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*Mexican Repatriation Statistics:
Some Suggested Alternatives
to Carey McWilliams*

ABRAHAM HOFFMAN

During the years of the Great Depression, an unprecedented number of Mexican immigrants, for a variety of reasons, returned or were returned to Mexico from the United States. This movement, an acceleration of repatriation that dated back to the 1920s, was also spurred by a federal deportation campaign against aliens who had illegally entered the United States. Mexican aliens were especially vulnerable to this campaign because many had entered informally before laws were passed, and they had not regularized their entry.¹

For many years repatriation, as well as other episodes in Mexican American history, was completely ignored. Not until recently have serious studies begun to come from disciplines other than sociology, anthropology, or education. Because of the dearth of material on Mexican Americans, scholars have been compelled to rely on a select group of published writings for much of the background knowledge and many of the assumptions made about the experiences of Mexicans in the United States. For the phenomenon of repatriation, one of the most quoted sources has been Carey McWilliams, for the past twenty years editor of the *Nation* and a widely respected journalist.

McWilliams, a prolific writer, discussed Mexican repatriation in several of his books dealing with minorities in America. His first observations on the return of Mexicans to Mexico were recorded in an article

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¹ Abraham Hoffman, "The Repatriation of Mexican Nationals from the United States during the Great Depression" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1970), *passim*.

which appeared in *American Mercury* in March 1933. Several years later, Mexican repatriation was briefly discussed in *Factories in the Field*, a controversial book on migratory farm labor in California. Several paragraphs were also devoted to this mass movement of Mexican immigrants in *Southern California Country* and in his history of Mexican Americans, *North from Mexico*.²

McWilliams provided statistical information on the repatriation movement, and this data can be divided into two categories. First, he published statistics as to the number of Mexicans being repatriated from the United States during the depression. Second, he dealt with repatriation from Los Angeles county in particular, where the Department of Charities had inaugurated an organized repatriation program. McWilliams gave statistics as to the cost of the Los Angeles repatriation program and the numbers who left.

Carey McWilliams fully deserves credit for creating a bookshelf of ethnic studies long before the term became fashionable in the academic world. Careful examination of McWilliams's writings, however, reveals serious deficiencies in his documentation on repatriation — shortcomings important enough to call for a reevaluation of the repatriation movement and the offering of alternative sources of information.

In citing repatriation statistics McWilliams often requires the reader to accept the absence of documentation, as shown in the following series of examples culled from McWilliams's writings. On the numbers of Mexicans leaving the United States, McWilliams had this to say in 1933, without citing a source other than two newspaper articles:³

No one seems to know precisely how many Mexicans have been "repatriated" . . . to date. The Los Angeles *Times* of November 18 [1932] gave an estimate of 11,000 [from Los Angeles] for the year 1932. The *Times* reported last April [1932] that altogether more than 200,000 *repatriados* had left the

² Carey McWilliams, "Getting Rid of the Mexican," *American Mercury*, XXVIII (March 1933), 322-24; *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Boston, 1939), 128-30; *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land* (New York, 1946), 315-17; *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (Philadelphia, 1949), 185-93. See also McWilliams, *Ill Fares the Land: Migrants and Migratory Labor in the United States* (Boston, 1942), 36-39; *Brothers under the Skin*, rev. ed. (Boston, 1951), 128; *California: The Great Exception* (New York, 1949), 153-55.

³ McWilliams, "Getting Rid of the Mexican," 323. This article was recently elevated to the status of a document in Wayne Moquin and Charles Van Doren, eds., *A Documentary History of the Mexican American* (New York, 1971), 294-97.

United States in the twelve months immediately preceding, of which it estimated that from 50,000 to 75,000 were from California, and over 35,000 from Los Angeles county. Of those from Los Angeles county, a large number were charity deportations.

Six years later McWilliams wrote *Factories in the Field*, a book which has been considered the nonfiction counterpart of Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*; both appeared at approximately the same time. In referring to the repatriation of Mexicans, McWilliams stated that "thousands of Mexicans, many of whom were citizens of the United States, were herded together by the authorities and shipped back to Mexico, to get them off the relief rolls." The most recent figure McWilliams had at the time was "in excess of 75,000 Mexicans" who had been repatriated from Los Angeles. As a reference McWilliams footnoted his 1933 article.⁴

McWilliams's next consideration of Mexican repatriation appeared in his book *Ill Fares the Land*, a study of migratory labor as a national problem, published in 1942. Here he wrote: "During the first year of the depression . . . an estimated 160,000 Mexicans left California. . . . [It] is generally estimated that close to 200,000 left between 1929 and 1939."⁵

For the first of these sentences, McWilliams referred the reader to part 53, page 19,714 of the transcript of the hearings conducted by Senator Robert M. La Follette, Jr.'s subcommittee of the Committee on Education and Labor. La Follette's subcommittee was investigating "violations of free speech and rights of labor" and in January 1940 was in Los Angeles hearing testimony on "open-shop activities." On page 19,714 a letter appeared that had been copied from the files of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce's Agricultural Department, written by Arthur G. Arnoll, the chamber's general manager. Arnoll had stated, "During the first years [not first *year*, as McWilliams had written] of the depression we lost about 160,000 of our Mexican people." Arnoll's letter, written in 1936 in response to a request for information about migratory labor in California, gave no indication as to where Arnoll had obtained his statistical information.⁶

⁴ McWilliams, *Factories in the Field*, 129.

⁵ McWilliams, *Ill Fares the Land*, 37.

⁶ The files of the chamber had been requested by the subcommittee because of its suspected involvement with the Associated Farmers, an antiunion organization. U.S., Congress, Senate, Subcommittee of the Committee on Education and Labor, *Hearings on Violations of Free Speech and Rights of Labor*, 74 Cong., 2 sess., 1936, p. 19, 714.

A curious footnote can be found for the second sentence concerning repatriation in *Ill Fares the Land*. The sentence states that "close to 200,000" Mexicans left the United States in the ten years following the advent of the depression. In the footnote McWilliams referred the reader to *Tumbleweeds*, a 1940 novel by Marta Roberts, "which recounts certain phases of this tragic exodus." *Tumbleweeds* describes the efforts of a Mexican family to cope with the problems of the depression. At the end of the novel, after a financial windfall, the family voluntarily undergoes repatriation to Mexico, where they hope for spiritual regeneration. But nowhere does the novel document McWilliams's figure of "close to 200,000" Mexicans.

In 1943 McWilliams wrote *Brothers under the Skin*, an important work with chapters on Indians, Chinese, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Negroes, and other ethnic minorities in the United States. In the chapter entitled "The Forgotten Mexican" McWilliams stated, "Then came the depression which resulted in the repatriation of thousands of destitute Mexican nationals and their American-born children." McWilliams made no attempt to document his assertion or to provide an exact number.⁷

Following World War II McWilliams wrote a book for Duell, Sloan, and Pearce's American Folkways series. *Southern California Country* appeared in 1946 and presented the history of the region in the subjective, liberal-oriented style which has become McWilliams's trademark. Since the focus of the book was on southern California, McWilliams limited his view of repatriation to the experiences of Los Angeles county, where, he asserted, "In 1932 alone over 11,000 Mexicans were repatriated." No source was given for this figure, though its origin is revealed in the 1933 article.⁸

In 1949 two books by McWilliams were published. *California: The Great Exception* briefly noted, "With the onset of the depression, thousands of Mexicans were repatriated by the relief agencies, others huddled in the cities where they had acquired residence and refused to make the annual crop junket, and still additional thousands left voluntarily for Mexico." Though the book has footnotes, there are none for this section,

⁷ McWilliams, *Brothers under the Skin*, 128. A condensed version of "The Forgotten Mexican" appeared in *Common Ground*, III (Spring 1943), 65-78.

⁸ McWilliams, *Southern California Country*, 317. The book lacks footnotes and bibliography.

and there is no bibliography.⁹ McWilliams's second 1949 book also considered Mexican repatriation. *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* remains the most ambitious attempt yet made to place Mexican Americans in historical perspective. All that McWilliams noted about repatriation, however, was an almost verbatim reprinting of what he had written in *Southern California Country* — still without documentation for his statistics.¹⁰ He also stated, inexplicably, that “in the depression years, some 65,000 Mexican immigrants were repatriated, some voluntarily, some with the aid of the Mexican government, some being summarily shipped back to Mexico by welfare agencies in this country.”¹¹ No attempt was made to reconcile this contradiction in figures with the numbers he had used in the *American Mercury* article, *Factories in the Field*, or *Ill Fares the Land*.

Regrettably, writers on the topic of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the United States have tended to accept uncritically McWilliams's statistical figures for repatriation.¹² This has been in spite of the fact that McWilliams himself has changed the figures, left them ambiguous, or failed to indicate where he obtained his information. Even McWilliams has tended to rely on his memory rather than engage in further research that might bring greater precision to a complex problem.¹³ Indeed, recent authors have insisted that records on aliens leaving the United States “are so confused as to be nearly useless.”¹⁴

⁹ McWilliams, *California: The Great Exception*, 154.

¹⁰ McWilliams, *North from Mexico*, 193.

¹¹ McWilliams, *North from Mexico*, 185.

¹² Ruth Landes, *Latin Americans of the Southwest* (New York, 1965), 56–57; Earl Pomeroy, *The Pacific Slope: A History of California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Utah, and Nevada* (New York, 1965), 283; Beatrice Griffith, *American Me* (Boston, 1948), 115; Harvey A. Levenstein, *Labor Organizations in the United States and Mexico: A History of Their Relations* (New York, 1971), 125; Leo Grebler, Joan W. Moore, and Ralph C. Guzman, *The Mexican-American People: The Nation's Second Largest Minority* (New York, 1970), 524. The authors of *The Mexican-American People* refer to McWilliams's body of work as “intended as a call for social action” (p. 7), but proceed to utilize it for reference.

¹³ Carey McWilliams, “A Man, a Place, and a Time,” *American West*, VII (May 1970), 7. McWilliams stated in this article that his article had appeared in the July 1933 *American Mercury*.

¹⁴ Joan W. Moore, *Mexican Americans* (Englewood Cliffs, 1970), 42, citing Leo Grebler, *Mexican Immigration to the United States: The Record and Its Implications* (Mexican-American Study Project, Advance Report 2, Graduate School of Business Administration, UCLA, January 1966), 27–28.

This may be the case if one does not seek for data beyond the annual reports of the U.S. Commissioner General of Immigration. In 1931 the commissioner stated, "From numerous sources it has been reported that the departures of Mexicans to their own country in the past year, of which we have no complete records, have reached large proportions."¹⁵ The following year he commented on the "unrecorded but impressive number of Mexicans. . . . The Immigration Service had not the facilities to keep count of this hegira. . . ." ¹⁶ The Roosevelt administration brought in a new secretary of labor, but little improvement in tallying departures.¹⁷

While the inadequacy of the records kept by the Bureau of Immigration and its successor, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, is self-evident insofar as Mexican repatriation is concerned, such inadequacy does not mean that better records are nonexistent. One long-neglected source for repatriation statistics is Paul S. Taylor, who between 1928 and 1934 wrote a series of monographic studies on Mexican labor in the United States. One of these, *Mexican Labor in the United States: Migration Statistics, IV*, contained important statistical data on repatriation from every point in the United States where it occurred.¹⁸ It is one of the curiosities of historiography that McWilliams's writings have often been cited, but Taylor's work has been overlooked. Many of Taylor's figures were based on statistics he obtained from the Mexican government, and the only shortcoming in their use is that his monograph was written in 1934, before the repatriation movement lost its significance — hardly an important matter when one considers that McWilliams's 1933 article is still cited.¹⁹

¹⁵ U.S., Commissioner General of Immigration, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration, 1931* (Washington, 1931), 25.

¹⁶ U.S., Commissioner General of Immigration, *Annual Report . . . 1932*, 2.

¹⁷ The numbers for departing Mexicans were still far too low. Besides deportations, the Immigration and Naturalization Service counted only those Mexicans and other aliens who declared they had no intention of returning. Many repatriates avoided such a declaration. U.S., Department of Labor, *Twenty-Third Annual Report of the Secretary of Labor, 1935* (Washington, 1935), 85.

¹⁸ University of California Publications in Economics, XII (Berkeley, 1934). Another scholar who utilized Mexican government figures was Emory S. Bogardus, who obtained them from James C. Gilbert, a master's degree candidate who had done extensive field research in Mexico. Emory S. Bogardus, *The Mexican in the United States* (Los Angeles, 1934), 91.

¹⁹ Grebler et al., *Mexican-American People*, 524.

An even closer examination than Taylor's of some aspects of repatriation statistics is possible. While Taylor's work reveals repatriation from specific points in the United States and to specific destinations in Mexico, he did not provide a month-by-month tally of the movement of Mexicans southward. This information does exist and may be found in consular reports in the State Department files at the National Archives. Investigation of these records reveals a wealth of hitherto untapped material dealing with Mexican repatriation from the United States.

State Department interest in the movement of Mexicans back to Mexico is reflected in a confidential letter sent to Robert Frazer, the American consul general in Mexico City, on March 16, 1931. "In view of the apparent large number of Mexicans involved in the movement from the United States to Mexico," the letter stated, "you are requested to prepare a questionnaire addressed to consular officers stationed at Mexican border posts requesting that they submit to you uniform reports on the subject dating from July 1, 1930, this data to be supplemented from time to time as additional information becomes available." The data gathered was to be consolidated into one report, "so arranged as to show the movement of Mexicans both to and from the United States separately at each of the border ports, with a combined total of all arrivals at and departures from Mexico through the ports mentioned." The State Department suggested that the information be obtained discreetly and that an opinion of the reliability of the sources be given.²⁰

Although the consulate general had been submitting occasional reports pertaining to the movement of Mexicans back and forth across the border, no data had been provided on entries and departures through individual ports. In addition, no distinctions had been made between the types of entry granted except to record visas granted to nonquota immigrants.²¹ Consul General Frazer replied to the State Department's request by noting that American consulates were established at only seven entry-departure points along the Mexican border, making any comprehensive survey difficult. On the other hand, observed Frazer, the Mexican Migration Service "has offices at twenty-six such ports, which maintain and submit regularly to the Mexican Migration Department at the capital statistics concerning migration." Consequently, the consulate general's

²⁰ Mexico Reports/39, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives.

²¹ Mexico Reports/32-36, 38.

statistical reports would be based on data provided by the Mexican Migration Department rather than from consular officers at the seven border ports.²²

Since the Consulate General is in position to obtain the statistics desired by the [State] Department with less difficulty, more discreetly and with less publicity, and probably more promptly than our border consulates could obtain them, it is respectfully requested that I be informed whether the Department has any objections to obtaining such statistics directly from the Migration Department.

Thereafter, on a monthly basis, the consulate general submitted statistical reports indicating the number of Mexicans entering and departing Mexico through twenty-six border ports, and monthly and yearly cumulative totals. Although occasional problems occurred,²³ the American consulate general reiterated its belief in the basic reliability of the statistical data supplied by the Mexican Migration Department.²⁴

In view of the existing literature on Mexican repatriation, some interesting observations may be gleaned from the neat columns of type-written numbers in the statistical reports. For example, while organized repatriation programs by local welfare agencies commenced in 1931 and lasted until about 1935, the *peak* of Mexican repatriation occurred in November 1931 and thereafter continuously declined (see table 1). Many implications may be drawn from this, chief among them the possibility that there were at least two repatriation periods during the depression. The first, more significant numerically, may have been largely voluntary; numerous pre-1932 reports attest to Mexicans returning to Mexico driving automobiles loaded down with material possessions acquired in the United States, though it should be noted that many destitute Mexicans were

²² Frazer to State Department, March 30, 1931, Mexico Reports/40. Frazer's suggested modification to the way in which the data was to be collected was approved by the State Department. State Department to Frazer, April 17, 1931, Mexico Reports/41.

²³ State Department to Frazer, December 5, 1931, and Frazer's reply to State Department, December 18, 1931, Mexico Reports/48 and 49.

²⁴ After January 1932 a specific category for repatriates was established; they accounted for over 90 percent of the Mexicans returning to Mexico. Mexico Reports/54-57. The consulate general correlated figures coming to it from the Mexican Migration Service and the Department of National Statistics. Frazer stated that the immigration services of both countries paid "more attention to the number of Mexicans entering its own country." Frazer to State Department, September 3, 1932, Mexico Reports/58.

TABLE 1

REPATRIATION BY MONTHS, 1929-1937

	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937
January	6,868	3,782	6,508	9,115	3,005	1,786	1,339	1,138	467
February	4,465	3,472	6,145	6,308	3,108	1,607	1,014	1,138	515
March	4,382	3,391	9,400	5,931	2,979	1,502	1,241	1,036	558
April	4,333	3,830	10,439	5,987	4,817	2,213	1,275	843	535
May	5,592	3,674	7,201	8,327	2,946	1,489	1,232	981	383
June	9,768	5,174	9,639	7,614	2,741	1,653	1,271	946	552
July	7,101	5,788	8,954	8,018	1,851	1,776	1,266	1,129	714
August	6,285	5,775	14,748	6,071	2,333	1,577	1,369	782	687
September	6,991	7,134	13,826	3,777	1,721	2,320	1,325	926	653
October	7,809	8,648	16,448	5,128	2,283	2,976	1,347	895	788
November	7,850	9,560	20,756	5,460	2,554	2,967	1,413	826	1,026
December	7,975	9,899	14,455	5,717	3,236	2,077	1,276	959	1,159
Total	79,419	70,129	138,519	77,435	33,574	23,943	15,368	11,599	8,037

SOURCE: Mexico Reports/59, 80, 99, 122, 141, 142, Record Group 59, National Archives.

also returning.²⁵ The second had quantitatively fewer people but involved movement from American cities; the emphasis after 1931 is on organized repatriation as it occurred in Detroit, Los Angeles, Chicago, Saint Paul, and other cities.²⁶ The year 1931 also deserves special attention because of the Department of Labor's drive on aliens illegally in the United States, a campaign which directly affected Mexicans.²⁷ Such complicating factors suggest strongly that simplistic explanations and the generalized term "thousands" do little to inform the student of history about Mexican repatriation.

If McWilliams lacked precision in his quoting of figures for Mexican repatriates generally, he seemed much more certain of his sources when he discussed Mexican repatriation from Los Angeles county. On the surface he seemed in command of his information to the exact penny:²⁸

It was discovered that, in wholesale lots, the Mexicans could be shipped to Mexico City for \$14.70 *per capita*. This sum represented less than the cost

²⁵ Hoffman, "Repatriation of Mexican Nationals," 186-91.

²⁶ Hoffman, "Repatriation of Mexican Nationals," 191-92; Norman D. Humphrey, "Mexican Repatriation from Michigan: Public Assistance in Historical Perspective," *Social Service Review*, XV (September 1941), 497-513; Emory S. Bogardus, "Mexican Repatriates," *Sociology and Social Research*, XVIII (November-December 1933), 169-76.

²⁷ Hoffman, "Repatriation of Mexican Nationals," 58-121.

²⁸ *American Mercury*, XXVIII (March 1933), 323.

of a week's board and lodging. . . . The repatriation program is regarded locally as a piece of consummate statecraft. The average per family cost of executing it is \$71.14, including food and transportation. It costs Los Angeles county \$77,249.29 to repatriate one shipment of 6,024. It would have cost \$424,933.70 to provide this number with such charitable assistance as they would have been entitled to had they remained — a saving of \$347,468.41.

Thirteen years later McWilliams repeated this account, using the same figures, in *Southern California Country*, and in 1949 he repeated it again in *North from Mexico*.²⁹ The McWilliams version has been quoted by a number of writers who apparently did not think it necessary to question its authenticity, yet in no case did McWilliams leavel where he had obtained his figures.³⁰

No great mystery surrounds the Los Angeles county repatriation programs. The county welfare records are open to public view in the Los Angeles County Hall of Administration, and the Los Angeles Public Library has a fairly complete file of the newspapers of the period. The Los Angeles *La Opinion* (a source overlooked by McWilliams) can be scanned at the Bancroft Library. Moreover, McWilliams was not the only one who observed the repatriation trains as an eyewitness. Dr. George P. Clements, manager of the Agricultural Department of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, left a detailed account of a repatriation shipment he witnessed in August 1931.³¹ Another writer on repatriation was Rev. Robert N. McLean, who observed the movement of re-

²⁹ McWilliams, *Southern California Country*, 317, and *North from Mexico*, 193.

³⁰ Grebler et al., *Mexican-American People*, 524, quotes from the 1933 article and adds, "The records of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors — their negotiations with Mexican railroads, their careful accounting — cover many pages. There is practically no mention in these pages of the reaction of Mexicans involved — nor of their friends and relatives who witnessed the 'repatriations'." It should be noted that there is no mention of the efforts of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to check on reports of land colonization projects, the sending of Charities Department representative Rex Thomson on several trips to Mexico to confer with Mexican officials, or the cooperation of the Mexican consul in the repatriation programs. Another point is that the county records are incomplete; to make full use of them one must consult carbon copies of the missing documents, and a number of these are available at the National Archives, Record Group 59. Finally, the available county records make little mention of the Mexican viewpoint, perhaps because such documents, if they existed, have been misplaced or lost; Los Angeles county's welfare agencies have undergone several reorganizational changes since the early 1930s, as well as several changes of address.

³¹ The Clements Papers are in the Department of Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles.

patriates in several cities.³² Documents pertaining to deportation, repatriation (especially from Los Angeles), the efforts of Los Angeles county representatives to meet with Mexican officials, and other matters affecting the welfare of Mexicans in the United States can be seen in Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, *Memoria de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores* (Mexico, 1928–36). American consular reports, now at the National Archives, are also full of firsthand observations on Mexican repatriates. Repatriation programs in almost all of the cities where they occurred have never been studied. Grebler's comment "We have a record of the procedures involved in only one case, the city of Detroit"³³ simply means that cities such as Chicago, Saint Paul, San Antonio, and Phoenix still await scholarly investigation.

McWilliams's simplistic view of repatriation also leaves much that is unexplained or ignored. When he suggested that growers conspired with county officials to be rid of Mexican farm workers because the Mexicans were becoming aware of the efficacy of organizing,³⁴ he omitted mentioning that Dr. Clements and the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce itself took a strong position *opposing* repatriation in 1931. The Agricultural Department had been established by the chamber to represent the interest of large-scale growers, yet Clements was a leading opponent of immigration restriction for Mexico and played a leading role in contesting the Bureau of Immigration's deportation drive in Los Angeles.³⁵

Other factors pertaining to Mexican repatriation were left unmentioned by McWilliams. The Cristero Revolt in Mexico had ended, and many Mexicans may have returned to Mexico because of the cessation of the Mexican government's antireligious campaign. The efforts of the Catholic Welfare Bureau in assisting indigent Mexicans in Los Angeles have been neglected, as well as the work of the Mexican consulate in promoting relief and repatriation before and during the programs of the Bureau of County Welfare.³⁶ Similarly unnoticed has been the question

³² Robert N. McLean, "Goodbye, Vicente!" *Survey*, LXVI (May 1, 1931), 182–83; "Hard Times Oust the Mexican," *Mexican Life*, VII (September 1931), 19–21; "The Mexican Return" [*sic*], *Nation*, CXXXV (August 24, 1932), 165–66.

³³ Grebler et al., *Mexican-American People*, 524.

³⁴ McWilliams, "A Man, a Place, and a Time," 7.

³⁵ Hoffman, "Repatriation of Mexican Nationals," 58–121.

³⁶ Francis J. Weber, "Irish-Born Champion of the Mexican-Americans," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, XLIX (September 1970), 233–49; Hoffman, "Repatriation of Mexican Nationals," 124–25. McWilliams may have confused the repatriates leaving under the auspices of the Mexican consulate with those leaving under the county repatriation programs, since they often departed on the same trains.

TABLE 2

REPATRIATION SHIPMENTS FROM LOS ANGELES COUNTY

<i>Trip Number</i>	<i>Date of Departure</i>	<i>Total Ticket Cost</i>	<i>Total Cost</i>	<i>Single Persons</i>	<i>Families</i>	<i>Individuals</i>	<i>Cases</i>	<i>Full Fares</i>
1&2 ^a	3-23-31 & 4-24-31	\$ 15,262	\$ 15,959	29	228	1,350	257	639
3	8-17-31	10,708	11,642	6	149	899	155	430
4	10-29-31	12,885	14,033	13	189	1,059	202	544
5	1-12-32	16,659	18,483	36	227	1,267	263	678
6	3- 8-32	17,415	18,783	62	229	1,295	291	730
7	4-29-32	11,676	12,753	53	155	875	208	479
8	7- 7-32	15,808	16,989	162	217	1,063	379	656
9	8-18-32	12,203	13,125	133	147	845	280	527
10	10- 6-32	10,934	11,879	72	160	758	232	437
11	12- 8-32	13,470	14,380	87	173	932	260	563
12	2- 8-33	7,982	8,687	41	109	546	150	341
13	4-14-33	12,692	13,575	49	177	914	226	533
14	8- 3-33	6,533	7,105	40	82	453	122	271
15	12-12-33	4,340	5,182	49	71	412	120	244
16	4-15-34 ^d	6,804	11,926	47	125	664	172	394
Total		\$175,371	\$194,501	879	2,436	13,332	3,317	7,466

SOURCE: Division of Accounts and Collections, Statistical Service, Los Angeles County Department of Charities, "Analysis of Repatriation Trains," June 15, 1934. A carbon copy of this analysis is in Record Group 59, National Archives. The original is missing from the files of the Board of Supervisors.

^a The first two trips were averaged together.

^b Average does not include single persons.

^c Items included in total costs — board and cars, cash, express and cartage, transportation of indigents, and expenses of attendants (exclusive of salaries).

^d The original analysis incorrectly gives this date as May 25, 1934.

of citizenship as it affected the children of Mexican immigrants born in the United States. Mexico, like such countries as Greece and Italy, considered children born on foreign soil to be citizens of the mother country. A prevailing view among Los Angeles county officials in the case of Mexican American children was that culture rather than birthplace determined nationality — admittedly a most controversial position, but one that for them simplified the problem of returning a family in which the parents were aliens and the children citizens.³⁷

³⁷ Interview with Mrs. Lupe Tellez, February 15, 1970. Mrs. Tellez, who assisted a notary in Los Angeles during the depression, related several stories in which some families were separated when older children remained behind. See also Jack Starr-Hunt, "The Mexicans Who Went Home," *Los Angeles Times Sunday Magazine*, March 26, 1933, p. 10, 20.

<i>One-Half Fares</i>	<i>Frees</i>	<i>Average Ticket Cost Per Full</i>	<i>Average Total Cost Per Full</i>	<i>Average Number Persons Per Family</i>	<i>Average Ticket Cost Per Family</i>	<i>Average Total Cost Per Family</i>
367	344	\$18.56	\$19.40	5.8 ^b	\$64.58	\$67.53 ^c
264	205	19.05	20.72	6.0	71.10	77.18
257	253	19.16	20.87	5.5	66.86	72.81
332	257	19.74	21.90	5.4	70.26	78.72
306	259	19.72	21.27	5.4	70.71	76.26
215	181	19.91	21.74	5.3	68.52	74.85
216	191	20.69	22.24	4.2	57.40	61.69
170	148	19.94	21.45	4.8	64.97	69.83
157	164	21.21	23.04	4.3	58.79	63.88
193	176	20.44	21.82	4.9	67.58	72.15
102	103	20.36	22.16	4.6	65.57	71.36
209	172	19.92	21.31	4.9	66.19	70.80
105	77	20.16	21.93	5.0	69.84	75.95
93	75	14.97	17.87	5.1	50.79	60.64
160	100	14.35	25.16	4.9	49.04	85.94
3,146	2,720	\$19.401	\$21.517	5.107	\$64.94	\$72.02

The numbers quoted by McWilliams as taking part in the Los Angeles county-sponsored repatriation programs and the costs involved also do not stand up against close scrutiny. Missing from the Los Angeles county records, but present as a carbon copy attached to a report in the National Archives, is a Los Angeles County Department of Charities "Analysis of Mexican Repatriation Trains," itemizing the number of trips, the ticket costs, and the number of families and individuals (see table 2). Nowhere is a single shipment of "6,024" listed; the greatest number to depart in any one shipment under county auspices was 1,295 on the sixth trip. The exactness of "\$71.14" is also open to question, as the average cost varied from trip to trip from as low as \$61.69 to as high as \$85.94. Similarly, the county's own estimates of costs and savings are at variance with McWilliams's figures. Estimated costs and savings were just that — estimates. County Supervisor Harry Baine stated in November 1933 that \$435,000 had been saved,³⁸ while in January 1935 Rex Thomson of the Charities

³⁸ Baine to Board of Supervisors, November 27, 1933, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, File No. 40.31/340.

Department claimed that over \$2 million had been saved.³⁹ The figures vary according to the sources giving them, and variations even within the county offices can be detected. Certain costs refused to remain static, such as the price of railroad tickets. Savings estimates had to be based on the assumptions that a relief case would have continued through the entire depression period had the family not returned to Mexico, that the family had been on relief since 1931, and that costs were static. The hundred-thousand-dollar difference between McWilliams's estimate and the estimate of Supervisor Baine shows that the amount of savings to the county must remain a figure that changes according to time and circumstance in the 1930s.

There is no argument here with the conclusion of McWilliams and other writers that repatriation for many Mexican immigrants was a traumatic experience or that repatriation could also involve coercion, deportation, exploitation, and racism. However, to suggest that these elements in equal parts add up to a clear definition of the repatriation movement is to distort its history. Repatriation was a complicated process composed of many factors and nuances, most of which have been unexplored, neglected, omitted, or oversimplified. Before generalizations about repatriation can be made, the specifics need to be thoroughly investigated.

³⁹ Thomson to Supervisor John Anson Ford, January 25, 1935, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, File No. 40.31/340.