauses that marked a setback" (120). What were those setbacks? Mexico relinquished its unilateral right to blacklist regions where braceros suffered discrimination. Negotiators failed in Mexico's decades-long effort to convince the Americans to penalize employers of unauthorized migrants. In an important achievement, they did secure a prohibition against Social Security deductions from bracero paychecks.

Vézina acknowledges migrant agency. While readers learn little about the impact of migrants' return to Guanajuato, she narrates how aspiring braceros amassed at the border, risked clandestine crossings, and appealed directly to authorities. Those petitions illustrate their expectations that bracero contracts would compensate them for setbacks, be they climatic (drought) or attributable to state policy (dams). This grassroots perspective challenges recent histories that portray the program as a ruling party plot to separate families or modernize Indigenous men. The underdogs perceived bracero contracts as a form of justice to alleviate their hardships, and plenty of honorable mayors and priests delivered on this expectation.⁹ Vézina's socioeconomic and political portrait of Guanajuato illustrates the unique confluence of factors that swelled the state's population of aspiring migrants. Its mining industry suffered a withdrawal of foreign capital. Raw material shortages and recurring blackouts hit León's labor-intensive leather shops. Then came the government's draconian response to foot-and-mouth disease. In contrast to Mexico's north, Guanajuato's farmers suffered the mass slaughter of livestock, while

⁹ For an excellent case study, see Ramón Alejandro Montoya, *La migración potosina hacia Estados Unidos de Norteamérica antes y durante el Programa Bracero: El caso de Cerritos* (San Luis Potosí: Ponciano Arriaga, 2006).

statewide quarantines disrupted regional commerce. Larger growers responded to the culling of draft animals with mechanization, which León's major daily highlighted as a cause during the years when emigration remained front-page news.

Readers will benefit from Vézina's comprehensive analysis of US congressional debates on migratory labor, the dynamics of American foreign policymaking, agribusiness lobbying, and bracero employment in California. She uncovers the surprising extent to which California growers extended their lobbying efforts (and financial favors) directly to President Alemán and his political cronies. Thus Mexico City permitted the recontracting of braceros when diplomacy faltered. It was also Mexican officials who proposed the stop-gap 1947 policy to authorize the immediate reentry of deportees with legal contracts. Thus from 1947 to 1951, thousands of voluntary departures reflected a transitory program to regularize migrants. This benefit to growers also served those aspiring braceros, and a Mexican state willing to relinquish early contractual prerogatives to renew the accord and replace clandestine labor with legal guest workers.

Despite the book's promising title, readers learn far more about US congressional debates than the diplomatic negotiations that resulted in the program's renewal. Vézina's analysis of the latter draws less from archival sources than from the Mexican national press. Nor does she offer the international relations perspective that one finds in US State Department records, where foreign service officers castigate the nativist hard-liners back home while touting the guest worker program as a Good Neighborly form of foreign development aid that fostered pro-American sentiments in Mexican sending communities.¹⁰ In the end, she hangs her portraits of California and Guanajuato on opposing walls, illustrating the structural forces that connected these historic sending and receiving states but not the microsocial networks that still bind a Mexican diaspora in Bakersfield to hometowns in Guanajuato. But *Diplomacia migratoria* marks a commendable investigation of these transitory yet consequential years in the Bracero Program's history.

Mireya Loza investigates the Bracero Program from both historical and contemporary angles, building her narrative around interviews she conducted for the Bracero Oral History Project (BHOP). Between 2002 and 2011, the BHOP recorded the experiences of some seven hundred ex-braceros residing in Mexico and the United States. Responding to structured inquiries, former migrants recollect their rural upbringing, the hiring process, employer relations, and their experiences of work, housing, and leisure. Despite its accessibility at the digital Bracero History Archive (braceroarchive.org), few historians utilize this invaluable contribution to Mexican migration studies. Loza herself conducted nearly one hundred interviews. *Defiant Braceros* builds selectively on those recorded during a three-week period in predominantly Indigenous communities in western and southern Mexico. The first of four chapters analyzes the intersection of elite discourses on race with the lived experience of Indigenous braceros. The next travels north to explore leisure and vice in bracero labor camps. The final chapters document bracero rights activists in the past and present. One examines the Mexico-based Alianza de Braceros Nacionales (ABN). The last narrates the origins and strategies of a cross-border legal struggle to seek justice for ex-braceros victimized by the scandal-plagued savings plan that Mexican officials amended to the original bracero accord. That movement generated its own controversies, but its extensive press coverage rescued the bracero story from the dustbin of history. A traveling photo-documentary exhibit called "Bittersweet Harvest" further enshrined the public memory of braceros. Loza analyzed its origins and reception at the National Museum of American History for the *Public Historian*. She replicates that article here in her epilogue.

¹⁰ Michael Snodgrass, "Dreams of Development in Mexico and Spain: A Comparative History of Guestworkers and Migration Diplomacy," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 64, no. 3 (2022): 756–787, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417522000226>.

The freedom-fighting migrants of *Defiant Braceros* will defy readers' expectations. Their defiance rarely involves material forms of resistance like the strikes recalled in BOHP interviews. Rather, Loza's subjects challenged a "normative narrative" that stereotyped braceros as "ethnically homogeneous" guest workers whose remittances complied with official expectations of "the mestizo heteronormative nuclear family life" (5). Consistent with the cultural turn in bracero histories, Loza depicts managed migration as a racist and gendered social-engineering policy. In her telling, this "racial project of modernity" (9) targeted Indigenous men, contracting them for a guest worker system that ideally transformed braceros into malleable laborers and modern consumers.¹¹ Meanwhile, these dutiful patriarchs would remit their savings in compliance with the state's "perverse capitalist vision of respectable transnational domesticity" (67).

Loza offers no archival evidence of such top-down discourses on race and patriarchy. Policymakers certainly expected braceros to develop skills and remit earnings, a commonplace justification for guest worker programs. But Loza juxtaposes the state's ostensible vision of the ideal bracero with a hidden transcript of "nonconformist identities" (5). Many proved to be youthful adventurers more than sober family men. They discovered a host of freedoms in labor camps, forsaking lives of austerity for "pleasure and recreation." In other words, they drank, gambled, and slept with sex workers. They pursued further "sexual freedoms" via extramarital affairs and (rumors of) "queer encounters." This cultural deviancy somehow "challenged both American and Mexican state power" (93). Meanwhile, despite these leisure pursuits, remittances soared, and Loza's evidence confirms that even young single men—like her own Tío Juan—dutifully remitted earnings to their families.

Loza's methodology evokes Maria Herrera-Sobek's pioneering study, which contrasted literary depictions of the Bracero Program as a degrading affront to Mexican dignity with more upbeat recollections of ex-braceros she interviewed in Huecorio, Michoacán.¹² Indeed, Herrera-Sobek is among the only scholars of Mexican migration acknowledged in this study devoid of historical or historiographical context. Loza assumes readers' familiarity with this "dehumanizing" guest worker program, offering no explanation of its origins while structuring the narrative around "historic injustices" that reduced braceros to "a stateless class of workers" (19). In contrast to Vézina, she never explores migrant aspirations, and readers of the BOHP interviews learn that few ex-braceros felt dehumanized by their experience. Those familiar with Mexican history and geography will notice obvious editorial oversights. *Chichimecas* is not a term for Nahua people, nor is Jalisco a "northern state" (26). And where does one find "the state of Puebla-speaking Nahuatl" (46)? Her study confirms the regional and ethnic diversity of braceros. Yet it does not correct any "absence of indigeneity in historical studies of migration" (10). Herrera-Sobek is among many scholars to investigate Purépecha Highlands communities, whose histories of emigration predated the Bracero Program.

Like many bracero studies scholars, Loza and Vézina both used Stanford's Ernesto Galarza Papers to document the program's shortcomings in Mexico and California. Both authors thus highlight the Alianza de Braceros, with whom Galarza built a tenuous alliance based on a mutual desire to unionize farm workers and curb unauthorized migrations. Unlike Galarza, the ABN sought to expand bracero contracting because its suspect leader peddled memberships for the unattainable promise of "securing work in US farmlands" (Vézina, 297). Despite dedicating an entire chapter to the Alianza, Loza finds it "difficult to assess any lasting accomplishments" (132). Galarza proved more consequential,

¹¹ Aside from Michoacán, Mexican authorities allocated bracero quotas disproportionately to Mexico's least Indigenous states: Jalisco and Guanajuato.

¹² María Herrera-Sobek, *The Bracero Experience: Elitlore versus Folklore* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center, 1979).

less as an organizer than as a lobbyist and scholar who left an archival trail of congressional testimony, correspondence with Mexican officials, and empirical research to back his claims against the merchants of labor. Like most US labor activists, he opposed Mexican migration as a threat to unionization and wages. His red-baiting, nativist strategies included vigilantism against so-called wetbacks and claims that bracero contracting opened the border to communist infiltration. Yet Galarza, a Pan-Americanist who lauded the wartime program for its beneficial impact on US-Mexican relations, later condemned it as a “discriminatory” measure that secured Mexican nationals “protections and guarantees which are not made available to American citizens.”¹³ Notably absent from Galarza’s exhaustive and caustic research is a single mention of “wage theft,” the historic injustice with which Loza begins and concludes her study.

Upon Mexico’s insistence, the initial accord included a compulsory 10 percent savings deduction, transferred to braceros upon return. Delayed payments prompted protests and the program’s 1947 termination. As Vézina reports, braceros recouped less than half their collective savings. Yet the forced savings plan affected less than 10 percent of the 4.6 million contracts issued by 1964. Loza offers the finest narrative to date of how this controversy reemerged in the late 1990s, when the son of an ex-bracero read his father’s 1942 contract and concluded that all braceros suffered this injustice. He launched a movement, called *Braceroproa*, that crossed the border and filed a (failed) US federal court case. Other pro-bracero activists soon launched rival organizations. Unscrupulous lawyers entered the scene, charging ex-braceros (or their widows) “exorbitant fees” (148) to file claims on their behalf. Loza narrates the publicity campaigns, legal strategies, and factional divides within this so-called Bracero Justice Movement (BJM), her catchall term for this transnational cause rooted in a “politics of dignity” (139).

Loza collaborated with *Braceroproa* activists in Mexico, and her interviewees clearly believed the flawed narrative of state-sanctioned wage theft, one reported widely in the US and Mexican press. Regarding the savings program’s 1947 termination, the BJM (i.e., Loza) “rejects the claim,” insisting that this “most heinous type of disenfranchisement” affected “every bracero paycheck throughout the life of the program” (143, 137). Her evidence includes archived petitions, all notably filed before 1948. Braceros who migrated later failed to protest because, unlike their wartime predecessors, they somehow did not “fully understand the contract” (138). In fact, the revised 1949 accord explicitly prohibited such deductions. None appear on digitized pay stubs archived in the BHA and cited by Loza (194, n. 70). The ex-braceros she interviewed even recollect wildcat strikes and protests filed with Mexican consuls over contract violations. They clearly knew their rights, which is why their defiance extended beyond their transgressive acts of leisure that Loza so richly narrates. Harder to understand is how (and why) historians maintain their claim that some four hundred thousand men contracted annually in 1954–1960 failed to understand the contract. Given that braceros are a passing generation, scholars and activists might better dignify their sacrifices by acknowledging the implausibility of such collective quiescence.

Since the Bracero Program’s termination, sixteen million Mexicans migrated to the United States, and Mexico surpassed Germany as the premier source of migrants. The BOHP interviews illustrate the strategies by which many ex-braceros and their families settled permanently, and legally, a consequential process that awaits its historian. Better studied are the clandestine migrants whose numbers mounted at century’s close. Roughly five million emigrants departed in 1995–2005 alone, and in the two decades after NAFTA’s passage remittances skyrocketed from \$3 billion to \$25 billion (and surpassed \$50 billion in 2021). In contrast to the bracero era, when *migradólars* offset the trade balance, they now became “Mexico’s de facto social policy in rural areas” (23). In 2008, Roy

¹³ See Snodgrass, “Dreams of Development.”

Germano interviewed pig farmers in Michoacán and coffee growers in San Luis Potosí to explore the local impact of remittances. He surveyed 768 households in ten Mexican communities to calculate whether and how this “significant, reliable and enduring safety net” (62) affected respondents’ political outlooks and voting behavior. In *Outsourcing Welfare*, Germano even adds a comparative perspective. Two of his five chapters use regional barometers—which notably include questions on remittances—to prove that altruistic transfers to Latin American and sub-Saharan African countries generated “feelings of economic security” so that recipients were “less angry at the government” (90, 98). However, Germano combines quantitative analysis with historical context and ethnographic fieldwork to make a more convincing case for rural Mexico. In addition to *Outsourcing Welfare*, Germano lets viewers hear the firsthand perspective of former migrants, community activists, and rural development officials in his excellent documentary, *The Other Side of Immigration*.¹⁴

Outsourcing Welfare surveys the changes wrought by neoliberalism on smallholder farmers and reviews scholarly debates on the developmental and political impact of remittances, in terms that undergraduates find accessible and provocative. Germano challenges commonplace claims that policymakers failed small farmers since the Green Revolution. Prior to the 1980s, state companies subsidized seed and fertilizer, offered credit and crop insurance on affordable terms, and purchased corn and coffee at above-market rates. His interviewees “remembered the old system of PRI patronage fondly” (28). Those policies and enterprises disappeared with neoliberal retrenchment and privatization (1982–1988). Farmers already struggled before NAFTA’s effects further decimated incomes. So as markets liberalized, small farmers hit the migrant trail across a “lightly patrolled US-Mexican border” (37). Their remittances replaced state supports to finance inputs and farmhand wages and thereby sustain what remains of small-scale pork and coffee industries. They cover food and healthcare costs while financing long-term investments in education, housing, and commerce. Sending communities thus traded historic dependence on PRI party patronage for support from altruistic migrants. His interviews in Huandacareo, Michoacán, appear in his documentary, where locals explain their experience of neoliberal cutbacks and the significance of remittances for individual families and sending-community economies. In this excellent teaching resource, students hear women express the pain of the absence of husbands and daughters, and old-timers reference border walls while many lament the limited availability of seasonal guest worker jobs. Germano advocates the benefits of “temporary labor agreements” (153–155) in contrast to ever more costly and risky alternatives.

Opponents of NAFTA predicted that neoliberal technocrats would expect migrants to absorb the shocks of rural displacement, and Germano confirms that outcome: “Mexican politicians outsourced welfare provisions to citizens abroad” (125). None stated this directly. But his interviewees assume that “the government wants us to migrate,” while rural development officers agree that optimism generated by remittances “relieves their offices of pressure” (56). In an instructive Methodological Appendix, Germano explains how he measured the impact of remittances on family incomes. His household survey relates those measures to recipients’ assessments of both household well-being and Mexico’s economic prospects. As readers might suspect, families in high-migration communities expressed less demand for government assistance. Germano then analyzes remittances’ impact on voting behavior. He concludes that “millions of poor remittance-receiving voters may have” tipped the 2006 election in the PAN’s favor, “forestalling a shift to the left in Mexico” (140). He offers no electoral results from his case-study municipalities. But the Huandacareo residents interviewed in his documentary express a more cynical fatalism toward elected officials, regardless of party. Moreover,

¹⁴ *The Other Side of Immigration*, dir. Roy Germano (United States, 2009).

twelve years later, remittances surged to record levels and the presumably leftist Morena candidate won the presidency. So this reviewer finds Germano's time-sensitive model less helpful than the chapter's overview of recent political science literature on migration and political behavior. Meanwhile, Germano balances quantitative analysis with an empathetic perspective that reminds readers that remittances are products of both migrants' "sense of duty" (8) and the sacrifices they endure in order to save: family separation, discrimination, hard jobs, long hours, and austere lives.

The risk of deportation compounds those hardships. Indeed the extent to which Mexican migrants upheld their duty to remit proved especially heroic in the decade that followed Germano's fieldwork, years when remittances grew as US authorities removed 2.6 million "criminal aliens." In *Deported Americans*, the legal scholar Beth C. Caldwell narrates the experience of 112 such deportees who joined this "deported American diaspora" (7). She limited her subjects to those who arrived as children and "spent their formative years in the United States" (11). The title reflects her "noncitizen" protagonists' dual identification. Mexican society perceives them as Americans although they were "expelled by the country they consider home" (4). Most arrived as children and possessed green cards. Mostly male, they included veterans, husbands, and fathers. Their stories illustrate the unforgiving nature of the early twenty-first-century deportation machine that prioritizes "judicial efficiency and finality" (19) over the well-being of their predominantly US-citizen families. Her heartbreaking anecdotes humanize these deported Americans whose affective allegiance to the United States makes them *de facto* citizens.

Caldwell's introductory chapter traces the historical origins of modern deportation law from its 1890s roots, when Congress secured its plenary power to regulate immigration. No title reviewed here offers a clearer analysis of the historical and contemporary association between race and immigration law. Her expertly written legal history culminates with the 1996 IIRIRA, which quadrupled the number of offenses classified as aggravated felonies and curtailed judicial discretion to offer hardship exemptions. One result was that immigration-related crimes (like reentry) made up 39 percent of federal convictions by 2015. Authorities remove 80 percent without court hearings, a lack of due process protection that alarms Caldwell's legal colleagues unfamiliar with immigration law. In contrast to Goodman's US-centric focus, she follows the deportation machine's effects into Mexico and the lives of its victims. Their titles illustrate the gripping focus of subsequent chapters: "Return to a Foreign Land," "Life after Deportation," "Deported by Marriage," and "Children of Deportees."

Deportees experience culture shock, alienation, fear, and stigmatization as presumed criminals upon their forced entry into Mexico. Her subjects arrive to a country where they often lack immediate family support, community ties, or even the personal documentation to access employment or education. Half of her interviewees attempted to return, unsuccessfully, while their life stories in Mexico take divergent paths. Some end up as homeless heroin addicts in Tijuana. Mixed-status families settle in border towns so that US-citizen spouses and children can commute for work or school. Most rebuild new lives in Mexico beyond *la frontera*. Their bilingual and bicultural competencies open job opportunities in tourism, language schools, or in new call center hubs like Mexico City. A deportation machine that enriches private prisons in the United States then expels a ready labor pool for this growing Mexican (and Salvadoran) service industry. Meanwhile, the deported Americans receive little support from the Mexican government and thus rely on nonprofit organizations or their own strategies of mutual aid to navigate new lives. Their children face the trauma of deported parents. Caldwell synthesizes new social science research on the educational and mental health consequences of family separation. Meanwhile, at least half a million US-citizen children joined the forced trek south, and they face the same stigmas and language barriers as adults while Mexico's underfunded public schools confront their own challenge of immigrant acculturation.

Caldwell admits that reforming this draconian immigration policy remains a “political challenge, to say the least” (185). She argues that the historic allowance of unauthorized entry and the tax-paying migrants’ economic contributions establish an “implied contract” that justifies a path to lawful residency. In contrast to a US system under which deportation entails lifelong removal, why not adopt a lawful path to return, as in Canada and Britain? Or Congress might exercise its plenary power and grant immigration courts the autonomy to consider the trauma and suffering that results from judicial removal. The judges she cites desire that discretionary authority. In the end, though, such change will only result from a “radical transformation” of public discourse from one that demonizes noncitizen migrants with minor criminal convictions “to one that recognizes their humanity” (185). A broad public reading of Caldwell’s *Deported Americans* would certainly inspire citizens to initiate that change.

Along with Roy Germano’s documentary, no title reviewed here resonated more powerfully with undergraduate students at our urban university than *Deported Americans*. For some, these two studies reflected the lived experiences of their immigrant families. One can lose hope reading migration studies of racial nativism, heartless deportations, and a Mexican government that never developed policies of managed integration for those whose remittances sustain communities. These reviewed titles counter that downside with upbeat narratives of human rights activists, well-intended diplomats, altruistic remitters, and defiant migrants. They illustrate how the innovative combination of archival sources and oral interviews allow social scientists to integrate analyses of elite policymaking with bottom-up narratives of suffering and resistance. I challenge students to develop research projects reflecting migrant opportunity and activism. So we should recall that over the past generation more than five million Mexican immigrants settled legally in the land of expulsion. An unprecedented pandemic taught many Americans of the essential role of immigrants as providers of our food and health care. Recent scholarship also illustrates their entrepreneurial role in revitalizing rural main streets and urban neighborhoods.¹⁵ More such studies will challenge a deportation machine that propagates narratives of Mexican migrants as criminal aliens.

Michael David Snodgrass is professor of Latin American history and director of global studies at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. In addition to publications on Mexican labor and working-class history, his research on Mexican emigration and return appears in edited volumes on the history of Mexican-US migration, labor in the Americas, and postrevolutionary Mexico, and in the journals *Istor: Revista de Historia Internacional* and *Comparative Studies in Society and History*.

¹⁵ Jesus Lara, *Latino Placemaking and Planning: Cultural Resilience and Strategies for Reurbanization* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2018); A. K. Sandoval-Strausz, *Barrio America: How Latino Immigrants Saved the American City* (New York: Basic Books, 2019).

Cite this article: Snodgrass, Michael David (2023). Deportation, Diplomacy, and Defiance: New Research on Mexican Migration. *Latin American Research Review* 58, 465–476. <https://doi.org/10.1017/lar.2022.74>