

Aaron Ziskin

Dr. Bridger

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### The Repatriation of Mexicans-Americans to America

When looking back on the short history of America one could easily categorize the countless times it has exploited foreign labor. It need not depend on time period or even region of the United States, the continual practice is always evident, often transgressing several races. The typical Californian knows a few examples of this exploitation, whether it be the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 or the better documented Executive Order 9066, calling for Japanese internment; however few Californians, let alone Americans, know about one of the biggest exploitations and deportations. This exploitation was coined as Mexican Repatriation, it constituted the removal of any 'illegal' Mexican immigrants, and their subsequent repatriation (or deportation) back to Mexico. Unfortunately for countless Americans of Mexican origin, the undertaking of this extensive deportation did not distinguish between legal and illegal immigrants. Throughout the 1930s, Repatriation relocated countless Mexicans, upwards of a million (actual figures are debated) back to Mexico where they resided for several years, working primarily in villages and colonies established for farming.<sup>1</sup> The deplorable nature of how the United States chose to treat Mexican-Americans at this time is catalyzed by the fact that they were met with poor social and economic conditions upon returning to Mexico. Looking at the social factors that allowed such discrimination and racism opens the door to a multitude of possible conclusions. By determining how and why repatriation operated, one gains a perspective

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<sup>1</sup> Bogardus, Emory S. *The Mexican in the United States*. New York: Arno, 1970. Print.

on America's most expansive exploitation of labor. This legal racism was taken in stride by the American public, who allowed Repatriation to occur for several years, deporting countless citizens of Mexican heritage. As World War II began, however, labor necessities required the renewed importation of laborers, signaling a change in the American perspective. But the question remains, was this change solely due to the necessity of foreign labor in American fields? This period, and the start of the Bracero (work) Program, mark the beginning of changing relations between Mexico and America. The fact that Mexican labor was brought back after the Depression to fill the void Mexican laborers left when they were repatriated, is unique to American history. Typically when a immigrating group is targeted, after first being subjected to racism and discrimination, they are simply replaced in the labor force with another nationality for example, Japanese/Eastern and Southern European's immigration increased after the Chinese Exclusion Act...and Mexicans after the Immigration Quota Act of 1924. This area of study is interesting because it helps to bridge the discrimination and cause of Repatriation with the social and economic changes that allowed for the Bracero program.

When delving into others' research, the justifications and logic behind the Repatriation Program began to emerge. There were several theories behind the cause of repatriation, however most boil down to a few of the same main points. The most prominent point relied heavily on the American view of an impoverished, illiterate, and lazy Mexican.<sup>2</sup> Scholars such as Elizabeth Fuller claim that this was the perception, false or not, of Mexican attitudes and lifestyles. In many American minds Mexican immigrants were taking advantage of undue welfare and housing arrangements; while also sending money home and contributing to neither society nor the American economy. These factors along with the American media's portrayal of Repatriation

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<sup>2</sup> Fuller, Elizabeth, and Jay S. Stowell. *Perspectives on Mexican-American Life*. New York: Arno, 1974. Print.

as mutually beneficial for Mexico and America allowed Anglo-Americans to pursue a strict race-based policy. Common arguments look toward racially motivated unrest driven by the large emergence of Mexican labor prior to the Depression. These arguments claim that the Depression was the final catalyst for anti-Mexican sentiment, and the ultimate driving force behind America's pursuit of Repatriation.

Understanding the nature of American society leading up to Repatriation helps to clarify why Mexican-Americans were the perfect scapegoat; the book *Perspectives on Mexican American Life* (consisting of two essays from 1920 & '21), entertains both sides of this debate. The first author, Elizabeth Fuller, discussed the urgent need for action against the growing Mexican population; and even goes on to list eleven problems their presence either directly or indirectly caused.<sup>3</sup> This perspective can be understood as running congruent with that of countless other beliefs American held, especially those of unemployed Anglo-Americans. The minority argument, which is advocated by Jay Stowell, attempts to understand the culture and customs of the immigrating Mexicans before judging. Although Stowell believed that the assimilation (or acculturation) of Mexican-Americans was vital to their survival, he also understood the importance of a friendly relationship between the United States and Mexico/Mexicans. He believed that our nations are intrinsically linked and to simply force a separation could potentially lead to numerous harmful consequences on both sides of the border.

This argument, that Mexico and America are intrinsically linked, played out after Repatriation as Mexico's economy stalled and the American workforce began to dwindle. Overall, these arguments tend to get grouped in either pro-American or pro-Mexican perspectives and typically only encompass the years leading up to Repatriation and rarely the

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<sup>3</sup> Fuller, Elizabeth, and Jay S. Stowell. *Perspectives on Mexican-American Life*. New York: Arno, 1974. Print.

operation itself. From the American perspective, Mexican-Americans were threatening actual citizens' way of life, leading to a blind hatred, which during the Depression allowed for this extensive deportation (or Repatriation) to happen. When looking at post-Repatriation America an intriguing notion arises of Mexican laborers filling the void left by Mexican workers after their exodus. When doing research, Repatriation and the Bracero Program were typically discussed separately (apart from chronological histories of the Mexican-American experience) which piqued my curiosity in such a topic. In order to pursue this topic it was important to understand the true nature of the Bracero program, which on its face seemed systematically one-sided, in favor of America. Overall, it was difficult determining how and why Mexicans were able to come back after being so vehemently discriminated against, besides the blatant demand from the economic necessity. Therefore in order to figure out the true social changes that allowed them to return, it is important to research the Bracero Program.

While looking through a few articles about the Bracero Program I began to realize the inadvertent effect such a program had on those who participated in it. This program had unfortunately lead to a skewed view that migrant Mexican Braceros were good workers, but not good citizens. This coupled with their treatment and continued discrimination was intriguing, especially when taking into account the publicly stated reasons for such a program. Originally it was created as a wartime necessity (due to a shrinking farm labor supply), but as the program progressed it became a vital source of cheap, experienced labor for agricultural owners throughout America. This program by nature was opposed by countless parties, most notably many Anglo-Americans and the Mexican Government, however these sides had very different objections from each other. Overall, the Bracero program helped to bring thousands of Migrant workers to America; unfortunately they were not recognized by Americans as trying to help



(possibly because they were being forced to help) which in the end did not help to curtail American racism. The acceptance of the Bracero program is remarkable considering its opposition, however it operated for numerous years, raising questions, yet again, as to how and why? In previous years the United States had simply barred a nationality, in favor of another that would better suit American interests; however in this instance, despite the vehement racism, Mexicans returned shortly after being deported.

When trying to better understand how Mexicans came back during the Bracero Program, it is important to look at other races who were used for labor (or whose population experienced an influx within America) and why the United States instituted the policies it did to severely curtail their immigration. First was the Chinese. These workers were depicted as a foreign menace who, with continued immigration, would have disastrous effects on American society. This racism derived from similar origins as that of Mexican immigrants, who were also 'stealing' American jobs; however Americans were more familiar with Mexicans leading to a less irrational fear. The idea of the Chinese as a 'Yellow Peril' terrified many Anglo-Americans and the festering fear quickly caused America to pass the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which constituted an abrupt stop of most 'legal' Chinese immigration. With a reduced number of Chinese the irrational fear in Anglo America began to subside, at least that is until the early 20th century. During this period Japanese immigration had systematically replaced the Chinese, however as their presence in society increased, a new fear arose once again in Anglo-America. Living in a xenophobic America, many Japanese struggled to adapt and in 1917 they too were excluded by the newly passed Asiatic Barred Zone. This Act was a death-blow for immigration from Asiatic nations and the Pacific Islands; which were all now severely hindered, if not completely stopped. One of the final noticeable cases has to do with the culmination of the

Immigration Acts of 1919, '21, and '24. All of these Acts built upon each other to stop the flood of immigrants coming from Eastern and Southern Europe. After World War I the United States regressed into an isolationist nation and as citizens learned of the anti-capitalistic nature of many of these radical immigrants a fear emerged. Countless Anglo-American citizens worried an influx of these immigrants could cause a revolution of sorts, and if not a weakening of America's government. In the end, there are several examples of American Immigration Acts targeting a specific race, but it is important to look at, why. In these cases an overriding fear in the public caused the government to react in the way that they did. When looking at Mexicans Repatriates the abovementioned 'Fear' did not seem to be a factor. What drove the government toward Repatriation were economic concerns: Mexicans stole jobs and didn't contribute to society. These justifications contrast with the other cases of a great and immediate threat motivating the American government to stop the immigration of a specific nationality or race. The lack of this distinct 'Fear' is the most prudent factor when considering how and why Mexicans were allowed to return to America and fill their own void.

As the United States was entering the twentieth century it had already seen the rise and fall of one imported labor force, the Chinese. The strict denial constituted by the Chinese Exclusion Act was also felt by Japan and many other Pacific oriented Asiatic Nations, all of whose access was hindered. Despite this, there still remained a relatively large labor force to pull from as many poor Europeans were looking for a way or place to achieve a better life. European immigration would however be severely curtailed by the outbreak of World War I and subsequent Immigration Quota Acts. These Acts derived from a post-World War I xenophobic and isolationist America, setting quotas on immigration that would be felt hardest by Eastern and Southern Europeans. The implementation of the immigration quota terrified growers and

farmers who began fearing they would no longer have access to the cheap labor this mass migration offered. Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez's book, *Decade of Betrayal* illustrates how in 1926 agricultural owners "pleaded [with Congress] for the admission of Mexican workers because 'nothing else was available.'"<sup>4</sup> This endorsement was a godsend for countless rural Mexican farmers who, for the past several years, had been plunged into a brutal and chaotic civil war. The Mexican Civil War brought about, "Inflationary prices, fear of starvation, the dread of having ones land and goods forcibly taken, and the fear of a violent death [which all] contributed to the reasons that Mexicans entered the United States."<sup>5</sup> These issues, which Manuel Machado highlights, create a clear image as to why Mexican nationals were seeking something better. Throughout the 1910s and '20s Mexican immigration flourished; according to the US Census upwards of 600,000 Mexican nationals legally entered the United States.<sup>6</sup> This number added to the Mexican American population and the 1930 census "calculated that approximately 1,422,533 Mexican nationals and Mexican-Americans lived in the United States."<sup>7</sup> The ever increasing population, illustrated by these two statistics, can be attributed to the growing illegal immigration and the fact that it was the first census that Mexican was an option in the race category.<sup>8</sup> Regardless of the cause, the increased presence of the Mexican population led to racism within Anglo-America, as Mexicans (citizens and otherwise) were being constantly discriminated against in most American cities.

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<sup>4</sup> Balderrama, Francisco E., and Raymond Rodriguez. *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico, 1995. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Machado, Manuel A. *Listen Chicano!: An Informal History of the Mexican-American*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1978. Print. 60.

<sup>6</sup> Reyes, Ignacio. *A Survey of the Problems Involved in the Americanization of the Mexican-American*. San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1972. Print.

<sup>7</sup> Balderrama, Francisco E., and Raymond Rodriguez. *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico, 1995.9.1

<sup>8</sup> "1930 US Census." 1930. U.S. Census Bureau, 31 Mar. 2015. Web. 15 May 2015.  
<[https://www.census.gov/history/www/through\\_the\\_decades/index\\_of\\_questions/1930\\_1.html](https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/index_of_questions/1930_1.html)>.

This reaction is seen countless times in American history, however in the past it seemed to be driven by fear, the so called 'Yellow Peril' of the Chinese and, later, fear of the anti-capitalistic nature of radicals from Eastern and Southern Europe. Racism toward Mexicans can be seen deriving from a false sense of superiority within Anglo-America. These Citizens felt Mexicans were better suited for hard manual labor, because of their size, and therefore required less compensation. In reality these were the only jobs Mexican immigrants could arrange when lacking an American education. Without a competitive job market farmers and growers were able to set the pay whether fair or not. The steady increase of Mexicans within the United States can be attributed to many things, however its stark ending in 1931 can only be attributed to one, Repatriation.

Within two years of the Great Depression Mexican immigration had halted. Throughout the 1930s an average of 3,200 Mexicans immigrated to America; this number pales in comparison to the whopping average of roughly 46,000 in the '20s.<sup>9</sup> Coupled with this drastic decrease in Mexican immigrants came a steady stream of racism as during the Depression Anglo-Americans felt they deserved work before these lowly immigrants. This desire helped to create a new image of Mexicans within America, one driven solely by racism and jealousy. The image portrayed was of a low-class beast without any education or ambition; on top of this the idea of a 'lazy Mexican' arose as a small portion of Mexican immigrants opted for American welfare.

The proportion of Mexicans actually on welfare, in reality, was drastically outshined (even on average) by that of his white (Anglo) counterpart. One example from South Texas showed how, "In 1938....about 22 percent of the individual workers [Mexicans] were

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<sup>9</sup> Meier, Matt S., and Feliciano Ribera. *Dictionary of Mexican American History*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1981. Print.

unemployed...only 9 percent of all families, however, reported any income from public assistance..." on top of this, "Almost all Mexicans were excluded from coverage by the unemployment compensation and old-age insurance provisions of the Social Security Act because they were not American citizens."<sup>10</sup> This point, illustrated by Paul Taylor, uncovers a common misconception that Mexican immigrants were abusing welfare; when in reality very few were actually documented properly enough to receive any government assistance. Regardless of these facts the dominant Anglo viewpoint of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans was that they were an "undesirable class of residents" who would do "evils to the community."<sup>11</sup> Attitudes toward Mexican immigrants (legal or not) began to sour as citizens took note of their severe lack of assimilation or acculturation to American society. "Proud of their cultural heritage, Mexican Nationals saw no reason to pledge allegiance to a Nation that viewed all Mexicans as second-class citizens."<sup>12</sup> The authors of *Decade of Betrayal* were a few of the first to attribute these immigrants lack of assimilation to a personal choice made by each individual; and not a defiant act.

As the Depression sunk in and unemployment soared, the United States Government began to look for new avenues to relieve pressure. The Depression was felt worldwide and as Mexico's economy plummeted, its interest in the vast amount of Mexican Nationals within America skyrocketed. The Mexican Government viewed the time these workers had spent in America as schooling and felt these men could come back to productively teach modern farming techniques to citizens in rural Mexican colonies. Due to the ever increasing racism within

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<sup>10</sup> Taylor, Paul S. *Mexican Labor in the United States*. New York: Arno, 1970. Print. 46.

<sup>11</sup> Hoffman, Abraham. *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939*. Tucson: U of Arizona, 1974. Print. 14.

<sup>12</sup> Balderrama, Francisco E., and Raymond Rodriguez. *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico, 1995. 24

America and the drastic economic situation in Mexico the two governments discussed a plan of Repatriation. This plan was part of a program the United States had been pursuing for the previous few years. Beginning around 1928 America started instituting new policies that severely curtailed the amount of Mexican work visas allocated per year. In Abraham Hoffman's *The Repatriation of Mexican Nationals from the United States*, he discusses how as the Great Depression hit, "The movement of Mexicans southward was generally accelerated..."<sup>13</sup> He moves on to discuss how during the Winter of 1929-30 the first repatriates began to return to Mexico. For several years Mexican immigrants were seen voluntarily moving home in look of any work, however in 1931 the Department of Labor's Bureau of Immigration would begin the Federal Deportation Campaign. Abraham Hoffman illustrates how the campaign was undertaken on two levels, the first was, "the repatriation programs organized by local public and private welfare agencies, representing an intensification of an earlier effort; the other, as part of a campaign of threatened deportation, undertaken by the federal government."<sup>14</sup> This understanding of the program perfectly displays the ambiguity of who authorized and carried out the Repatriation Program. In the end, the deportation of Mexicans was carried out mainly by local officials, with some help from federal officers. These officers, would typically encourage the efforts of Repatriation by claiming the program was mutually beneficial for Americans and Mexicans, however the threat of deportation subtly loomed in their policies. This technique allowed for a two front attack, first local officials performed deportations in an attempt to motivate Mexicans to return with fear. While their federal counterparts incentivized the return in an attempt to make the decision easier.

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<sup>13</sup> Hoffman, Abraham. *The Repatriation of Mexican Nationals from the United States during the Great Depression*. Dissertation. Los Angeles: UCLA, 1970. Print. 197. 54.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 58.

After understanding how Repatriation operated it is important to look at why it was instituted. *Decade of Betrayal* discusses how, “The intent of repatriation was threefold: to return indigent nationals [Mexicans] to their own country...to save welfare agencies money, and to create jobs for Americans. These concepts were reinforced and justified by the prevailing belief that ‘those people would be better off in Mexico with their own kind’ therefore, repatriation was viewed as a humanitarian gesture.”<sup>15</sup> This logic allowed for one of the most unprecedented deportation programs that ever existed, expelling upwards of a million Mexicans. The range of people targeted by Repatriation is appalling, however it helped to drastically increase the detrimental effect their absence would cause within America.

The Great Depression acted as a catalyst, intensifying society, xenophobia, and American isolationism, but most notably was an increasing distrust of anyone foreign. Being the backbone of America's labor force, Mexicans (and Mexican Americans) took the brunt of this societal unrest. As life became more difficult for these immigrants, many but not all looked for alternative opportunities to thrive. Unfortunately for most a sweeping program known as Repatriation was just around the corner. This program was not federally authorized, but rather, “it was primarily a local undertaking carried out by the city, county, and state governments, or by a combination of all three.”<sup>16</sup> The shadowy nature of who actually carried out this program led to abuses and the widespread deportation of Mexicans. Mexicans on welfare were the first to go, those who had ‘stolen’ American jobs were next. In order to avoid the humiliation of being forcibly repatriated, countless immigrated later under their own will. The actual number of repatriated Mexicans is open to debate; however, “According to figures attributed to the US

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<sup>15</sup> Balderrama, Francisco E., and Raymond Rodriguez. *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico, 1995. 120.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 120.

Labor Department and cited by *El Universal*, on August 22, 1932, 2,000,000 Mexicans had returned home during the past fifteen months.”<sup>17</sup> Although this number is typically seen as a bit high it helps solidify the understanding that countless Mexicans were uprooted and affected by the program. Also, within the mass population of deportees were an incalculable amount of Mexican-Americans who, being born in the United States, were legal citizens. These immigrants were shown no special discretion and, “once such a policy was adopted, it was often applied indiscriminately, and many (actually more than half) who were ‘repatriated’ were native-born Americans.”<sup>18</sup> The amount of actual American citizens repatriated fluctuates depending on the total number of repatriates an individual statistic claims; but the percentage of more than half being natural born American is standard in most figures.

Many of the Mexicans deported during Repatriation were American but not Anglo (white) Americans; this helps display how Anglo Americas lack of regard for social justice was driven by a blind hatred and distrust of anyone foreign. The mass round-ups and deportations of Mexican residents in the United States lasted upwards of six years never really having a definitive start or finish. The effects of this sweeping program could almost immediately be seen, however it was not quite what Anglo America had in mind. Instead of filling the jobs Mexicans had ‘stole,’ many Anglo workers felt the type of labor to be demeaning for the amount of compensation, which was still at a higher rate than what Mexican laborers had previously received at home or abroad. This lull in the labor supply could be seen affecting agricultural businesses throughout the nation. Without a dependable workforce agricultural owners who grew time sensitive crops feared their livelihood would be at stake.

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<sup>17</sup> Balderrama, Francisco E., and Raymond Rodriguez. *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico, 1995. 150.

<sup>18</sup> Moquin, Wayne, and Van Doren Charles Lincoln. *A Documentary History of the Mexican Americans*. New York: Praeger, 1971. Print. 299.-



Immediately following the onset of Repatriation a strict line of supporters and protesters emerged. The supporters were in an extremely delicate position trying to defend a blatantly race-based policy, which also had very questionable legality. By not attempting to differentiate between Mexican-American citizens and Mexican nationals, the Repatriation program could be seen as violating countless guaranteed rights. Fortunately for the supporters, a large population of poor constituents (mostly unemployed Anglo Americans) felt that Mexican Repatriation could, and would, cure the ails of the Depression. These views were voiced in countless newspaper articles written throughout the nation, from New York to Los Angeles. Many of these articles took extraordinary steps in order to justify Repatriation, however they failed to take the personal injustices toward the repatriated Mexicans into account. One such article from a 1933 Los Angeles Times discussed how the unemployment problem in America would actually benefit Mexico's economy; it went on to say "the value to Mexico by the return of the 13,000 Mexicans versed in the ways of American agriculture is unlimited..."<sup>19</sup> In an attempt to justify their policies the United States made it seem as though it was doing Mexico a favor by teaching Mexican workers new, advanced, farming techniques.

This logic illustrates the complete lack of regard for the actual repatriated Mexicans; these families were forcibly removed from their homes and communities and sent back to Mexico, stripping any sense of their self-worth. The Mexico that they returned to was unfamiliar. Numerous American articles praised the government established farm colonies, however these places were shaping up to be disastrous. The colonies were solid in theory; they were set up to try and help stimulate Mexican society by putting Repatriates back to work, but their implementation and direction failed. The colonies went from "a peak of between five and seven

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<sup>19</sup> "Repatriation of Mexicans Wins Praise." *Los Angeles Times* (1923-Current File), Mar 22, 1933.

hundred repatriates in April-May 1933 but, by the following February only eight colonists remained, governed by fifteen administrators.”<sup>20</sup> This quote perfectly describes the failure of these colonies, in both implementation and effect. Oddly enough the other main supporter of Repatriation was the Mexican Government itself. Abraham Hoffman a historian from UCLA discussed how the program was applauded in Mexican newspapers as “Word of [American] exploitation or unfair treatment was quickly communicated to the Mexican public.”<sup>21</sup> The Mexican Government felt that they had an opportunity to help out these abused workers; unfortunately, their policies would fail. On top of this the return of these nationals was seen as a chance to revive a stalling Mexican economy. With an increasing labor force the Mexican government was extremely optimistic, however as was stated earlier with the failed colonies, things were not going according to their plan. For Mexico the economic situation brought on by the depression, coupled with the struggle to quell long term revolutionary fervor stunted its ability to flourish. Overall, the supporters of Repatriation saw harmony at work. The United States poor treatment and constant promise of jobs in Mexico compelled Mexicans to return, while in Mexico the Government sat with open arms promising adequate work and fair treatment.

For the Mexican nationals forced to repatriate returning home was not an intriguing offer, but a necessity. *Decade of Betrayal* illustrates this point by including a report issued by the American Consul from 1930. This source discusses how, "A Mexican coming from a large Mexican settlement...stated that almost all [his fellow workers] were planning to return to

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<sup>20</sup> Hoffman, Abraham. *The Repatriation of Mexican Nationals from the United States during the Great Depression*. N.p.: n.p., 1970. Print. 205.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid 194.

Mexico because of lack of work.”<sup>22</sup> Many returned with false promises of profitable work and stable housing, however Mexico failed to account for, “repatriates [that] had returned home not with the intention of participating in colonization projects or land purchases, but because Mexico seemed preferable to the United States in a period of depression.”<sup>23</sup> Regardless of their reason to return Mexicans faced desolate conditions, “70 percent of Mexico’s total land area was in farms, while only 10 percent of her total land area was classified as ‘tillable,’ of this 10 percent (some 49 million acres), approximately 46 percent (some 22 Million acres) lay fallow.”<sup>24</sup> This statistic helps to display the ambitious nature of Mexico, unfortunately her plans were not completely thought through or realistic. Only helping to exacerbate this problem, Mexican job competition skyrocketed as Repatriation correlated to a population boom within Mexico.

As Repatriation progressed through the 1930s, some of the first American objectors became known. Without a steady labor force numerous agricultural growers found it increasingly difficult to meet demands. Richard Craig discussed how, “in spite of efforts by growers to secure them, domestic farm laborers were simply not available in sufficient numbers when they were needed.”<sup>25</sup> These businessmen’s plea for a cheap, mobile labor force was one of the first instances of American protest to Repatriation. In the late 30s with the onset of World War II just around the corner these agricultural owners strove for the renewed allowance of foreign labor especially in areas of America affected by the labor shortages because of the war. This push led

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<sup>22</sup> Balderrama, Francisco E., and Raymond Rodriguez. *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico, 1995. Print. 154.

<sup>23</sup> Hoffman, Abraham. *The Repatriation of Mexican Nationals from the United States during the Great Depression*. 1970. Print. 197.

<sup>24</sup> Wylie, Kathryn H. *Mexico as a Market and Competitor for U.S. Agricultural Products*. Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1957. Print. 10.

<sup>25</sup> Craig, Richard B. *The Bracero Program; Interest Groups and Foreign Policy*. Austin: U of Texas, 1971. Print. 24.

government officials to once again look toward Mexico for help; and with the founding of the Bracero 'Work' Program a more regulated, governmental plan was put into action.

Within the few short years between Repatriation and the inception of the Bracero Program (1942) society within America and Mexico had trouble adapted to their new conditions. Mexico was still reeling from the Depression, and due to the influx of repatriates from America, it was having trouble staying afloat. As mentioned earlier, the programs and colonies arranged for repatriated workers were failing and things became increasingly desperate in both urban and rural Mexico. As laborers returned and struggled to survive, they began pleading with the Government for assistance. In their opinion, the money they had been sending back to Mexico while working in the United States (reported in the millions in *Decade of Betrayal*) had fueled its economy in hard times, and they wanted their just compensation. These new arrivals had been a part of a more open society in America which encouraged them to demand fairer treatment once back in Mexico. "Their situation was aggravated by the fact that there were several diverse groups involved in adjusting to life in a stratified and authoritarian Mexican society."<sup>26</sup> This problem was intensified when looking toward the children of Mexicans born within America, they had become accustomed to American ways and were struggling to adapt once back in Mexico. These were just a few of the social issues that plagued Mexico prior to the Bracero program.

When looking at America a much different scenario emerges. By the time Repatriation had ended America was well on its way to recovering from the Great Depression and was turning its aim toward international affairs, most notably World War II Europe. America's industrial sector was booming as it began producing for the Allies and ramping up its own military in

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<sup>26</sup> Balderrama, Francisco E., and Raymond Rodriguez. *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico, 1995. Print. 237.

preparation for World War II. This transition of the workforce into factory and military occupations led farmers and growers in the agricultural business to fear an imminent work shortage. These fears were quelled on August 4 1942 after much pleading with the United States Government led to the foundation of the Mexican Work Program (or Bracero Program).

Several years after Repatriation was phased out of American policy, society within the United States had finally adjusted and was getting back to normal. The relationship between Mexico and America had seen a lot of tension as, “the flow of farm labor to and from Mexico continued in a sporadic pattern during the interwar [WWI & WWII] years.”<sup>27</sup> American necessity for foreign labor would again be needed with the onset of World War II and as it began looking for help, familiar faces appeared. The intriguing nature of Mexican labor filling the void they seemingly helped create can only be discussed once analyzing the Bracero Program and its stipulations.

The situation in Mexico was drastically different than society within America, few repatriates let alone Mexicans were finding any success. As mentioned earlier, there was a scarce amount of practical farmland available to Mexican farmers and as a result Mexico experienced a rural-urban migration. Poor farmers looking to make anything began infiltrating Mexican cities in search of factory or industrial work. “Those peasants not migrating to the cities chose one of two remaining alternatives: continued bare subsistence off the land, or migration north to the United States.”<sup>28</sup> This was not a difficult choice for most; when considering wages, the lowest rung on the United States economic ladder (Migrant Farmworker) earned considerably more than

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<sup>27</sup> Craig, Richard B. *The Bracero Program; Interest Groups and Foreign Policy*. Austin: U of Texas, 1971. Print. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 16.

most Mexicans.<sup>29</sup> With the sense that a labor agreement would be mutually beneficial, America and Mexico began the Bracero program.

Beginning in 1942 Braceros could legally enter the United States to temporarily work in Agricultural fields and areas with diminished labor supplies caused by the draft and World War II. The ‘Mexican Farm Labor Program’ was an agreement between the two nations which helped set rules and regulations for both Mexican workers and American farmers. This agreement lasted nearly a decade when, in 1951, “Congress approved Public Law 78, which added Title 5 to the Agricultural Act of 1949 and which served as the statutory basis for Bracero contracting...”<sup>30</sup> The stipulations of the newly adapted program required growers to be experiencing an actual worker shortage and proof that the employer had tried, unsuccessfully, to hire American labor (at wages/hours comparable to Mexican workers).

The new program also described the need for established ‘recruitment centers’ in Mexico. The centers could send viable worker candidates to ‘reception centers’ in America wherein they would officially sign a Bracero work contract. Contracts such as these provided Bracero workers with certain basic rights: competitive pay, affordable meals, adequate housing, occupational insurance, and finally free transportation back to Mexico after their work period ended. Richard Craig’s in depth look at the stipulations of the Bracero Program uncover how, unfortunately for the Bracero worker like “other agreements, it contained a great deal of vagueness.”<sup>31</sup> The basic rights afforded to Mexican migrants within the contract were littered with legal jargon and hidden stipulations which allowed Agricultural owners a chance, which they took, to exploit the commodity they had desired most.

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<sup>29</sup> Craig, Richard B. *The Bracero Program; Interest Groups and Foreign Policy*. Austin: U of Texas, 1971. Print. 16.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 5.

The Bracero program opened the door for a lot of peasant farmers from rural Mexico, primarily working age men. They would arrive in America with the intention of saving up money to send home to their families who were struggling back in Mexico. These men were put through an arduous process in which they were commonly shuffled around and taken advantage of by the officials who regulated the program. One example of this can be seen in the seemingly inhumane treatment of Mexican nationals before entering the United States. "When the bracero was chosen, he was vaccinated, fingerprinted, given a physical examination, loaded on a bus, and taken to a U.S. reception center. There he was X-rayed, dusted with D.D.T. and again given a thorough physical examination."<sup>32</sup> The precautions taken by United State officials were seen as needed, however the manner in which they applied is appalling. Adding to their inhumane treatment, Braceros had to report to facilities that were commonly overcrowded and unsanitary. Following their entrance to the United States the Mexican Bracero workers were contracted out by farm organizations (consisting of several growers) and could be transported anywhere in the United States. After the work period ended these workers were typically sent to another farm or back to Mexico until the next seasonal harvest or grower request. The total United States immigration during the Bracero program heeds some astonishing numbers, "of the 5,073,475 foreign workers legally admitted for temporary employment in United States Agriculture during the 1942-1967 period, 4,681,255 (or more than 92% were Mexicans).<sup>33</sup> When looking at the Bracero Program it is crucial to understand who was supporting its continuance, and who was protesting it; this helps to determine which residual effects impacted America and Mexico the most.

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<sup>32</sup> Herrera-Sobek, María. *The Bracero Experience: Elitlore versus Folklore*. Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, U of California, 1979. Print. XIV.

<sup>33</sup> Craig, Richard B. *The Bracero Program; Interest Groups and Foreign Policy*. Austin: U of Texas, 1971. Print. 7.

Unlike Repatriation, support for the Bracero Program came from several different sources residing in not only America, but Mexico as well. As the American government scrambled to accommodate a perceived labor crisis, it found itself promoting a plan, which was the stark opposite of Repatriation. This plan was in direct response to the requests of agricultural growers who had a multitude of justifications for importing foreign labor. First of all, the growers felt this was the only option for the labor shortage since training was unnecessary as the workers were already proficient and adapted to manual field labor. On top of this growers found domestic Anglo workers to be unreliable due to their belief that this physical work was below them. Domestic workers resented the low pay, long hours, and backbreaking labor that Braceros made commonplace in the Agricultural business. Despite the discrimination and adversity Braceros and poor Mexicans experienced, they made up the last portion of supporters. These individuals were looking for access to a better life and found, what they felt to be an avenue toward it. According to Richard Craig, "The average Mexican stands an excellent chance of earning the equivalent of a small fortune if only he can come to the United States."<sup>34</sup> With this logic, support for Bracero within the Mexican public began to increase, especially after contracted workers began sending money home. These were the main supporters for the Bracero program, however it should be noted that the Agricultural owners constituted the majority of America's pro-Bracero interest.

At the onset of the Bracero program, protestors within the United States and Mexico arose, not all however were to be expected. One of the first challengers were labor unions, both inside the United States and Mexico. This idea is expressed in a book by Emory Bogardus from 1934 entitled, *The Mexican in the United States*. The book expresses how, "organized labor both

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<sup>34</sup> Craig, Richard B. *The Bracero Program; Interest Groups and Foreign Policy*. Austin: U of Texas, 1971. Print. 7.



in the United States and in Mexico is resentful of immigration from Mexico." The book moves on to discuss how American labor unions had the "belief that Mexican labor 'keeps down' labor standards" and Mexican labor unions resent derived from, "real and alleged exploitation of Mexican immigrants in the United States."<sup>35</sup> Labor groups within the United States also feared they would be undermined by a flood of cheap portable labor. One of the final agreements discussed how, "Labor Unions opposed the programs virtually from the start, charging that the labor shortages had been manufactured by growers to prevent improvement in the living conditions of field laborers."<sup>36</sup> Another main dissent came from human rights leaders who were pushing for social reform. These men and women saw growers' exploitation and racism toward the Mexican laborers and wanted to fix the problem. Assuming the Braceros were simply better suited for this type of remedial labor was a weak excuse by growers, and the United States government, to justify abusing them. In reality, the Bracero's were coming from extremely impoverished conditions and therefore willing to accept low pay for long hours of backbreaking work. Because of this growers would simply lowball American workers until they refused to work, thereby creating a shortage of domestic workers at which point they could hire braceros and give them 'competitive' (extremely low) wages. For opponents of imported labor there was "no shortage of workers, only a shortage of decent wages, benefits, and working conditions..."<sup>37</sup> The final and biggest objector was the government of Mexico, who saw the program as harmful in countless different areas.

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<sup>35</sup> Bogardus, Emory S. *The Mexican in the United States*. New York: Arno, 1970. Print. 42.

<sup>36</sup> Majka, Linda C., and Theo J. Majka. *Farm Workers, Agribusiness, and the State*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1982. Print. 138

<sup>37</sup> "Agricultural Guest Workers - Rural Migration News | Migration Dialogue." Agricultural Guest Workers Rural Migration News | Migration Dialogue. Web. 14 May 2015.

Several historians including Richard Craig took the stance that, the “Mexican Government, which, by virtue of its position, was generally a *pro forma* opponent of this labor exodus.”<sup>38</sup> This rationale displays how the Mexican Government was forced to take a stance against the Bracero program for several reasons. First of all, by sending its skilled workers to America, the Government felt it was giving up some, if not all, of its best laborers. Along with this, the Government was fearful the peasant farmers would learn social and political awareness from life in the United States and return desiring more from their own life and government. Regardless of the more self-serving reasons of protest from the Mexican government, they also realized the imported laborers would be subject to the ebb and flow of the United States economy. Although this may not seem like a major factor during the last depression the United States faced it resorted to a policy of Repatriation. Ultimately this program was seen by the Mexican Government as demeaning to their citizens, as well as solely for the benefit of America’s market consequently, harming Mexico’s. Richard Craig theorizes that, “Mexico acquiesced to the Bracero Program because its advantage far outweighed its disadvantage.”<sup>39</sup> The most prominent advantage being not only for the actual Bracero worker, but for Mexican society. These men would once again learn modern farming techniques and, as was customary for most workers, send their money to their families back home inadvertently helping stimulate Mexico’s economy. The Mexican government who initially were forced to object to the exodus of its labor force, reluctantly agreed in time. The *pro forma* nature of the Mexican government’s objection helps explain why the criticism of the program eventually ceased as support grew within the poorer Mexican population for the allowance of Bracero.

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<sup>38</sup> Craig, Richard B. *The Bracero Program; Interest Groups and Foreign Policy*. Austin: U of Texas, 1971. Print. 20.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

One of the last aspects of the Bracero Program that is crucial to understanding the evolution of the Mexico-America relationship is the daily life and treatment of Bracero laborers. These workers came to America on the promise of steady work and pay, along with fair accommodations. In the beginning of this program there wasn't evidence of horrible exploitation, as the United States Government helped to regulate and ensure some rights. Of course there were still countless examples of abuse, for example upon being brought to reception centers in the United States, the "lucky ones rode comfortable buses, but others were transported in cattle cars on the Mexican railways, without heat, toilets or drinking water."<sup>40</sup> Although this treatment was demeaning, government regulations helped ensure fair pay and housing. However, the post-war Bracero Program would give more power to the actual farmers and growers who commonly bent regulations and standards.

An increasing amount of migrant workers were flowing into America at this time and unfortunately growers were looking for any and every way to exploit them. As mentioned earlier, upon entering the United States, Mexican workers would sign contracts. After the war however, growers took charge of this feature and contracts became increasingly vague and oftentimes were written in English, thereby completely leaving the laborer in the dark as to what they had signed. Not divulging the stipulations of the contracts in a comprehensible way was one of the biggest tricks growers used to exploit workers.

There were many issues within the Bracero Program that helped perpetuate the poor conditions and treatment thrust onto Bracero workers. Perhaps the largest handicap for workers' rights however was due to a, "perpetual oversupply of farm labor, ensuring that farmers could

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<sup>40</sup> Mandeel, Elizabeth. "The Bracero Era: 1942-1964." *American International Journal of Contemporary Research* 4.1 (2014): 58-89.

break any strike.”<sup>41</sup> This issue was only amplified by the ever increasing nature of Mexican immigration, as in the later years of Bracero there were tantamount legal Bracero’s as illegal ‘wetbacks’ entering the United States. The increase in illegal immigration also helped to slowly raise discontent (once again) within Anglo America. Coupled with this cause, the type of work these laborers performed was seen as demeaning and Americans began once again associating Bracero’s (specifically Mexicans) as subhuman. This was unfortunate for countless Mexican-American citizens as they too became discriminated against, regardless of their societal status. The Bracero Program opened opportunities for countless Mexican immigrants however, in the end, its manipulation and exploitation proved too much and as support died out the program ended, this didn’t stop countless growers and farmers from simply switching to illegal immigrants to maintain their cheap labor supply. In the midst of countless allegations of abuse and corruption the end of the program was solidified by Congress in 1964 when it voted to stop the government regulated Bracero Program.

After looking at the implementation and subsequent failure of both the Repatriation and Bracero Programs, questions arise as to the nature of the United States and Mexico's relationship. The mutually beneficial aspects of the programs are evident, however racism between the two countries was overwhelmingly against the Mexican people. This issue gets even more intriguing when looking how the implementation of Bracero was even possible. The prevailing mentality in America prior to, and throughout, Repatriation was that the Mexican worker was leeching off the United States. Beyond this, countless Americans saw the agricultural jobs performed by Mexican laborers and associated the workers as beast-like and subhuman. These views are expressed in Leticia Saucedo’s journal article, *Anglo Views of Mexican Labor*, where she depicts the two

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<sup>41</sup>Jenkins, J. Craig, and Charles Perrow. *Insurgency of the Powerless: Farm Worker Movements (1946-1972)*. American Sociological Review 42.2 (1977): 249. Web.

standard stereotypes of Mexican immigrants. These stereotypes were of a “docile” and “backward” people who were physically suited for the hard work needed for the lower rungs of the labor market ladder.<sup>42</sup> This belief was solidified for many as reports came out declaring that Mexicans small stature was a specialized characteristic, which allowed them to perform the backbreaking field labor they were conscripted for.<sup>43</sup> Leticia Saucedo addresses this by discussing how, “growers perpetrated the narrative of Mexican Laborers’ biological aptitude for heavy-duty farm work such as stoop labor.”<sup>44</sup> Being seemingly endorsed in their racism by the fictitious ‘narratives’, many Americans did not feel sympathy for the repatriates; and as newspaper articles began coming out justifying Repatriation as mutually beneficial, many began to even feel good about the policies of the United States.

With this sentiment growing in America it is curious how a program such as Bracero could be approved by both Mexican and American officials. At the onset of Repatriation Mexico was excited to get skilled agricultural workers back. After this momentary excitement had faded and personal stories were shared, the Mexican Government and people began to take notice of the atrocities repatriates were put through. Coupled with this, Mexico was scrambling to accommodate the sudden population influx and the programs, specifically colonies, they initially set up were failing. On top of the poor planning of the colonies, weather and a lack of motivation can be seen backing its demise. Along with environmental factors the majority of terrain in Mexico is not suitable for agriculture as, “Much of the country is mountainous, with only one-

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<sup>42</sup> Saucedo, Leticia M. *Anglo Views of Mexican Labor: Shaping the Law of Temporary Work Through Masculinities Narratives*. Nevada Law Journal: Vol. 13: Iss. 2, Article 13. 2013.

<sup>43</sup> Hoffman, Abraham. *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939*. Tucson: U of Arizona, 1974. Print.

<sup>44</sup> Saucedo, Leticia M. *Anglo Views of Mexican Labor: Shaping the Law of Temporary Work Through Masculinities Narratives*. Nevada Law Journal: Vol. 13: Iss. 2, Article 13. 2013.. 588

third of the land being level..."<sup>45</sup> Regardless of this unfortunate situation, the Mexican Government pursued a strict agricultural pursuit.

With Mexico in such a grave state it is astonishing that they allowed and eventually supported the Bracero Program, which by nature would take its best workers. When looking at the general sentiment and situations of both Mexico and America the Bracero Program does not seem like a logical progression; especially with America's history of discarding a specific immigrant work force in favor of another, less feared group. With this understanding an intriguing question arises as to how Mexicans were able to, despite the Mexican American relationship, fill the void they left in the American workforce when being repatriated? This relationship was tense because for the past several decades Americans had treated Mexicans as a mere commodity. While researching this topic a diverse amount of explanations appeared which, when all combined, began to shed light on this complex issue.

After reading several different authors such as Richard Craig and Erasmo Gamboa it became apparent that most point to agricultural labor shortages along with the Mexican workers motivation to return to the United States as the main explanation for the implementation of the Bracero Program. For example, an article from the Los Angeles Times in 1942 illustrated "leading Northern Californian agriculturalists, declaring that at least 160,000 seasonal workers are needed immediately if some of the state's major crops are to be saved."<sup>46</sup> Another source entitled *Mexican Labor and World War II* by Erasmo Gamboa depicts how, "As the country was pulled toward war, farm labor shortages reached crisis levels."<sup>47</sup> These understandings of a

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<sup>45</sup> Craig, Richard B. *The Bracero Program; Interest Groups and Foreign Policy*. Austin: U of Texas, 1971. Print.

<sup>46</sup> "Mexican Labor Plan Worked Out." *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File)*, Aug 28, 1942.

<sup>47</sup> Gamboa, Erasmo. *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942-1947*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990. 22.

critical agricultural labor situation were definitively concrete in these authors' minds, however they failed to look more in-depth at the issue. Of course there was a labor shortage as the United States invested in World War II and, with America's history, the importation of a foreign labor force was imminent; but why Mexicans? In its time of need America turned to the race it had recently discriminated vehemently against and I refuse to believe it was solely due to proximity. The 'proximity' approach was only taken by a few articles and sources, but it is inherently infused into many arguments to dodge the 'why Mexican,' question. Although proximity may have played a factor in Mexican immigration it fails to account for the ease in which America could import or ban an immigrating group.

By looking at the bigger picture, of the societal mindset in America and the strict governmental agreements, explanations as to why they were the only people to return begin to appear. The sentiment in America toward Mexicans throughout the Repatriation Program left little to be hopeful for. In their opinion, not only were Mexicans stealing American jobs, but they were leeching off American society and not contributing anything in return. This feeling was exacerbated as Americans noticed Mexicans were sending the majority of their income home instead of spending it in the United States to help stimulate the American economy. With this mindset rampant in America it could be argued that American society had not changed its feelings but that it was solely an agricultural need. Lending credence to this theory is the type of work the workers would perform; many citizens in the United States felt that Mexicans were genetically superior for farm labor with special characteristics that made the grueling work somehow easier. This understanding does not take into account the exploitation by growers and farmers within America.

The practices agricultural owners undertook subjected these migrant workers to positions deemed sub-human; once this pattern began, it was near impossible to break. By forcing migrant workers to perform these difficult tasks owners only promoted a more racist image of Mexicans to Anglo-Americans. This growing sentiment was treacherous to the Mexican-American relationship however with the entry of the United States into World War II, we can see the nation, as a whole, becoming less isolationist. This factor definitely contributed to a more open relationship between Mexico and America, especially because by the time of Bracero; both had declared allegiance with the Allied forces. This new feeling of teamwork could be seen illustrated in countless newspaper articles from both sides of the border. One such account was from an article in the New York Times from 1943 which stated that "A temporary migration of labor from one Allied nation to her neighbor is indeed an excellent means to overcome the manpower shortage in specific fields."<sup>48</sup> These articles helped to improve the attitude toward Mexican workers as they were now being seen as a beneficial workforce. Overall, the discriminatory nature of many of America's policies helped strengthen racist mentalities, but as time went on this perception began to improve. Due to World War II the United States was forced to open the door to immigration yet again, however this time migrant workers were received in a somewhat better light, as they were there to help America. This brought about an intriguing question of whether it was a flat out governmental agreement or if Mexico and America had alternative motives. This question can be better understood while looking at the stipulations and nature of the agreed upon Bracero 'Work' Program.

The institution of the Bracero Program was advertised, by Americans, as a mutually beneficial policy, if not more pro-Mexican. Richard Craig and other authors displayed these

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<sup>48</sup> Utell, Henry. "Mexican Farm Workers here." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Mar 04, 1943.



ideas as they strove to advocate for the importation of Mexican Workers, claiming it was reciprocally profitable for both nations. Conversely in articles a few years earlier it was beneficial for Mexicans to return home during Repatriation, which leaves the question...who actually were these programs benefitting?

After delving into this question it quickly becomes clear that Repatriation and Bracero were in America's best interest; constantly putting Mexican laborers at the whim of American growers and farmers. With this understanding of the Bracero Program it would seem that American racism was not taken into account, therefore displaying little to no regard for the imported Mexican laborers rights. The governmental influence in the beginning of the Bracero Program however, help to show how the American Government was trying, albeit in a minimal way, to help the workers. The regulations by the United States helped to ensure that migrant Braceros were not treated as mere commodities by farmers and growers, specifically it held agricultural owners accountable for many of their promises. Steady hours and pay were agreed upon in early Bracero contracts.<sup>49</sup> This interpretation of how migrant Mexican workers were able to once again enter the United States helps to uncover how, possibly unintentionally, the American Government set the stage for the Mexican workers return. One could argue against this by claiming it was merely proximity that afforded Mexicans the best chance to come back, however this fails to take into account Americas other close neighbors, such as Canada. The ability for America to pick and choose its labor force was as easy as adopting or striking down specific immigration acts. Knowing this, it is useful to look toward the wartime necessities in America as a deciding factor for choosing who would be imported to work. The wartime mentality is also an important consideration because many of our friendly alliances involved

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<sup>49</sup> Craig, Richard B. *The Bracero Program; Interest Groups and Foreign Policy*. Austin: U of Texas, 1971. Print

countries who were either in battle or had declared war on the Axis power. With this in mind it becomes clearer why America chose Mexico, despite their history, for the Bracero Program.

Regardless of the fact that Mexican laborers had already been to the United States, both the countries declared war against the Axis at around the same time. The non-aggressive, ramping up nature of our governments allowed them to work in unison. Overall, World War II can be seen acting like a catalyst for Mexican immigration to the United States. It also helped to regulate American opinion, stopping some of the vehement discrimination. With a better understanding of HOW Mexican workers were allowed back into America, the final question arose: WHY, specifically, were they the only nationality permitted to fill their own void?

While trying to figure out why Mexicans have been the only race allowed back immediately after being kicked out, several standard justifications arose. The first two were mentioned earlier; first, the stereotyped traits and characteristics of these workers perfectly suited the intense, backbreaking manual labor they performed. The second basic belief is that, due to an immediate need, America turned to the nearest nation for workforce assistance. This theory is faulty because as mentioned before, the United States has had few problems throughout its history regulating immigration both ways, in-and-out of America. An example of this is seen with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which abruptly stopped Chinese (and most Asian) immigration. This act was solidified even more in 1917 with the implementation of the Asiatic Barred Zone, stopping all Pacific (Asian) Immigration. Due to this European immigration increased as many fled a war-torn Europe in search of a better life. The newly flourishing nature of European immigration lasted up till 1919 when the first Immigration Quota Act stopped all European immigrants; at which point Mexicans stepped in. Although hemispheric immigration already existed it would soon be drastically increased with the immigration restrictions imposed

on countless nationalities. This idea is seen reiterated by Abraham Hoffman who stated that the, "Passage of the Quota Act of 1924 had sealed off immigration from sections of Europe and Asia, but immigration from countries in the Western Hemisphere was not included in the law. With Mexicans as the primary target..."<sup>50</sup> This is where the final question derives, how was it that after Repatriation Mexicans came back into America to fill the emptiness its migratory workers had left when being repatriated.

The ebb and flow of immigration to the United States is subject to countless societal, economic, and political turbulences. Throughout its history America can be seen exploiting numerous nationalities, however for the focus of this analysis I plan on looking at the three that specifically allowed for the Mexican return. The plight of the Chinese, Japanese, and Eastern/Southern Europeans all contribute distinct rationales as to why each's immigration was stopped. While researching the immigration history of these nationalities a clearer picture of why Mexicans were quickly permitted access to the United States appears. Similar to migrant Mexicans, Chinese immigrants came to America in search of work and found it in lowly positions, however their presence was taken in a much different light. The racist sentiment Mexican and Chinese workers generated had a very similar foundation, for example, beliefs that they were stealing American jobs and sending wages home. Fear of the unknown, however, helped catalyze a harsher American view of the Chinese. As Chinese immigration increased so did the idea of these workers as a 'Yellow Peril' who would destroy American ideals. This societal fear can be seen reiterated in several newspapers as they conveyed this issue to the public. When looking at newspaper articles it becomes apparent that coupled with Anglo-American resentment of Chinese workers was a fear of this foreign invader who has strict and

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<sup>50</sup> Hoffman, Abraham. *The Repatriation of Mexican Nationals from the United States during the Great Depression*. Dissertation. Los Angeles: UCLA, 1970. Print. 37.

strange customs. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was in direct response to the growing uneasiness between Chinese and American society and resulted in an abrupt stop of all Chinese immigration.<sup>51</sup> This uneasiness continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century as seen in a Salt Lake City newspaper article from 1902. The article states that, "We are dealing with people who are trained to the evasion of the law, and for twenty years the Government has been endeavoring to circumvent their evasion."<sup>52</sup> This quote helps express how American sentiment toward the Chinese had not faltered in its racism in the 20 years since the implementation of the Chinese Exclusion Act. With Chinese immigrants virtually out of the picture the United States, as it has so many times, turned to another nationalities for a cheap labor force. With a strict ban on Chinese immigration the United States saw a systematic rise in Japanese immigration, however as with many other nationalities; restrictions were on their way. In 1907, the United States and Japan signed the Gentleman's Agreement which stopped all unskilled workers from migrating.<sup>53</sup> Although this hindered Japanese immigration it was still progressing at a steady rate, causing a growing unrest in the Anglo public of another, new, 'Yellow Peril'. A fear began growing within America that would not cease until Japanese immigration stopped; American prayers were answered with the acceptance of the Asiatic Barred Zone in 1917.<sup>54</sup> This policy banned nearly all Japanese and Asian immigration and was reinforced in 1924 with the implementation of the Immigration Quota Act severely curtailing immigration as a whole; specifically Asians and

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<sup>51</sup> "Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)." Our Documents -. National Archives and Records Administration, 1989. Web. 15 May 2015.

<sup>52</sup> Phelan, James D. "Chinese Exclusion." The Deseret News (Salt Lake City), February 6, 1902.

<sup>53</sup> "Japanese-American Relations at the Turn of the Century, 1900–1922 - 1899–1913." Milestones - Office of the Historian. Office of the Historian, Web. 15 May 2015.

<sup>54</sup> Starkweather, Sarah. "U.S. Immigration Legislation: 1917 Immigration Act." U.S. Immigration Legislation: 1917 Immigration Act. University of Washington, Web. 15 May 2015.

Eastern and Southern Europeans.<sup>55</sup> The denial of these European immigrants is crucial for understanding how fear was a major motivator of immigration reform. As the United States progressed out of World War I it took on extremely isolationist goals; these actions helped contribute to a more xenophobic public. When looking at the big picture of why these three races were targeted an interesting pattern emerges.

The bigger picture begins to shed light on a pattern within American immigration that has been present for much of its history. When looking at American techniques of dealing with immigration influxes it seems common for the government, press, and public to alienate the largest faction. This can be seen within the three examples previously discussed, where a phony fear was established within Anglo-America to help pass race based policies without objection. For the Chinese, as their population increased, a new image of a dangerous and sly 'Yellow Peril' emerged, helping make the 1882 Exclusion Act possible. Due to the fear used to institute this policy it became extremely difficult for the Chinese to immigrate and for immigrants still residing inside the United States to break the stereotype and survive in American society. As the United States moved on from the Chinese the emergence of another group, the Japanese can be seen in the American workforce. With the implementation of the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, the United States ensured it would only be getting 'skilled' workers. Unfortunately for the Japanese, as time progressed and its population within America increased, resentment in the Anglo community became evident once again. The 'Yellow Peril' stigma once applied to the Chinese was rejuvenated with even more fervor as it was used to target Japanese as dangerous foreigners. With the implementation of the Asiatic Barred Zone in 1917 the United States effectively protected Anglo-Americans from the perceived fear of a foreign 'Yellow Peril'

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<sup>55</sup> "The Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act) - 1921-1936." Milestones - Office of the Historian. Office of the Historian, Web. 15 May 2015.

consisting of Japanese and Chinese immigrants, this made it extremely difficult for the American Government to ever advocate their return. The final group brought about a strict political fear as Eastern and Southern Europeans were commonly associated with the radicals of socialism and anarchism, therefore being labeled anti-capitalist. This fear allowed for the acceptance of the Immigration Quota Act of 1924 stopping all Asian and most European immigration. This understanding of these immigrants quickly created a great deal of unrest within Anglo-America as citizens began to feel these Europeans had the intention of harming the Government and their way of life. Overall, when looking at these three nationalities it can be noted that a distinct fear within the American public greatly contributed to their downfall. The passing of these policies is seen stemming from a fear and hysteria created by the government and press and brought to heart in Anglo-America.

By analyzing these three alternative circumstances a better idea as to why Mexicans were allowed to return appears. Throughout Repatriation and the Bracero Program Mexicans were never looked at in the same light as the Chinese, Japanese, and Eastern/Southern Europeans. Although there were severe cases of exploitation, it becomes evident that Mexicans were experiencing harsh racism, but not fear. These beliefs represented an American view of a low-class, beast like, worker who could endure even the toughest physical labor. This view contrasted with past racism, as it did not attempt to elicit a fearful response from the American public. Without this blatant fear, Mexican Repatriation seemed to be more of an economic necessity proscribed by the Government as opposed to the previous policies that were made out of fear. With this in mind it becomes easier to understand how a race who simply 'stole' jobs could be allowed back in to fill its own void. Coupled with this was the understanding that these workers would be performing grueling farm labor no one else wanted to do. The acceptance of lowly

workers helped lend credence to the notion that Mexicans were coming back into America to help, therefore our population was more accepting of them. In the end, the fact that Mexicans were not deported under the pretense of fear allowed for their subsequent return when the economic situation had recovered and workers were required.

While exploring this immense topic it was crucial that a clear understanding and base for Repatriation and Bracero be determined. These programs were the two major factors in researching the history of Mexican immigration to America. It seemed odd that they could be the only nationality allowed back into America immediately after their expulsion; however after delving into instances of other immigration influxes, new ideas emerge. The lack of fear behind the American motivation of Repatriation seemed to be the major factor; in almost every other case a deep sense of fear of strange foreigners was installed by the press and government within Anglo-America. With just general unrest and an economic rationale, American pursued Repatriation mainly to get Anglo 'white' jobs back. A few years later with the outbreak of World War II America began looking for a portable and efficient labor force. Policy makers quickly realized a perfect candidate would be Mexican Americans for a multitude of reasons; most importantly, in my opinion was that there wasn't an intense fear or hatred within Anglo-America toward Mexicans.

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