



Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s

By Francisco E. Balderrama, Raymond Rodríguez

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During the Great Depression, a sense of total despair plagued the United States. Americans sought a convenient scapegoat and found it in the Mexican community. Laws forbidding employment of Mexicans were accompanied by the hue and cry to "get rid of the Mexicans!" The hysteria led pandemic repatriation drives and one million Mexicans and their children were illegally shipped to Mexico.

Despite their horrific treatment and traumatic experiences, the American born children never gave up hope of returning to the United States. Upon attaining legal age, they badgered their parents to let them return home. Repatriation survivors who came back worked diligently to get their lives back together. Due to their sense of shame, few of them ever told their children about their tragic ordeal.

Decade of Betrayal recounts the injustice and suffering endured by the Mexican community during the 1930s. It focuses on the experiences of individuals forced to undergo the tragic ordeal of betrayal, deprivation, and adjustment. This revised edition also addresses the inclusion of the event in the educational curriculum, the issuance of a formal apology, and the question of fiscal remuneration.

"Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, the authors of *Decade of Betrayal*, the first expansive study of Mexican repatriation with perspectives from both sides of the border, claim that 1 million people of Mexican descent were driven from the United States during the 1930s due to raids, scare tactics, deportation, repatriation and public pressure. Of that conservative estimate, approximately 60 percent of those leaving were legal American citizens. Mexicans comprised nearly half of all those deported during the decade, although they made up less than 1 percent of the country's population. 'Americans, reeling from the economic disorientation of the depression, sought a convenient scapegoat,' Balderrama and Rodríguez wrote. 'They found it in the Mexican community.'"--*American History*

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Editorial Review

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Balderrama and Rodriguez couldn't have penned a more timely book on Mexican Americans. As this century speeds to a close, history, as they say, seems to repeat itself. Today's Proposition 186 legislation in California is a carbon copy of xenophobic laws that were howled for and passed earlier this century in this country. Covering the 1930s, *Decade of Betrayal* details the shameful treatment that people of Mexican heritage were handed when the going got tough in the U.S. The Bill of Rights was out the window when it came to people of brown skin, who had to endure unlawful search and seizure and systematic roundups, such as the infamous La Placita raid, in which the INS, in conjunction with state and local police, surrounded a public park on a weekend day demanding proof of citizenship from those who didn't look "American" and arresting those who couldn't immediately show proof. U.S. citizenship did not provide protection from harassment by the government; legislators in Washington strongly debated and seriously considered the wholesale deportation of all "non-Americans," that is, nonwhites, from U.S. shores. This is an important historical accounting, "social history rather than historical sociology" as the authors state. Every active history and political science collection should add this title. *Raul Nino*

Review

"Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez's "Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s" remains one of the seminal works within Chicano history and immigration studies."

""Decade of Betrayal" is an important book on a topic little understood by most Americans."

From the Inside Flap

Decade of Betrayal focuses on the experiences of individuals illegally shipped from the U.S. to Mexico in the 1930s and the recent questions of a formal apology and fiscal remuneration.

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