



Mexican Workers and the American Dream: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939 (Class & Culture)

Camille Guerin-Gonzales

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"Guerrin-Gonzales's special contribution is the link she explores between immigrant experience and the American dream. The towering irony her fine book reveals is how an ideology of promise for others was for the Mexican migrants the justification for their exploitation and, when the Great Depression struck, for expelling many of them from the country."--David Brody, University of California, Davis

"Based on exhaustive research in U.S. and Mexican archives, this study offers a richly-textured history of Mexican immigrants in rural California. A work of exceptional breadth, especially with regard to repatriation, [it] is a pivotal contribution to Chicano historiography and immigration studies."--Vicki L. Ruiz, Andrew W. Mellon All-Claremont Professor in the Humanities, The Claremont Graduate School

In the first forty years of this century, over one million Mexican immigrants moved to the United States, attracted by the prospect of farm work in California. They became workers in industrial agriculture --barely recognized, never respected, and poorly paid. Native white American workers did not resent the Mexicans during prosperous times, when everyone who wanted to work could do so. But during the Great Depression, native workers began to realize that many of the Mexican workers were here to stay. Native workers, blaming their unemployment on the immigrants, joined with government officials to demand that Mexican workers and their families return to Mexico. During the 1930s, the federal government and county relief agencies cooperated in a nasty repatriation program, forcing half a million Mexicans living in the U.S. to return to Mexico.

Camille Guerin-Gonzales tells the story of their migration, their years here, and of the repatriation program--one of the largest mass removal operations ever sanctioned by the U.S. government. She documents both their efforts to resist and the overpowering forces that worked against them.

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