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Deportation of Illegals during the Depression

Revisionist historians have made many unfair accusations against America during the depression of the 1930s, when many illegals were sent back to their country of origin - mostly Mexico. Here is an accurate account of these events.

First, authorities were only after deportable aliens.(1) Mexicans were not just rounded up and shipped back to Mexico. In most cases, there WAS due process. For instance, in the El Monte Raid, 300 people were stopped and questioned, with only 13 jailed, 12 being Mexican.(2) In the LA city plaza raid in Feb. 1931, about 400 people were questioned about their immigration status. Only 17 were detained, 11 being Mexican.(3) Nine of the 11 Mexicans were later released.(4) Most of the US citizens who were deported were children born in the US - which automatically makes them citizens - to parents who were non-citizens or here illegally. Obviously, if the parents were deported they are going to take their children with them. Mexicans who were being deported were taken care of by US authorities. No one went hungry or lacked medical attention.(5) Claims of Mexicans being abused in the US were lies told by the Mexican media, which has been bashing America since the 1830s.(6) Mexico actually praised the repatriation efforts in Los Angeles.(7)



In the LA plaza raid in 1931, 11 Mexicans, 5 Chinese and one Japanese were detained.(15)

Second, there is nothing immoral, criminal or racist with evicting illegals from your country. It happens in every country in the world, including Mexico. Since at least the 1850s, non-citizens - whether German, Irish, Italian, Mexican, etc., etc., were replaced with citizens during economic downturns. Most Mexicans came to the US for a job, NOT to become a citizen. **It is incredibly arrogant to come to America solely to make a living, send a lot of your money out of the country and THEN be offended when you are deported so citizens can take your job.** Deporting non-citizens was not an unthinkable idea when 15 to 25% of Americans were unemployed.

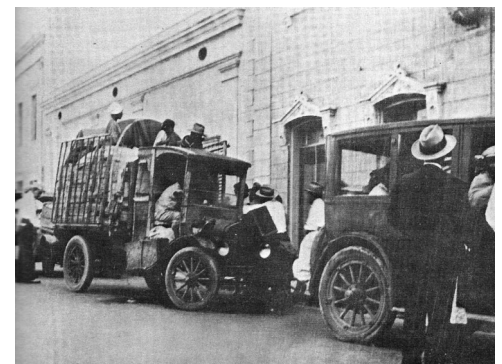
Third, it was NOT hispanics in general, it was mostly Mexicans who were deported, because - even in the 1930s - it was mostly Mexicans who were here illegally. When the Mexican Revolution of 1910 broke out, over 500,000 Mexicans entered the US to escape the violence. Because the border at this time was seldom patrolled, Mexicans entered the US at will, most illegally. After 1917, a higher head tax and literacy requirement imposed for entry prompted more people to enter illegally.(8) It was this huge increase in illegal immigration into the southwest US that caused Congress to establish the US Border Patrol in 1924.



Families and friends gather at the Los Angeles railroad station in 1931 to bid farewell to Mexicans returning to Mexico.(16)

Many Mexicans never applied for citizenship, because most intended to eventually return to Mexico after making enough money in the US.(9) American officials in the southwest US were well aware of this fact. It is estimated that about one-half of those immigrants who entered the United States from 1900 to 1930 freely returned to Mexico.(10) Between 1917 and 1929, Mexican migrants in the United States sent over \$10 million to relatives in their home country.(11) The Mexican Consulate sponsored campaigns to repatriate Mexicans, promising their expenses would be paid and some would even get a job in Mexico.

Fourth, the number of Mexicans deported has been greatly exaggerated. Some claim 2 million were deported but this is mathematically impossible. In 1930, the U.S. Census counted 1.42 million people of Mexican ancestry, with 805,535 born in the U.S.(12) There were 1.225 million people of Mexican ancestry in the 4 states bordering Mexico.(13) Critics claim the 1930 census undercounted Mexicans living in the US, but the two million figure is still not possible. The most reliable source has about 500,000 people sent back to Mexico. This data comes from the "Departamento de Migracion de Mexico" or "Mexican Migration Service," which was said to be a reliable source since the Mexican government had many ports along the border in which Mexicans were required to register and could do so free of charge.(14) A 1936 dispatch from the U.S. Consulate General in Mexico City says 345,839 people went to Mexico from 1930 to 1935, with 1931 as the peak year.(13) Many Mexicans were deported who were on public assistance.



Automobile caravan of repatriate families assembling at Karnes City, Texas, 1931.(17)

Some historians believe that some Americans didn't accept Mexican Americans as "real" Americans. This was probably true in some cases. However, it is also true that many Mexican Americans don't consider themselves "Americans," rather Mexicans with American citizenship living in America. A large percentage of Mexican-Americans have Dual citizenship.

Some believe this was a xenophobic campaign against Mexicans. We should keep in mind that only immigrants from Spain were allowed into New Spain (later Mexico) for 300 years. THAT is xenophobia.

Sources:

1. Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression (1974) by Abraham Hoffman, (p. 51, 63)
2. Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression (1974) by Abraham Hoffman, (p. 56)
3. Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression (1974) by Abraham Hoffman, (p. 1, 59)
4. Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression (1974) by Abraham Hoffman, (p. 62)
5. Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression (1974) by Abraham Hoffman, (p. 93,94, 129)
6. Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression (1974) by Abraham Hoffman, (p. 68, 69, 72, 134-135)
7. Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression (1974) by Abraham Hoffman, (p. 98)
8. http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/border_security/border_patrol/border_patrol_ohs/history.xml
9. Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression (1974) by Abraham Hoffman, (p. 19)
10. (Matt Meier and Feliciano Rivera, Mexican Americans/American Mexicans, [New York: Hill and Wang, 1993], p. 129).
11. (Carey McWilliams, North from Mexico, [New York: Praeger, 1990], p. 171).
12. http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2006-04-04-1930s-deportees-cover_x.htm
13. <http://www.azlibrary.gov/convocations/images/pdf/acosta.pdf>
14. Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression (1974) by Abraham Hoffman, (p. 174,175)
15. Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression (1974) by Abraham Hoffman, (p. 60)
16. Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression (1974) by Abraham Hoffman, (p. 92)
17. Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression (1974) by Abraham Hoffman, (p. 131)

Further Reading:

http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/border_security/border_patrol/border_patrol_ohs/history.xml