

9.5 Migration and Immigration in the 1990s and 2000s

Theme: Migration and Settlement

Learning Objective 9.E: Explain the causes and effects of domestic and international migration over time.

Importance of the South and West

KC-9.2.II.A: After 1980, the political, economic, and cultural influence of the American South and West continued to increase as population shifted to those areas.

- Political influence
 - _____ creates more political power in south and west
 - Importance of _____ in _____, difference of 537 votes
- Economic influence
 - Attract businesses through _____, _____, good climate
 - Southern states had dismantled legal _____ - residual effects persisted
- Cultural influence
 - South - country music, evangelical Christianity (“_____”),
 - Southwest - Roman Catholicism from Latin American migrants,
 - West Coast - _____ and _____

International Migration

KC-9.2.II.B: International migration from Latin America and Asia increased dramatically. The new immigrants affected U.S. culture in many ways and supplied the economy with an important labor force.

- Immigration from Europe _____ rose dramatically again despite 1965 Act
 - US would have _____ population without immigration
- Asian immigrants and Asian Americans
 - Make up _____ of population by 2018
 - Standards for visa created by legislation creates highly educated, wealthy East Asian population in US
 - Leads to _____
 - Present issue of Anti-Asian hate crimes
- Latin American migration restricted for the first time through 1965 Act
 - With end of _____, coming to the US became harder → increased illegal crossings
 - _____, (IRCA) 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act attempted at curbing illegal immigration - failed
 - _____ growing pop. segment

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- _____ (DACA) created through executive order (2012)
 - Allows childhood arrivals to study, work, get drivers licenses, pay taxes without deportation
 - Can't receive _____
 - Attempted repeal in 2017 failed - _____ (2020) states reasoning and process for repeal flawed

Recap

- The American South and West gain influence due to demographic shifts towards those regions
- Immigration continues to be important for population growth and cultural diffusion.

Part II

Short Answer Questions

Answer the following in AT LEAST three sentences.

1. Explain the causes and effects of domestic and international migration over time.

Secondary Source Document Analysis

Read the essay and fill in the chart below. Identify one claim for each subsection of the essay and provide a piece of evidence that corresponds to the claim.

Title:	
Author:	
Historical Period and Topic:	
Thesis:	
Claims	Evidence
Identify an alternative viewpoint to the author's thesis.	
Does the author address this viewpoint by refuting or conceding to it?	

Immigration Policy, Mexican Americans, and Undocumented Immigrants, 1954 to the Present by Eladio Bobadilla

Retrieved from: <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/essays/immigration-policy-mexican-americans-and-undocumented-immigrants-1954>

In 1953, a pamphlet ominously titled *What Price Wetbacks?* circulated widely throughout the American Southwest. Its authors warned that a “wetback invasion” was underway, one that posed “a threat to our health, our economy, [and] our American way of life.”^[1] A contemporary observer might be forgiven for assuming such was the work of a xenophobic outlet or a nativist group. In reality, the now-infamous pamphlet was the work of a respected Mexican American advocacy organization, the American GI Forum, with the backing of the Texas Federation of Labor.

Two decades later, the American GI Forum once again emerged as a central voice in the immigration debate. But this time, rather than warning about “wetbacks”—a term of derision recognized even in the 1950s as a racial slur—the GI Forum now proclaimed its unconditional support for the undocumented, proudly proclaiming that it stood “alongside all gente” without documents, and telling its members that “we cannot stop [organizing] until full amnesty is realized.”^[2] The GI Forum was not alone in this profound transformation. Other organizations that altered or completely reversed their positions on immigration by the late 1970s included the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA), and perhaps most strikingly, the United Farm Workers union (UFW). In short, by 1980, every major Mexican American organization had come to embrace the cause of the undocumented.^[3]

How did this remarkable transformation happen? A number of interrelated factors and developments came together to encourage the formation of a pro-immigrant consciousness among Mexican Americans so significant that contemporary observers regularly treat it as a natural, fixed, and ahistorical position. But the formation of this “without borders” ideology was anything but a given. While Mexican Americans had always understood the culture that tied them to their co-ethnics south of the border, previous experience suggested this was not enough to form a natural alliance. *What Price Wetbacks?* and the larger context in which it emerged were testament to that. When in the late 1950s the United States found itself in the midst of a ferocious recession, Mexican immigrants proved easy scapegoats. Leading Mexican Americans, along with anxious Anglos, heartily supported the mass deportation of Mexican workers in what became known as Operation Wetback.

Operation Wetback did not solve the problem of unsanctioned migration, however. In fact, it was never intended to. Operation Wetback, above all, was political sleight of hand meant to appease nativists while continuing to ensure farmers, growers, and other employers of cheap Mexican labor continued to have access to workers. Many of those “deported” were merely paroled to farmers.^[4] Others were sent across the border and turned into *braceros*, temporary workers who had been brought to the United States since the outbreak of World War II to work on farms, railroads, and other industries suffering worker shortages as result of the war effort. Many more simply returned.

In 1942, the United States responded to worker shortages resulting from the deployment of millions of young men to fight in World War II by launching the Bracero Program, a series of bilateral agreements with Mexico to import Mexican men to work in the States. Mexico, for its part, hoped the experience would give its economy a lift, both by encouraging workers to spend money they made in the US when they returned home and by providing them with experience they could apply to the country’s quickly industrializing sectors.^[5]

The Bracero Program, which imported some five million men during the course of its existence from 1942 to 1964, was considered a major problem by leading Mexican Americans, who believed the system at once exploited Mexican workers—who worked long hours, under horrific conditions, for as little as \$20 a week—and hurt American-born workers by creating unnecessary competition, depressing wages, and thwarting labor organizations.^[6] Worse, it encouraged “illegal immigration.” For this reason, even as Mexican Americans combatted the “invasion” of unsanctioned workers, they also fought to end the Bracero Program, which had not ended with World War II but instead was modified and extended at the beginning of a new conflict, the Korean War. The 1951 revisions, known as Public Law 78, streamlined the process by which the secretary of labor certified the need for workers, making it easier for employers to import large numbers of Mexican workers. The number of *braceros* increased markedly after 1951, reaching a high of almost half a million each year between 1956 and 1959.^[7] This surge in *bracero* use prompted a strong, organized backlash from Mexican Americans and labor unions, with figures like Ernesto Galarza and Cesar Chavez leading the fight.

By the beginning of the 1960s, Mexican Americans, labor unions, and others had gained momentum in their efforts to end the program, which was finally terminated in 1964. This was not the only crucial development in immigration history around this time, however. The following year, Congress passed and President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Immigration and Nationality Act. Ostensibly a progressive piece of legislation, it eliminated national origins quotas, first introduced in 1924 and reaffirmed in 1952. The act, often referred to as Hart-Celler, after its principal sponsors, sought to bring immigration policy in line with

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civil rights legislation. Specifically, it sought to make the immigration process more fair. To that end, instead of national origins quotas, numerical limits were instituted by hemisphere.

The problem, of course, was that not all countries were equal in their need for legal visas nor in their likelihood to send large numbers of their citizens to the United States. By placing all Western hemisphere countries under one numerical limit at precisely the same time the Bracero Program ended, the law inadvertently created the modern problem of “illegal immigration,” as poor Mexicans, rocked by continued political instability, out-of-control inflation, rampant corruption, and a population boom decades in the making, continued to migrate north without documents.[8] Between 1969 and 1975, the population of undocumented immigrants in the United States rose from half a million to over a million and doubled again by 1980 to some three million.

As Mexicans poured across the border after 1965, however, Mexican Americans generally welcomed and supported them, though there were exceptions. The iconic labor leader Cesar Chavez and his United Farm Workers union, for example, continued to believe that undocumented immigrants posed a threat to the advancement of poor Mexican Americans—and worked hard to keep them out of the country and away from the fields. But soon, Chavez realized he was virtually alone in this position.[9]

There were a number of reasons for this. One was that even as Chavez sought to keep immigrants from crossing the border, others had realized this was not going to happen and were having success organizing them. Another was that civil rights legislation had changed the political and social calculus for Mexican Americans. Whereas an earlier generation of Mexican Americans could only hope to advance by claiming to be white, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had given them the opportunity to seek protections as minorities.[10] Additionally, as the population of immigrants grew, so did a nativist backlash whose rhetoric lumped together American-born ethnic Mexicans, legal permanent residents, and undocumented immigrants. With increased contact and an increase in shared threats, bonds among Mexican Americans formed and cemented.

Still, there were challenges to come. In 1973, immigration reform legislation was introduced meant to punish employers who used undocumented labor, to strengthen the border, and to provide amnesty to some undocumented immigrants already in the country. Immigration reform became a hot topic by the late 1970s, as the hysteria about immigrants began to mount. Despite the failure of earlier efforts, President Jimmy Carter managed to create a select commission on immigration, headed by the respected scholar and Catholic priest Theodore Hesburgh. The commission studied the matter for three years and issued a wide-ranging report, whose recommendations were taken up by a new administration.[11]

After several years of debate, Congress passed and Ronald Reagan signed into law the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, which sought a three-pronged approach to immigration: border enforcement, employer sanctions, and amnesty. Mexican Americans were conflicted. On the one hand, they regarded the first two measures as discriminatory. On the other hand, they acknowledged that amnesty changed the lives of millions of people for the better.

By the mid-1980s, most Mexican Americans sought to support and protect undocumented immigrants. And while the legalization effort had changed the lives of millions of people (mostly men), there was an almost immediate backlash to IRCA. California, host to the largest number of undocumented immigrants in the 1980s and 1990s, quickly became proving grounds for new nativist legislation. In 1994, California overwhelmingly passed Proposition 187, a restrictionist and draconian piece of legislation designed to deny public services to undocumented immigrants and their children. Though quickly found unconstitutional, the law served as a model for other restrictive laws across the country over the next couple of decades. Proposition 187 also signaled a “new nativism” that saw in Latinos, not just immigrants, a “threat” to American culture and society.[12] Recognizing this, Mexican Americans have understood anti-immigrant rhetoric in much the same way that activist Herman Baca did when he proclaimed in 1986 that “the hysteria against them” (undocumented immigrants) “impacts us” (Hispanics more broadly).[13]

The “187 Effect,” as one political scientist has termed it,[14] has not been enough to dispel anti-immigrant fears and myths or to dissuade politicians from engaging in xenophobic dog-whistle politics. In fact, the rise of Donald Trump and the alt-right has been the result, at least in part, of a strong and recurring nativist faction. At the same time, immigrants no longer find themselves alone, and Hispanics, for whom immigration remains a central and defining issue, have grown to constitute a valuable and often decisive social and voting bloc, one that has, in recent years, taken up the task of igniting what Rep. John Lewis has called a new civil rights movement.[15]

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