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IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION IN THE AMERICAS

Max J. Castro

Mass immigration from Latin America and the Caribbean to the United States, historically speaking, is a relatively new phenomenon. What will be the consequences of the great Latin American/Caribbean migration now underway? For both sending and receiving societies, the implications of a large and long-lasting population movement from south to north are profound. Yet these implications are not well understood. This paper describes the causes and processes of Latin American immigration and the challenges posed by this new form of “integration from below.”

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The views expressed in this Agenda Paper are those of the author, not the North-South Center, which is a nonpartisan public policy and research institution.

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IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION IN THE AMERICAS

Max J. Castro

Shortly after he was elected president of Mexico in 2000, Vicente Fox made the United States and Canada a bold proposal: Why not begin a long-range process that would lead to expanding the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) into a full-fledged North American Common Market, featuring open borders for the free movement of people as well as goods? And, in the short run, would the United States agree to a significant increase in legal immigration in exchange for Mexico's pledge to crack down on undocumented immigration?

These were not ideas that met with great enthusiasm in Washington in an election year, but it was hardly the first time that the administration had been confronted with the fact that a liberal U.S. immigration policy is near the top of the agenda for many countries in the Caribbean Basin. Indeed, when President Bill Clinton traveled to Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean in 1997, he had wanted to talk to the region's leaders about free trade and hemispheric integration. He quickly found out that the heads of states there had a different agenda. For most of these leaders, concern about U.S. immigration policy was at the top of the list. The topic continues to be a top priority issue for these countries.

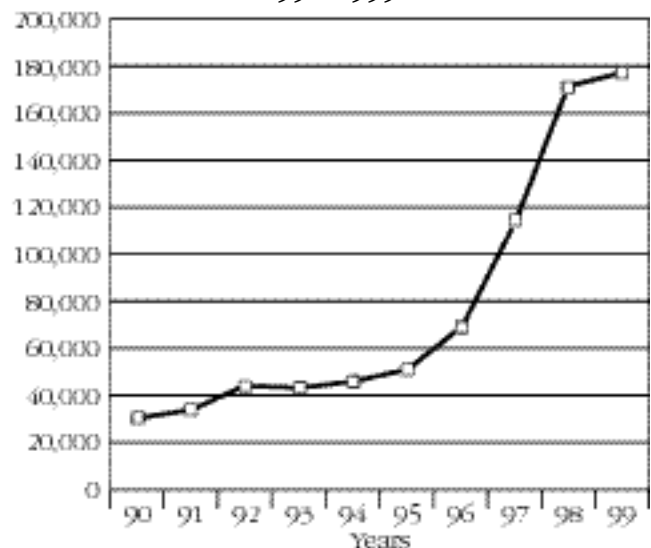
The immediate source of the anxiety in Latin America and the Caribbean in 1997 was clear: tough new U.S. immigration laws passed in 1996 make it easier to deport illegal immigrants and lawbreakers, make it harder for undocumented persons to adjust to legal status, and make many non-citizen legal immigrants ineligible for welfare and other federal benefits.

In countries recently torn by war and racked by poverty and natural disasters, including Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, the prospect of massive deportation of their nationals from the United States looms like a

potential disaster. Not only would such repatriation flood the labor market, it would also result in significant drops in the standard of living of thousands of households and in the flow of foreign exchange into a number of countries as remittances dwindled.

While there has been no mass repatriation, the pace of deportations has increased steadily and significantly during the last decade. In fiscal 1988, 25,829 aliens were removed from the United States. By 1999, removals had soared to 176,990. Figure 1 shows the progression of removals during the 1990s. The curve appears to flatten out after 1998, but this is largely a temporary phenomenon resulting from the moratorium in deportations immediately after Hurricane Mitch.

Figure 1.
Aliens Removed from the United States
1990-1999



Source: Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), 2000, *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1998* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office).

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The Latin American/Caribbean (LAC) area is by far the region most affected by the trend toward increased removals. Of 50,064 persons deported from the United States in 1997, 35,540 were sent to Mexico, 3,093 were expelled to the Caribbean, 7,540 went back to Central America, and 1,692 were returned to South America. In 1996, the top six countries in the world for removals were from the LAC region. Mexico (73.5 percent); Honduras (4.0 percent); El Salvador (3.6 percent); Guatemala (3.0 percent); Dominican Republic (2.8 percent); Colombia (1.9 percent); and Jamaica (1.7 percent) alone accounted for nearly 90 percent of all persons deported from the United States in 1996. Worldwide, the LAC region accounted for 95 percent of all deportations. Thus the experience of being deported from the United States is almost entirely a Latin American and Caribbean one.

The stepped-up pace of removals raises the need for improved government-to-government coordination and communication, particularly relative to the issue of criminal alien deportations. Procedures for removing criminal aliens have been streamlined and a high priority assigned to the issue in recent years. The number of criminal aliens removed has increased sharply. In fiscal 1999, 62,359 criminal aliens were removed from the United States. Most of these people landed in Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America.

The issue of deportation of criminals has produced more concern and resentment in the region than any other aspect of the changes in U.S. immigration policy. In some countries, wild rumors of secret landings through which the U.S. government has returned criminals without the knowledge of the home country have circulated. Deportees are blamed for rising crime and violence. In many cases, those returned left their countries of origin as children, and their development as criminals took place in the streets and prisons of the United States. Lacking any skills other than criminal, often unfamiliar with their home culture and sometimes unable to speak the language, deportees are a daunting challenge, especially to already hard-pressed economies and societies.

From 1997 through 2000, the U.S. Congress and the Clinton administration took several steps to soften the impact of the 1996 legislation, easing concerns in the region. But the flurry of lobbying carried out by Central American heads of state, not only with the president and the State

Department but also with Congress, points out just how critical international migration has become to the inter-American agenda. In the process, the divergence in the nature of the concerns of the two sides has been more than apparent. For the United States, the main objective is to minimize the flow of unauthorized immigrants, while sending countries have an interest in reaping the maximum benefits from their nationals in the United States, protecting their rights to the extent possible, and cushioning the negative impact of deportations.

Historic Change

The emergence of U.S. immigration policy as a focus of intense concern among many Latin American and Caribbean leaders reflects a series of historic trends that have been occurring since the end of World War II, but especially over the last three decades.

Latin America: From Immigrant Magnet to Exporter of Labor

The transformation of Latin America and the Caribbean from a net immigration area to a net emigration region took place in a relatively short period of time in historical terms. For almost five centuries, conquerors, settlers, slaves, indentured workers, and immigrants traveled from Europe, Africa, and Asia to the lands of Latin America and the Caribbean. They came from Galicia and Italy, Germany and Andalucía, the Canary Islands and West Africa, Ireland, the Congo, Shanghai, and Lebanon. As in the United States, European immigration to Latin America peaked during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth. More than 12 million people migrated from Europe to Latin America between 1821 and 1932, accounting for 22 percent of transatlantic migration. The main receiving countries were Argentina (6.4 million); Brazil (4.4 million); Cuba (800,000); and Uruguay (800,000). These figures mean that after the United States, which received fully 60 percent, or nearly 34 million immigrants of the total of 56 million during this period, Latin America was the leading immigration area in the world. Other areas of immigration were Canada (9 percent, 5 million) and Australia and New Zealand (6 percent, 3.4 million).¹

During the time between 1821 and 1932, immigration into Latin America and the Caribbean was not a spontaneous process resulting from wage differentials. Rather, it was a complex phenomenon with multiple causes on both sides of the Atlantic and significant regional and national variations. The industrial revolution, capitalist agriculture, and the breakdown of the remnants of feudalism increased the geographic mobility of broad sectors of the European population. Rural to urban and transatlantic migration were two sides of the same coin. On the receiving side, immigration was sometimes sponsored or encouraged through incentives. In some cases, immigrants were brought in as indentured workers to replace a formerly enslaved labor force. Cuba and Peru imported Chinese coolies. In Trinidad and Guyana, East Indians were brought in to toil in the fields. Many Latin American countries sought to attract immigrants to settle under-populated areas, to increase agricultural production, and to bolster their nations' economies.

Whereas immigrants brought as laborers were nonwhite, usually Asians, when it came to settlers, governments in the region almost universally sought white immigrants. The ideas of pseudoscientific racism that dominated the late phase of the great transatlantic migration had great influence on immigration policies in Latin America, as they did in the United States. "Mejorar la raza" (improve the race) was often the not-so-hidden agenda behind immigration policy in many countries of the region. Beyond the eugenic motive, there was a related political motive as well, namely, "an attempt by the dominant elites to expand their hegemony over the mulatto and mestizo masses, whose participation in the Wars of Independence had given them a major level of autonomy and confidence in their power."² This pattern held as late as the case of Cuba, the last country in Spain's empire to achieve independence (1902). There had been tremendous black participation and significant black leadership in the wars against Spain (1868-1878, 1895-1898). The actions both of the U.S. occupying forces and white Cuban elites worked to frustrate blacks from attaining the fruits of their patriotic effort. During this period, Cuban governments encouraged massive immigration from Spain, especially from the Canary Islands, whose insular inhabitants were supposed to be particularly suited to the Cuban environment because of the similarity in climate.

The immigration policy of the Dominican Republic under the Trujillo dictatorship provides another fascinating, if chilling, case study. In 1937, in order to discourage Haitian immigration, which was believed to "worsen the race," the government massacred perhaps as many as 20,000 Haitians living in the border area of the Dominican Republic, while sparing Haitian sugar cane workers vital to the economy. When word of the atrocity became public, President Rafael Trujillo tried to improve his image (and possibly also "improve the race") by accepting Jewish immigrants fleeing persecution in Europe. Later he sponsored the immigration of Spaniards and Japanese. Jews, Spaniards, and Japanese appear to have been the unwitting beneficiaries of Trujillo's racial and cultural prejudices, while the Haitians were victimized savagely.

Beginning in the 1920s, the influx of European immigrants to Latin America had begun to decrease, although not at the same time or at the same rate in all countries. Economic hardship caused some Latin American governments to reverse course on immigration policy, particularly during the Great Depression. Cuba had encouraged the entry of immigrants from Spain and the Canary Islands, who were thought to be hard-working. They were also white: Cuban elites had worried about the racial makeup of the island for over a century. Racist concerns had subsided by the 1930s; unemployment of the Cuban workforce was now a much bigger problem for the government. Accordingly, policies to restrict the employment of foreigners were put in place. Even during the decade of the Great Depression, however, there were some population movements into Latin America, including those of Spaniards after the Civil War and Jews fleeing the Nazi Holocaust. Following World War II, there was a last European migration that numbered approximately 2 million. This included a substantial number of immigrants to Venezuela, Chile, Cuba, and other countries.³ European immigration to the LAC region virtually ceased by the 1960s, as northern European economies grew at a fast rate, attracting millions of southern European immigrants who in earlier generations might have migrated to Argentina or Brazil.

The experience of Argentina, the leading immigrant-receiving nation in Latin America, illustrates the point. As late as 1960, 12.8 percent of the population had been born abroad. By 1980, the figure had dropped to almost half, or 6.6 per-

cent. Moreover, in 1960, only 18 percent of foreign-born residents of Argentina had been born in the Americas; in 1980, 40.2 percent originated in this continent. The explanation for the two trends is simple. As the aged members of the large European immigration wave of the first decades of this century died, they were not replaced by new European immigrants but by smaller cohorts of Latin Americans.⁴

The era of Latin America as a magnet for European immigration had ended. A new era began, in which Latin America as a whole would become an area of emigration, while some countries in the region, including Venezuela, Argentina, and Brazil, would receive a moderate volume of immigration from neighboring countries.

The United States: From Immigration Lull to the New Immigration

The end of more than four centuries of transatlantic migration to Latin America occurred shortly before another major development would take place to the north: *the resumption of large-scale immigration into the United States*. The United States is the leading immigration-receiving country in history. Immigration peaked during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth. As immigration grew around the turn of the century, nativist sentiments also grew, which produced a series of restrictive immigration laws. These were often targeted at specific racial or national-origin groups. The nativist upsurge started with the Chinese exclusion act of 1882 and culminated with the 1924 National Origins Quota Act, which effectively ended the great immigration from southern and eastern Europe. National quotas, a low numerical limit on total immigration, the exclusion of immigrants from Asia and Africa, combined with depression and war, drove immigration to extremely low levels in the thirties and early forties.

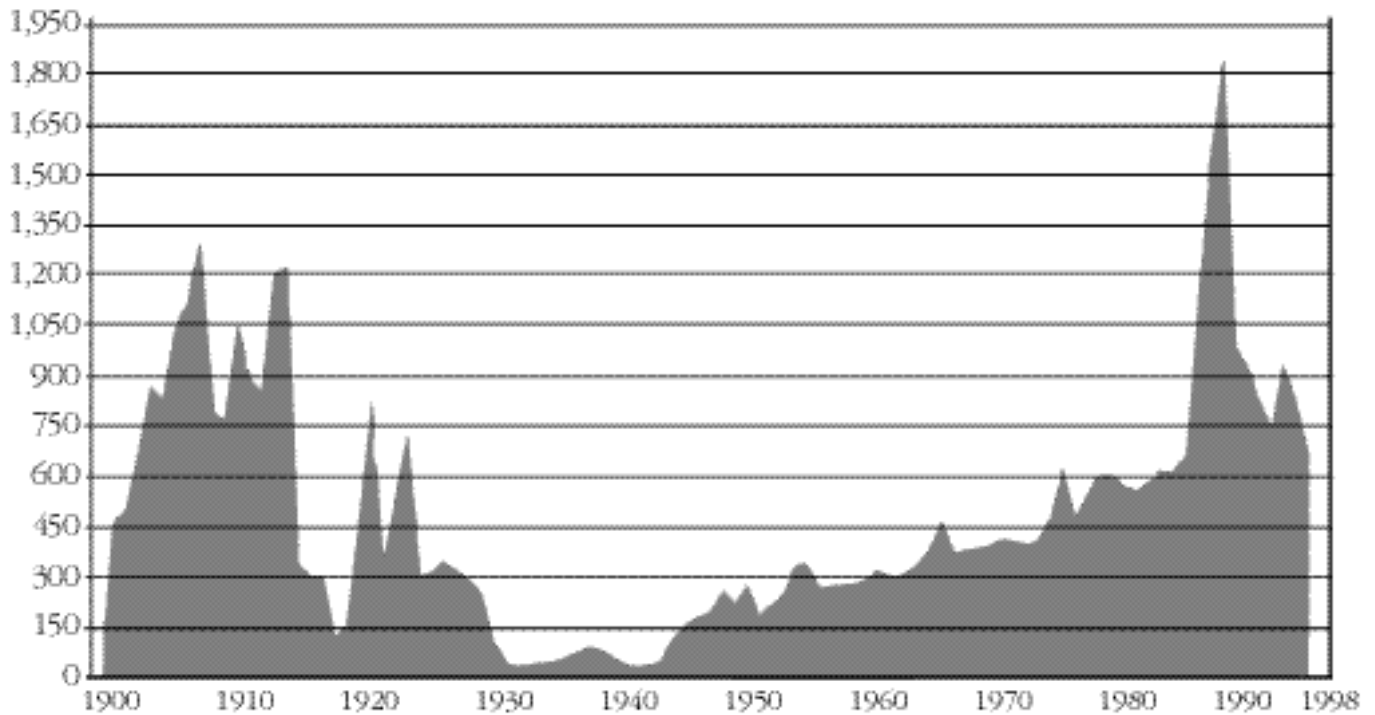
After World War II, immigration into the United States began to pick up gradually, but it was the 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act that did away with discriminatory quotas and instituted family reunification as a pillar of U.S. immigration policy. These amendments opened the door to a new wave, which came to be known as the “new immigration,” mainly from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Each decade since the 1960s has seen a substantial increase in immigration.

To put the process in context, immigration into the United States peaked in the first decade of the twentieth century, with an annual average of 880,000. Immigration levels remained high in the first half of the 1911-1920 decade, but the effects of World War I caused a sharp decline in the years 1915-1919, during which the annual average fell to just under 575,000. High levels were re-established in the early 1920s. However, while all provisions of the 1924 Quota Act were not implemented until 1929, its enactment drove levels downward in the second part of the decade to just over 410,000 annually. The full effects of the Quota Act and of the Great Depression sank immigration levels to just over 50,000 per year, less than the emigration level, making the decade of the 1930s one of net negative immigration. The average annual levels after that increased every decade: 1941-1950 = 103,000; 1951-1960 = 251,000; 1961-1970 = 332,000; 1971-1980 = 449,000; 1981-1990 = 734,000. The amnesty provisions contained in the Immigration Control and Reform Act of 1986 virtually guaranteed that the 1990s would establish a new peak. From 1991 through 1996, an annual average of 1,024,000 were admitted. The average declined in the second half of the 1990s as a result of bureaucratic overload at the INS and other factors, but remained at a relatively high level. Figure 2 shows the history of immigration to the United States in the twentieth century.

Immigration to the United States: Old World Origins, New World Realities.

Until recently, most immigrants to the United States came from Europe. Now, more than half of all foreign-born persons in the United States come from the LAC region (see Table 1), with Asia as the second leading region of immigration. The U.S. Census Bureau reported in 1999 that 51 percent, or 13.1 million, of the 25.8 foreign-born people in the United States came from Latin America. That compares with 1.8 million, or 19 percent in 1970. Thus, the number of LAC immigrants in the United States increased more than seven-fold in 27 years. That trend is part of a larger phenomenon. In 1970, only 2 out of the 10 leading countries of origin for foreign-born immigrants in the United States were Asian or Latin American, compared with 9 out of 10 in 1997.

Figure 2.
Immigrants Admitted to the United States, 1900-1998



Source: Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), 2000, *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1998* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office).

Table 1.
Immigrants Admitted to the United States, 1986-1996, from Latin America, the Caribbean, and the World

Mexico	2,969,595	29%
Caribbean	1,176,554	11%
Central America	678,451	7%
South America	669,294	6%
Total LAC	5,493,894	53%
Total, Rest of the World	4,811,783	47%
World	10,305,677	100%

Source: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1997, *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1996* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), 33.

The stock of Latin American immigrants in the United States will continue to grow as a result of the predominance of Latin Americans in the flow of immigrants into the United States. Currently, Mexico is by far the leading country of authorized immigration, and Cuba, the Dominican Republic,

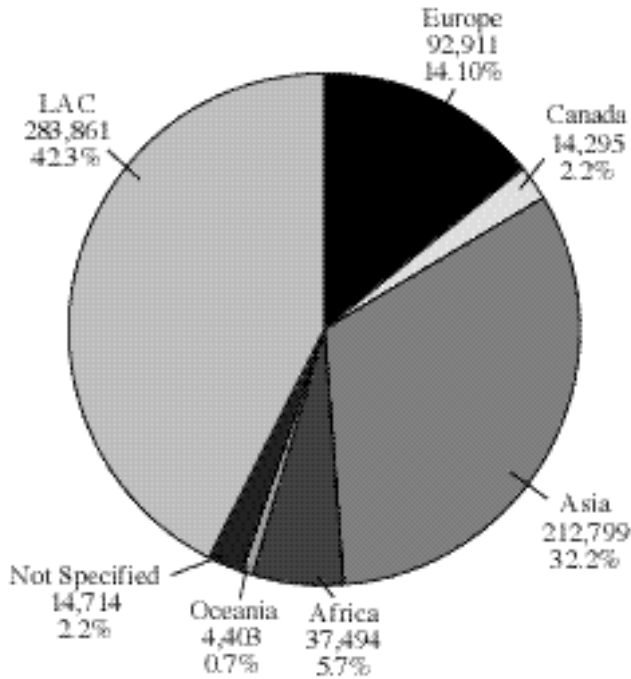
and El Salvador, have contributed large contingents of immigrants as well (see Table 2).

Table 2.
Country of Origin of Foreign-Born U.S. Population, March 1997, Ten Leading Countries

Mexico	7,017
Cuba	913
Dominican Republic	632
El Salvador	607
Great Britain	606
China and Hong Kong	1,107
India	748
Korea	591
Philippines	1,132
Vietnam	770

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, September 2000, *Census Brief: Coming from the Americas: A Profile of the Nation's Latin America Foreign Born* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce). The information in this brief is based on findings from Profile of the Foreign-Born Populations in the United States: 1997, Current Population Reports, Special Studies pp.23-195, and may be found at <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/foreign.html>.

Figure 3.
Legal U.S. Immigrants by Region and Selected Country of Last Residence, 1998



Source: Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), 2000, *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1998* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), 22.

When it comes to unauthorized immigration, the Latin American/Caribbean predominance is more dramatic (see Figures 3 and 4). Geographical proximity, the persistence of poverty, the growth of inequality, and periodic political instability in Latin America propel undocumented immigration.

From Transatlantic Migration to Hemispheric Linkages

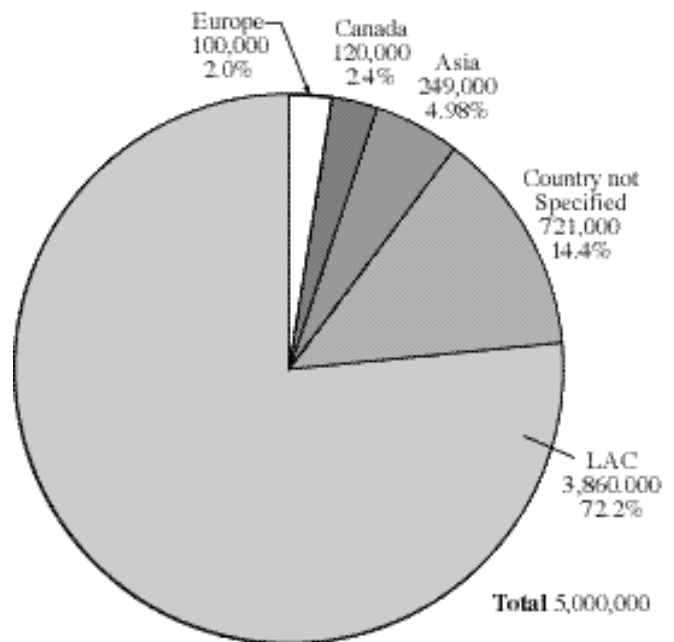
Looking at the American continent as a whole with a long historical lens, one can see that the extended era of vast transatlantic migration ended sometime around the early to middle decades of the twentieth century. A new era of international population movements began in the 1950s within the hemisphere, including primarily south to north international migration, specifically from Latin America and the Caribbean to the United States, but also south-to-south population movements from less developed areas and countries to more developed ones.

One consequence of this phenomenon is the development of an unplanned, emergent “hemispheric integration from below,” which involves

immigration-created social and economic linkages between locales in the United States and households, communities, countries, and regions in Latin America and the Caribbean. These linkages include remittance flows, immigrant chains, return migration, communication networks, and mutual cultural influences. This phenomenon has transformed communities in both North and South in myriad ways.

The flow of dollars from immigrant workers in the United States to their families and friends back home grew dramatically in the 1980s and 1990s. Such remittances create new linkages and interdependencies wherein, for instance, the standard of living of villagers in El Salvador may be substantially affected by the unemployment rate in suburban Virginia or welfare reform in California. Moreover, a percentage of remittances are used to purchase U.S. products, and, therefore, the jobs and incomes of some U.S. workers may be affected by remittances received in far away corners of Latin America. As some LAC countries benefit considerably from remittances in particular and the migration escape valve in general, political leaders in those countries have attempted to influence U.S. immigration policies and practices by lobby-

Figure 4.
Estimated U.S. Illegal Immigrant Population by Region of Origin, 1996



Source: Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), 2000, *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1998* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), 240.

THE VIEW FROM THE SENDING COUNTRIES

From the standpoint of the United States, Mexico is by far the largest factor in the immigration equation because of the relative and absolute magnitude of Mexican migration to the United States. However, the impact of migration on sending countries and the intensity of a country's migration-mediated links with the United States are more closely related to the percentage of that country's population that has migrated to the United States. Recent migrants have a special role insofar as they are most likely to maintain ties with the home country and to send remittances to family members.

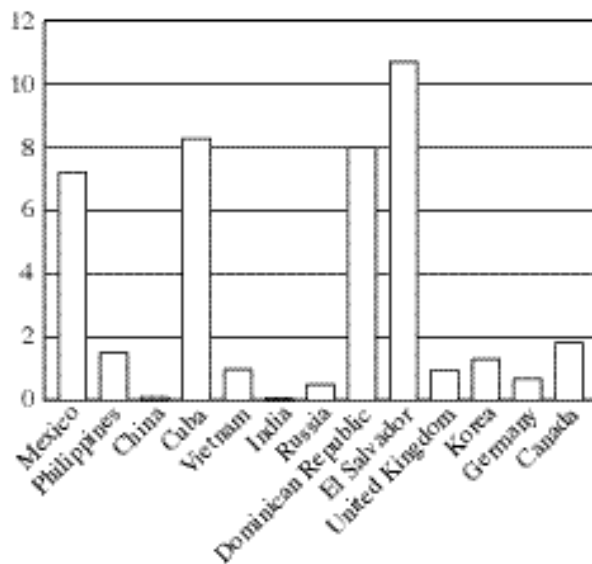
Figure 5 shows the number of immigrants (defined as foreign-born persons) from selected sending countries in the world residing in the United States in 1997 as a percentage of each country's population. This percentage is an indicator of the stock of citizens from a given country now living in the United States as a percentage of home country population. The figure clearly shows that Latin American countries dwarf those in other regions on this measure, with El Salvador, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico heading the list. Figure 5 does not include the small states of the Caribbean Basin, however.

Table 3, which looks at the recent *flow* of legal immigrants from selected Western Hemisphere countries over a recent decade (1988-1998) as a percentage of home country population, does include smaller states. Several surprises emerge from this analysis, suggesting the complexity of the migration phenomenon.

Guyana was the undisputed champion in exporting a high percentage of its population to the United States, with the equivalent of almost 40 percent of the 1997* estimated Guyanese population being admitted as immigrants to the United States in a single decade.

* Immigration figures are for fiscal years and population figures for calendar years. Therefore, the estimated 1997 population is approximately equivalent to the population at the end of the immigration period discussed here (fiscal years 1988-1998).

Figure 5.
Foreign Population Residing in the United States as a Percentage of Population of Country of Origin, 1997
 (All Countries with at least 500,000 Nationals Residing in the United States).



Source: Computed by author, using data from the U.S. Bureau of Census Center for International Research from "The Foreign-Born Population of the United States," 1998, *Current Population Survey, 1977*.

Table 3.
Immigrants Admitted to the United States, 1988-1998, as a Percentage of Sending Countries' 1997 Estimated Population
 (Selected Western Hemisphere Countries)

Guyana	39.89	Bahamas	3.47
St. Kitts and Nevis	14.88	Haiti	3.20
Jamaica	8.15	Nicaragua	1.91
Belize	6.84	Cuba	1.67
El Salvador	5.83	Honduras	1.39
Trinidad and Tobago	5.37	Guatemala	1.24
Barbados	4.96	Panama	1.03
Dominican Republic	4.88	Canada	0.51
Mexico	4.41	Costa Rica	0.50
St. Lucia	4.18	Colombia	0.42
		Brazil	0.03

Source: Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), 2000, *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1998* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office).

ing members of Congress and the executive branch with mixed success.

The above is but an example of the kind of transnationalism that has emerged as a result of migration from Latin America to the United States. There are many others, including the creation of transnational identities among individuals and communities. Former President of the Dominican Republic, Leonel Fernández, immigrated to New York City as a child and attended school there. He holds a green card and speaks of returning to the United States at the end of his term.

Moving from the Caribbean to Central America, the words, "Welcome to Intipuca City," can be read just below "Bienvenido a Intipuca" on the sign that greets visitors to this town of 20,000 in La Unión department of El Salvador, many of whose residents live in Washington, D.C., and its environs.⁵ Little wonder that a recent study of Intipuca City concluded, "Although the majority of the Intipuca population knows its traditions and has an interest in preserving them, the truth is that the locality is giving signs of cultural change as a result of the penetration of U.S. lifestyles."⁶ For El Salvador especially but also for other countries in the region, one consequence of migration to the United States has been the importation of U.S.-style gangs, as members are deported in ever-larger numbers due to the crackdown on criminal aliens. The large-scale return of young people imbued with U.S. culture has led, among other things, to an unsuccessful attempt to start an American football league.

While the income generated by immigrants increases the standard of living of their relatives back home, for the immigrants themselves the experience is often wrenching. Many Latin Americans go to the United States in search of the American dream, for instance, but after they arrive they must endure bleak lives filled with strife. According to a recent anthropological study by Sarah J. Mahler:

This book is a narrative of disillusionment. It is the chronicle of the hopes and desperation experienced by a group of undocumented immigrants who have migrated to Long Island in the last decade. These are people from Central and South America who fled dire circumstances in their homelands, sought refuge in the United States, and find little haven there, even among their fellow immigrants. Their portrayals of their lives in "America" are full of deceit, dejection, marginalization, and exploitation.⁷

Yet, the harsh experience of this particularly marginal group of immigrants cannot be taken as representative of the Latin American/ Caribbean immigrant experience in the United States, which is complex and diverse. West Indian and Cuban immigrants, for instance, on average have higher incomes than their Mexican and Dominican counterparts.⁸

Whereas countries such as Mexico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and El Salvador provide the largest absolute number of immigrants admitted to the United States from the LAC region, some smaller nations have substantially higher rates of migration to this country.

The impact of immigration on receiving areas has been as dramatic as its consequences for sending areas and for the lives of the immigrants themselves. (Figures 7-16 show where immigrants admitted in 1998 intended to settle by country of origin and metropolitan statistical area of intended settlement.) Moreover, the effect is no longer confined to traditional gateway cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Miami. Mid-sized cities, towns, and rural areas in states like Iowa, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Florida are hosting significant number of Latin American immigrants as well.

However, in cities such as Miami, Los Angeles, and New York, the effects of immigration are most visible and profound. In these cities, immigrants and their U.S.-born children already make up about half or more of the population. Miami has the highest percentage of foreign-born persons of any metropolitan area in the United States. In 1999, the Census Bureau reported that 39 percent of the population in the Miami-Fort Lauderdale metropolitan area were foreign-born. The figure would have been much higher if only Miami-Dade County had been considered in the calculation. Nonetheless, the percentage of foreign-born people residing in Miami-Fort Lauderdale exceeds that of any of the nation's ten largest metropolitan areas. At 30.5 percent, second-place Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County comes in nearly 10 percent behind Miami-Fort Lauderdale.⁹

Miami: A Natural Experiment

Given the high "dosage" of immigration Miami has received, the city can be seen as a natural experiment on immigration's impact, a "limit case," where the most extreme effects of the immigration phenomenon can be observed.

Figure 7.
Metropolitan U.S.
Statistical Area
Immigrants by Birth
Country – Colombia, 1998



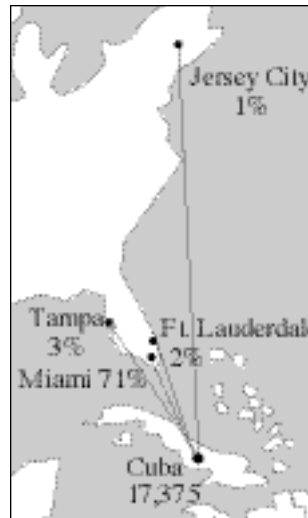
Source: Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), 2000, *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1998* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office). Note, all subsequent maps have this same source.

ues to have an unemployment rate that significantly exceeds national and state averages. The city of Miami, an area of high immigrant concentration, has one of the highest rates of poverty in the nation. Racial and ethnic tensions have sometimes erupted into riots; more often, they simmer below the seemingly quiet surface. An adversarial relationship has developed between Hispanic – especially Cuban – residents and the native African-American population.¹⁰ The white-non Hispanic population, known locally as “Anglo,” has declined in both absolute and relative terms. The black proportion of the population has

A full evaluation of the consequences of massive immigration for Miami is beyond the scope of this Agenda Paper, but some reflections are in order. It is clear that since the onset of immigration, Miami has become an important hub of U.S.-Latin American-Caribbean interactions. International business, real estate development, communications, and entertainment have all benefited from the changes wrought by immigration and the Latin American/Caribbean connection. Immigration has helped Miami acquire a vibrant cultural diversity and a cosmopolitan atmosphere.

At the same time, problems and tensions have emerged. Despite the booming U.S. economy of the late 1990s, the Miami-Dade area contin-

Figure 8. Cuba



remained stable at around 20 percent, but the native-born component has declined, while the number of foreign-born blacks has increased significantly.

Nationally, immigration is contributing to a shift in the racial and ethnic composition of the U.S. population. Hispanics are expected to make up one-quarter of the nation by the year 2050. There is much discussion and speculation about the effects of this demographic transformation. What is clear is that the area of intersection between the “American” and the “Latin American” worlds will increase in quite a dramatic and palpable way.

The latest trend in Latin American migration to the United States involves an increase in the number of persons from the Andean countries entering the United States. Historically, South America has not been a major source of immigrants to the United States, although in recent years the numbers have steadily increased. Recently, there has been a qualitative leap in the desire to migrate to the United States among many people from several countries in the region. Just as violence and political instability created massive Central American immigration in the 1980s, tens of thousands of Colombians, Ecuadoreans, Venezuelans, and other South Americans are now coming into the United States, fleeing from conditions at home. Most of the new arrivals are relatively well-off, educated, lacking in permanent immigration sta-

Figure 9.
Dominican Republic



Figure 10. Ecuador

tus, and desirous of returning home when conditions improve. Nevertheless, past experience indicates that such migrations tend to become more permanent and massive than first expected. The geographical area from which Latin American immigrants to the United States are drawn may be expanding once again in a southern direction.

Rising immigration has prompted the first national debate on the question since the 1920s. Proposals range from establishing an open border (removing all immigration controls) to eliminating all or most legal immigration (zero net immigration).¹¹ The outcome of the debate

will have important consequences for the United States, for Latin America and the Caribbean, and for inter-American relations. A recent report by the Population Reference Bureau attempts to stake out a middle ground.¹² Among the salient points are the following:

- The United States is in the midst of the fourth great wave of immigration in the country's history.
- The United States is the world's leading country of immigration and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.
- Past immigration flows resemble waves with sharp peaks followed by deep troughs. The fourth wave of immigration now underway shows no signs of giving way to a sharp decline, although many Americans would like to curtail immigration.

- Now, as in the past, most immigrants do not become citizens. However, since Congress passed tough immigration laws in 1996, naturalization rates have increased significantly.
- Research does not provide clear guidelines for immigration policy.

As the Population Reference Bureau report suggests, if current immigration levels are sustained indefinitely, that would be an unprecedented phenomenon in U.S. history. Massive immigration of groups from outside northwestern Europe, including Asians, Africans, Slavs, Jews, and Italians, was deliberately halted by federal legislation enacted between 1882 (Chinese Exclusion Act) and 1924 (Nationality Quota Act). As late as 1990, the three leading ancestry groups in the United States were German (57,947,374 – 23.3 percent); Irish (38,735,539 – 15.6 percent); and English (32,651,788 – 13.1 percent). A different rank order surely would have prevailed if immigration from southern and eastern Europe had been allowed to proceed unchecked after 1924.

The leading Latin American ancestry group as of 1990, Mexicans, came in a distant seventh at 11,586,983 (4.7 percent), trailing Afro-Americans (23,777,098 – 9.6 percent); Italians (14,664,550 – 5.9 percent); and the anomalous category of

Figure 11. El Salvador

Americans (12,395,999 – 5.0 percent). However, these figures can be expected to change dramatically if immigration from Mexico and other Latin American countries continues at a brisk pace.

The 2000 census showed a larger than expected increase in the Hispanic/Latino population of

Figure 12. Guatemala



the United States, which analysts attribute to an underestimate of the undocumented immigrant population, which the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) had estimated at 5 million. There are now over 35 million Hispanics/Latinos in the United States, and they make up 12.5 percent of the total. In California,

Figure 13. Haiti



the nation's largest state, Latinos make up one-third of the population, and their numbers continue to increase rapidly.

About two-thirds of Hispanics in the United States are of Mexican origin. Mexico is the leading country of emigration in the world. The United States is the leading immigration country, due mainly to Mexican immigration. Much anti-immigrant sentiment has been directed at

Mexicans, and that sentiment may grow.

Alarm about Mexican immigration has begun to reach beyond the anti-immigration movement. Recently, one of the leading U.S. academic voices on international relations, Samuel P. Huntington, expressed dire concerns about Mexican immigration: "Mexican immigration is a unique, disturbing, and looming challenge to our cultural integrity,

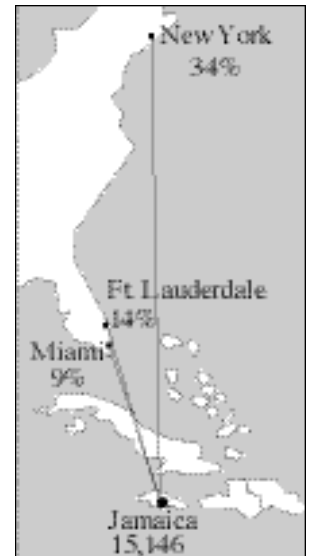
our national identity, and potentially to our future as a country."¹³ According to Huntington, Mexican immigration is of special concern because of geographical contiguity, the magnitude of the immigrant flow, the large illegal component, its geographic concentration, and its long duration. Huntington fears that Mexican migration will lead to a kind of Miami on a much vaster scale, where, according to Huntington, "people could be able to pursue satisfactory careers within an overwhelmingly Spanish-speaking and Mexican community, without ever having to speak English." This conclusion, however, draws on a misunderstanding of the Miami experience, where the widespread use of Spanish notwithstanding, English is still an essential requirement for the vast majority

of professional, executive, and managerial careers. Huntington may be more accurate, however, when he states, "America is moving in the direction of a bilingual and bicultural society."¹⁴

Another analyst, political scientist Tony Smith, also thinks Mexican migration is a cause of special concern but for somewhat different reasons. Along with other critics of immigration, Smith asserts, "Mexican migrants are largely uneducated and unskilled. . . ." and ". . . their arrival may depress wages for other poor groups in the United States." A more novel argument is Smith's contention that "a liberal [immigration] policy may be bad for the Mexicans who come, given the inhospitality of the American wage and educational system to unskilled immigrants."¹⁵ This argument raises the question of why Mexicans come to the United States, unless one assumes migrants do not know their own interests. A final argument Smith offers centers around what he considers the potentially ambivalent national loyalties of Mexican immigrants in the Southwest.

On the opposite side of these concerns is Mexican President Vicente Fox's call for an

Figure 14. Jamaica



increase in legal Mexican immigration and a gradual move toward an open border, as part of a North American Common Market. Fox's call for a tighter economic association with the United States and Canada, to include the labor market, did not receive a warm embrace in Washington. It, nonetheless, represents the aspirations of many Mexicans and other Latin Americans in terms of how hemispheric economic integration ought to proceed in the twenty-first century.

Immigration and Integration

As hemispheric integration develops in the early decades of this century, it will become increasingly difficult to ignore its most human dimension: migration. Increasingly, it will be necessary for the United States to think of international migration within the context of the process of hemispheric integration. It seems unlikely that a policy of wide-open markets and tightly closed borders can coexist forever. While immigration is an issue of sovereign national policy, bilateral and multilateral dialogues on immigration have been going on in Latin America and other parts of the world in recent years.

One example is the Binational Study of Immigration jointly carried out in the 1990s by Mexican and U.S. researchers.¹⁶ An instance of a multilateral regional approach is that of the Regional Migration Conference, or "Puebla Group," which brings together the United States, Canada, Mexico, and the Central American countries for such purposes as exchange of information and combating human trafficking.

The hemispheric dialogue that began to emerge in the late twentieth century should be intensified considerably in the coming decades. Immigration is a form of integration from below that has been occurring unacknowledged for three decades and will continue for the foreseeable future. If the integration of markets and the harmonization of economic and political rules of the game is the hallmark of the first wave of hemispheric integration, the integration of peoples is a necessary component of any enduring, meaningful attempt to unite the hemisphere. That will require a cross-cultural dialogue, a decrease in the level of inequality between the North and the South, and a coming to terms with the question of immigration as something more than an enforcement or sovereignty issue.

Figure 15. Mexico

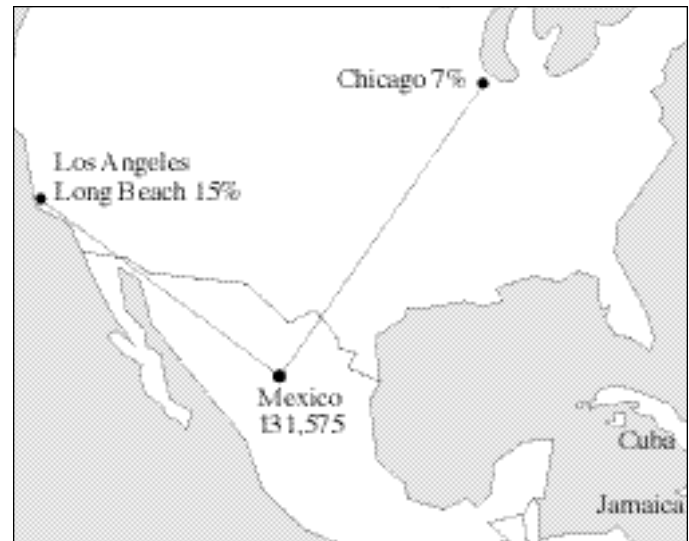


Figure 16. Peru



NOTES

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5. Pedro Ticas, 1998, *Cambios culturales, economía y migración en Intipuca, La Unión* (San Salvador: Universidad Tecnológica de El Salvador).
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