

Journal 8

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"Mexican Americans | American Mexicans"

1. *The three different periods of labor migration, and what caused the need in the U.S.* The first period began during WW2 and ended in 1947, the second was from 58-51, and the third from 51-64. The first one was smaller and primarily directed at the war effort, the second was less formal and many undocumented workers were legitimated, the third was the largest. They were primarily brought in as hired hands, temporary contract workers, usually for seasonal employment at low rates who returned to Mexico in the off-seasons. They made up a significant portion of the agricultural workforce in southwestern states, and so these states relied on them to bolster their economy in and out of war. In particular, during the war, it is noted that there would have probably been food shortages were it not for these workers.
2. *Demands of the Mexican Congress of 1931 for regulating foreign employment* The Mexican Congress was sensitive to the views of agricultural interests, and agreed to modify the bracero programs and policies. These included arrangements to safeguard workers' rights, which the growers deemed excessive but acquiesced to due to their need for labor. The agreements emphasized the temporary nature of such employment, but didn't put a time limit on the actual time periods or lengths - they could either be terminated by the government, or with 90 days notice by other parties. It also included minimum wages and certain guarantees for working conditions, as well as the right of the workers to cancel their contracts at any time. This marked a position of the US government assenting to the Mexican governments wants and standards.
3. *Statistics on braceros from 1942-1947* There was an estimated need of around 3,000 Mexican agricultural workers, while between 42 and 47 more than 100,000 were employed across 21 states. This included 4,000 men in 42, 52,000 in 43, and 62,000 in 44, dropping to around 30,000 in 47. Over 50% were employed in California agriculture, while the rest worked primarily on railroads and business farms. In 44, they made up 9% of all agricultural labor in the Pacific states and worked 10 million man-days for labor, resulting in a net worth of \$432 in crops. The cost to the federal government amounted to around \$113 million, or around \$450 per bracero, which essentially stood in for an agricultural subsidy during this time.

4. *Concerns and complaints of braceros* Many complained of prejudice and discrimination, substandard housing, poor food, and even physical mistreatment. Others recounted the harsh working conditions, exposure to pesticides, unjust deductions to their wages, as well as extra charges added on frivolously. It was even sometimes the case that weekly earnings totaled less than the cost of room and board itself, despite the fact that they travelled specifically for the promise of much higher wages than they might have obtained in Mexico. The most frequent complaint was regarding the quality of food, since room and board were often deducted from their wages and the food provided was poorly provided and of low quality, in addition to not at all catering to Mexican tastes. It was also often the case that the housing was shabby or pest-ridden, providing barely minimal shelter - they were often housed in broken trailer, old railroad cars, or chicken coops, although this was later slightly improved with the government implementation of labor camps. In Mexico, the drain of workers was often lamented, as well as their discriminatory treatment - this was an issue that may have been more difficult for the Mexicans working in the US to address, out of fear that there might be repercussions or lost opportunities as a result.

Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the U.S.

5. *What were the working conditions of Indians in Mexico* They were still a large community at the end of the 19th century, totaling over 1/3 of the population where over 2 million exclusively spoke native dialects. Diaz was convinced that they native population was "backward", despite the fact that his own ancestry was indigenous, and so he divided their populations and redistributed their lands to foreigners and the predominantly white Mexican upper class. This put large portions of land under the ownership of extremely few people - the article states that less than 3% of Mexican citizens owned land at all, while there was one wealthy person who owned several million acres. The indigenous populations were often reduced to working in haciendas or as peons, essentially under a form of slavery, and those who did not comply were punished. This subjugation was accompanied by a burgeoning anti-Indian prejudice among the general population, increasing racism throughout Mexico.

6. *Emiliano Zapata* He was a figure in the revolution around 1915 to attempt to overthrow US rule and reclaim the Southwest. This was launched by Madero, who was supported by the middle class instead of the working class, and came in the wake of financial downfalls after the rule of the Porfiriato. His victory came relatively easily, but he was supposedly assassinated shortly thereafter - this became the pattern for many other similar incidents. Zapata, an Indian, was one of the more dedicated revolutionary who fought for land and freedom, but was similarly assassinated around 1919. Overall, these revolutions resulted in great losses of life, but also showed a sense of Mexican/Indian strength and bravery that counteracted a common stereotype of cowardliness surrounding them at the time.

7. *Factors that drew immigrants from Mexico to the borderlands and American Southwest* The first reason mentioned is that there were already Mexican colonies established in these areas, and so this was a familiar place for them in terms of climate and geographical features. They also some themselves as indigenous to that region; distance also played a role, since the Southwest was very accessible, and railroads had been laid down linking it to the larger population centers in Mexico. There was also the incentive of financial aid provided by family members who had already journeyed to those areas, which led to chains of migrants, sometimes even from the same village, to these new locations. The primary

factor was the presence of jobs, however, where the majority came to work in mining, railroads, and maintenance industries.

8. *Asian farmworkers in the Pacific Coast* European immigration was in decline due to restrictive US policies, and the remaining Asians that worked in the fields slowly dwindled after 1900 until farm labor was mostly dominated by Mexican workers. Asian workers transitioned into other work, including owning farms themselves, while some left agriculture altogether. This led to a labor shortage going into the later wars, while agricultural production in the West simultaneously expanded greatly due to the rise of factory farms and large scale irrigation projects. By the 1930s, the Southwest had transitioned to producing nearly half of the US fruit and vegetable output, while large corporate farms began to become the dominating model. This also led to crops from other parts of the country transitioning to the Southwest as well, most notably cotton, all of which was labor intensive but only required unskilled labor - thus Mexicans became an indispensable part of the economic fabric of the Southwest.

9. *Campaign to restrict Mexican entry* There was already some level of racism and animosity towards Mexicans at first, which was exacerbated by the collapse of the economy around 1930. People associated the economic downturn with the arrival of Mexicans, denoting it the "Mexican Problem", which led to calls to clear previous immigration quota exemptions for Mexicans in the Southwest - usually for the same reasons we hear today, that it would depress wages and rob citizens of domestic jobs. Several Congressmen pushed legislation to do this, usually citing racist reasons, while others argued that their labor was indispensable. The legislation was ultimately stymied by the fact that large business interests from the Southwest had a hand in things, although popular opinion forced a bill making illegal entry into the US a criminal offense.

"The Myth of the Model Minority"

10. *Explain what the "model minority" stereotype is and why it's harmful.*

This has its roots in the success of earlier Asian immigrants, which the article says is commonly attributed to things like strong family values and work ethic which allowed them to get ahead, as opposed to things like government assistance. This is harmful because it is essentially another form of victim-blaming, in which people try to make it seem like those who are in the position of needing such governmental assistance have some kind of moral or personal failure that should be fixed by the individual themselves, as opposed to any external sources of aid. As the article mentions, it also espouses an idealist view of our society "working", and the American dream playing out in reality the exact same way it is often portrayed. It is inaccurate to stereotype in this way, because earlier immigrant groups had many more mitigating factors, such as their class status, both before and after immigration, which contributed to their success that did not have to do with race or culture at all. The largest form of harm is the fact that these arguments are used to withhold aid or even shut down social programs entirely.

11. *How does the trope of the model minorities cause issue with other minorities? What is the implication if you are not the "model"?* The article has a few spots where it highlights how these minorities are played off of other minorities, for example by indicating that Asian immigrants obtained good fortune from self-reliance, strong communities, and self-sufficiency, as opposed to civil rights activism or other governmental benefits - both of which are predominantly associated with other domestic poor minority communities. The fact that they bring up civil rights activism plays Asian immigrants off of African-Americans, highlighting some qualities in the former while simultaneously putting the latter down and implying that they lack these qualities. The implication is that if you are not the model, it is because of personal failings, or even more deeply tied to cultural traits that are somehow less desirable and conducive to success or prosperity.
12. *Describe what are considered advantages for people who emigrate from Asia to the United States?* A predominant advantage can be the set of expectations placed on such immigrants - if they are seen as minorities in the "model" category, it is possible that they would be more accepted in society, and more moral and emotional support would be provided in institutions like schools. They would be encouraged, although perhaps expected, to succeed, and this can have a significant effect on whether or not they do in fact succeed - contrast this to someone who is expected to fail, and is met with this prejudice at every turn. Their children could possibly be treated better in schools, as it is often cited that primary teachers preferentially give attention to those deemed bright or gifted - if this is a quality associated to your entire race or culture, then they can be enveloped in such an environment from a young age. This could also play into decisions like getting a loan or credit, to start a business or buy a house. If there is a positive model, this preconception can affect the very human people who make these kinds of decisions.
13. *What type of issues do disadvantaged Southeast Asians face in America?* As the article mentions, they are essentially lumped in with the rest of Asian immigrants, despite having very different backgrounds, needs, and issues facing them. One difference is that they are immigrating from a very recently war-torn country, possibly even becoming refugees in the process, and have distinct needs because of this. Their potential lack of education, coupled with their decreased opportunities to actually *obtain* an education, can also interfere with their ability to obtain jobs, leading to them becoming trapped in poverty and tied to systems like welfare. This in turn leads to them living in worse neighborhoods, which increases their chances to be exposed to crime, gang problems, and poor schooling.

"The Emergence of Yellow Power"

14. *How does Uyematsu say Asians have tried to transform themselves in the process of Americanization?* It is mentioned that Asian Americans, having achieved economic security, now essentially buy into and support a system that still systematically discriminates against them due to their non-whiteness. It mentions that they have given up their languages, customs, histories, and cultural values, and have adopted American replacements for all of these things. Essentially they have adopted an American way of life, while throwing away their physical heritage, which results in twisted form of hate against themselves. There is also a predilection to adopt whiteness in terms of looks and presentation, as the author exemplifies through lips, hair, height, size, and overall beauty standards.
15. *Explain how she says Asians are stereotyped, and how they have responded to that categorization.* She explains that they have been associated with a silent, passive image - while in fact this is something they themselves have come to start accepting and living, despite the fact that this stereotype was the result of fear and violence among early immigrants. She mentions that they've come to accept this in what she terms an "uneasy alliance", which serves to keep the attention off of their own minority status and on other groups, such as black people.

"The Cult of the Country Boy"

16. *Describe what style Elvis embraced, and why it was important at the time.* He embraced black culture, including musical styles, as well as hairstyles and fashion. He also embraced a form of sexuality that was unheard of at the time, in a very public format. Moreover, he also embraced a kind of rural status and imagery. This was important because he served as a role model to many people, but also because he helped bring these subcultures into the popular zeitgeist and actually normalize them. This had a significant effect on their acceptance, since media portrayal can be hugely influential. It is said that he whitened African American music, challenge conservative sexual mores, and helped associate a high class status with imagery that was traditionally associated with lower classes.
17. *The role of American suburbia, and who belonged and who did not* The landscape changed as poor whites moved north and created "hillbilly ghettos" within large cities. The chapter notes how the TV shows mentioned tapped into a larger anxiety that the idea of a cultural melting pot was not panning out, and that cultures still remained stratified based on things like class and status (in addition to race and culture). It notes that many Americans were still very class conscious, and ownership of a suburban home came to be associated with obtaining the American dream and thus a high class status. Zoning laws and geography contributed to this, keeping the working class in poorer areas while zoning expensive suburbia farther away, at a price and distance only affordable by the middle class. The article mentions the Beverly Hillbillies as well, which succeeded primarily by portraying poor, rural people in a place they "didn't belong", in this case a mansion in upper-class suburbia. The overall result was that suburbs became homogenous, "class conscious fortresses".

18. *Explain the imagery behind 'trailer park', 'vermin', and those labeled 'trash'.* Trailers themselves had been controversial since the 30s, but became more prevalent after they were produced en masse for war efforts and became more stigmatized as time went on - particularly because they were tied to instability, migrant workers, retired people, and the transient poor. It stood as the antithesis of the stable, fully-formed suburban outlets that were being built around this time that symbolized the new, highly coveted middle class lives that were portrayed in various media outlets. The trailers came to be associated with "tin cans", and when they were made stationary, they were thought of as slums built on top of city ruins. Coupled with the increased migration of poor white people into major cities where these trailer parks were set up, people came to associate words like "vermin" with the people and "junk yards" with the trailer parks they inhabited. They were generally seen as an eyesore, or a nuisance at best, as they were portrayed in suburban TV shows as being highly inconvenient. Although not directly associated, poor white people often became associated in the overall lexicon with trailers, and as a judge noted, vitriol directed at the trailers was could in essence become a form of targeted discrimination against the class of people that might inhabit them.
19. *What threat did integration pose for people like Hazel Bryan?* Having come from a low-class background and her family making their way into the working class, as the article says, she realized that the only way she wouldn't be cast to the bottom of the social hierarchy would be to have a class lower than hers - in this case, it revolved around exploiting racial tensions at the time to specifically put black students in this position. This was an effect of the class hierarchy present in their town, which she became aware of despite being at a young age and moving there relatively early. The threat that integration posed was to push her own social status and class farther down the totem pole, so to speak, thus relieving her of any advantages she might have had because of her position.
20. *How does the southern stereotype lend to imagery surrounding the 'trash'?* The imagery found its way into popular media, including epithets like redneck, "tobacco-chewing white men", "slattern housewives" and "harpies", and even outright "poor white trash". These are similar in nature to names such as "clay-eater" used many years beforehand, as well as names like mountain or swamp people. In particular, many of these involve physical or cultural characteristics that are present in Southern states, or physical attributes that might just be a result of living in those geographic areas or being far from more developed coastal cities. The terms for poor people and Southerners seem to have been intricately tied to one another, which is odd when you compare it to depictions such as "Gone With the Wind", a movie aired around this time that depicted the South much like Victorian England or something similar. The imagery shifted abruptly to include things like physical deformities (such as the cross-eyed man in one picture), premature aging, or decaying teeth, which came to be associated with both Southern people and "trash" in other parts of the country as well.

Jim Crow Guide, "Chapter 9" (Forced Labor)

21. *Explain how much the forced laborer has to work, and analyze where the ideologies of their work load stem from* When it came to people of color, essentially any part-time labor seemed to qualify as vagrancy, and people would be convicted of vagrancy for working anything less than half-time. During this era, that may have been anywhere from 20-30 era, as the concept of full-time employment was somewhat in flux between 1900 and 1930. Despite the fact that a constant percentage of the population was unemployed at any given time, these laws were still acted upon - and in particular, the enforcing officers could act beyond these laws due to racial profiling or discrimination. Later in the article, it is mentioned that the working day lasts from before dawn until after dark.
22. *Elaborate on the concept of 'debt slavery' and explain the issues with it* The issue is that although slavery in its old forms was prohibited, many vestiges of it live on in the form of debt slavery. As discussed in the article, this was evident in "peonage", where employees were required to room and board with a company and pay for it. Since they had no choice in the matter, since they needed to do this just to work in the first place, the companies were then able to charge exorbitant prices for these amenities. This kept the workers perpetually in debt, and thus continually obliged to work for the company just to survive, and the company had law enforcement agencies on their side due to the aforementioned vagrancy laws. The issue is that while there are guarantees against forced labor, debt slavery essentially reaches all of the same outcomes without using any of the same methods, and thus flies under the radar and is completely legal and supported by the government. This also allowed similarly bad work conditions to take place, since the workers were powerless - instances includes lynching, flogging, rape, and castor oil treatment in labor camps.
23. *What role does forced labor take on the entire victimized family?* The headhunters were paid extra to bring in entire families, so this practice was incentivized. Wives were subject to the same kind of mistreatment if they did not wake their husbands in time and have them ready, and were essentially held as hostages during the day so that the men would not try to escape during their day labor. One instance is recounted where a man's children were held due to a \$200 debt, and he was then thrown in jail for having abandoned them after going to court to protest. One man's wife was sent to jail for refusing to reveal where her runaway husband had gone. So it was often the case that punishment for one person's debts could be enacted on any other person in the family, or often on all of them, either directly or indirectly. They could either be fined or sentenced by the law, punished by the bosses in worker camps, or deprived of their husbands or fathers and most of their livelihood if they were jailed. Women were often forced into roles as domestic servants, and subjected to sexual abuse.

24. *Explain the international phenomena of forced labor* These accounts were brought before a UN committee, at which the author testified at his own travel expenses. The first responses to his testimony was that the workers could not be held in "forced" labor when they voluntarily signed their work contracts, although it is clear that economic (and other) pressures can substitute for such force. The author argues that the government was complicit in these actions, and in fact economically relied on them being carried out and actively created a legislative and judicial system that allowed them to be carried out with impunity. He calls these laws out as a thin veil for forced labor systems, and that their inaction contributed to the types of "enforcement" enacted by bosses described above. Meanwhile, the laws that might serve to protect these laborers were not often enforced, and the author asked that the world's attention be brought to bear on these injustices. In response, the author's responses were suppressed in the media, despite the fact that they had freely communicated similar charges that were brought against other countries in the past, and his remarks were made only a footnote in the final report. He was essentially dismissed as not having any proof, despite his presentation of recorded accounts of laborers, and it wasn't until 1957 that the US was forced to agree to the prohibition of labor camps and forced labor.