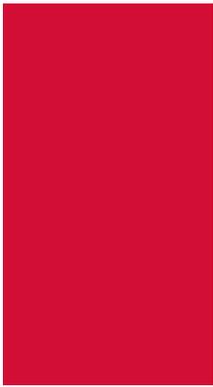


Center for Latin American Studies
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Long Road to the *Voto Postal*:
Mexican Policy and People of
Mexican Origin in the U.S.

David R. Ayón
Senior Research Associate
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February 2006
Paper No. 6

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This spring, for the first time ever, tens of thousands of Mexican citizens living in the U.S. will receive absentee ballots to vote for the next president of Mexico. Although the “*voto postal*” is unlikely to affect the outcome of the July election, it will nonetheless crown a major transformation in Mexican policy.

This form of transnational migrant empowerment is a major step in the redefinition of the terms of Mexican nationality and citizenship, to allow for permanent residence abroad and even *de facto* dual citizenship and binational civic participation. It may also open a new dimension of minority politics in the United States. The arrival of distance voting in Mexico’s elections is part of a larger response to the rise of a new network of Mexican immigrant leaders, activists, and organizations in the U.S.—a network that the Mexican government helped develop and which is distinct from established U.S. Latino leadership.

Both the U.S. and Mexico have repeatedly altered their basic policies toward the migration of Mexicans to the United States. This background paper places Mexico’s policy today against the backdrop of the various ends it has pursued, the means it has employed, and the results it has achieved over time. It examines the evolving civic orientation of both Mexican immigrants and U.S.-born Mexican Americans, touches on the role of issues such as guest worker programs, and pays special attention to the role of the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior—IME), a major new government agency.

There was a time when Mexico actively opposed migration to the United States. Toward the middle of the 20th century, however, Mexico came to accept and support temporary labor migration across the border. Only in recent years has Mexico begun to accept the *permanent migration of its citizens on a large scale* and to adapt its institutions to this long-standing reality. The acceptance of this sort of migration is not complete, however, nor is it entirely uncontroversial in Mexico.

PHASE I: IDENTITY AND RETURN

Mexico's first major policy toward its émigrés followed years of futile attempts to discourage and block emigration by various means. The Obregón administration launched an effort in the 1920s to reach out to Mexico's diaspora in the U.S. through its consulates. Comisiones Honoríficas, with their "Mexican Patriotic Committees" and Comités de Beneficencia, were formed in expatriate communities that had not previously had them or where they had passed out of existence. The consul in Los Angeles, for example, "emerged as the central organizer of community leadership," working both directly and through these bodies.¹

Officially, these groups were to help the consulates organize Mexican independence celebrations and assist indigent migrants. But they also had the purpose of serving as de facto leaders of the migrant community and the Mexican-origin population as a whole. In some cases, this effort placed the favored émigrés in competition with U.S.-born Mexican American or "Hispano" leadership, which Mexican policy took little note of at the time.

This was the case in 1921 when immigrant leaders backed by the consulate challenged traditional Mexican American control of the public observance of Mexican independence in Los Angeles.² The consulate and its allies went on to work to establish a number of schools for Mexican children in Southern California, modeled on Japanese and Hebrew language schools, and assisted in the creation of a Mexican community library in East Los Angeles.³

A general pattern emerged in this period, especially notable in San Antonio, of collaboration between the consulates and an elite class of Mexican migrants.⁴ Both sides stressed maintaining Mexican identity "in exile" and the desirability of a general return to Mexico. The elite exercised its leadership over a working class community, and it allied itself with the Mexican government to resist the effects of the "Americanization" policies that were in vogue at that time.⁵

There appears to be no evidence that the idea ever took hold among the participants in this alliance that Mexican immigrants could or should try to develop political influence in the United States, as can be seen in their united opposition to

acquiring U.S. citizenship.⁶ This attitude contrasted sharply with the outlook of the emerging middle class of U.S.-born Mexican Americans who came to be organized in The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC).⁷

Mexican policy at that time cultivated an archetypal feature of diasporic consciousness among Mexicans in the United States, what has been called the “myth of return.”⁸ The Obregón administration established a Department of Repatriation within the Mexican foreign ministry. According to Sanchez, “...a central goal of all programs initiated by the Mexican consulate was the preservation of the cultural integrity of Mexican emigrants through the establishment of institutions to foster Mexican patriotism, with the long-term goal of encouraging return migration.”⁹ This policy proved to be in a sense unexpectedly successful when a combination of factors led to a broad campaign to first encourage and then pressure Mexicans in the U.S. to do precisely that—to return to Mexico.

The repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Mexicans (including many of their U.S.-born children) to Mexico in the 1930s and the role played by the Mexican government in this affair have been documented by a number of scholars.¹⁰ Hoffman, Balderrama and Sanchez have described the role of Los Angeles consul (and later ambassador) Rafael de la Colina, in particular, in coordinating plans with local authorities for special county-sponsored trains that transported repatriates to Mexico. Guerin-Gonzalez describes the actions of consuls in promoting and facilitating repatriation in San Bernardino, Riverside, and San Diego counties.¹¹

This episode was rooted in a conjuncture of multiple circumstances. The main factors included the long-standing agreement on the part of émigré leaders and the Mexican government on the goal of voluntary repatriation. In the late 1920s, however, emigration had again surged due to the violent church-state conflict in Mexico. Following Obregón’s assassination in 1928, national reconciliation in Mexico became a dominant political theme. Negotiations led to the creation of the predecessor of the PRI party, new elections, and an end to the Catholic Church’s three-year national strike in 1929. President-elect Pascual Ortíz Rubio called on expatriates to

return to Mexico. This message was often echoed in community newspapers such as *La Prensa* in San Antonio and *La Opinión* in Los Angeles, both of which promoted a highly Mexico-centric viewpoint to their readers.

Deteriorating economic conditions in the United States after October 1929 reinforced an initial voluntary flow of repatriates. As the U.S. financial crisis developed into the Great Depression, economic, social, and political pressures mounted for all Mexicans to return or be returned to Mexico. Mexican policy was to oppose discrimination and coercion while continuing to encourage voluntary mass repatriation. In many cases, Mexican consuls were simply assisting unemployed and needy migrants who desired to return. In Los Angeles, the consulate-affiliated Comité de Beneficencia Mexicana turned from helping indigent Mexicans survive the Depression to paying their train fare to Mexico.¹²

The use of pressure, coercion, and discrimination by U.S. authorities and citizens aroused controversy and created tensions with the Mexican government. But the Mexican government's own policies were criticized, including by repatriates who faced hardship in Mexico. La Unión de Repatriados Mexicanos, apparently formed in Mexico City in 1932, petitioned the government to halt further repatriations.¹³ Consul de la Colina's successors in Los Angeles in 1932–33 turned from encouraging repatriation to discouraging it—at least by those who still had jobs.¹⁴

The Lázaro Cárdenas administration (1934–40), however, renewed the call for migrants in general to return. It established a major new agricultural colony for returning migrants in Tamaulipas (in addition to the many established by preceding administrations) and in 1937 sent government officials on a lengthy tour of émigré communities to again urge their repatriation.¹⁵ Hoffman describes this and other efforts by officials of both countries to encourage Mexican repatriation in the mid- to late 1930s as failures—due to the increasing resistance by migrants.

The misery, alienation and discrimination suffered by many repatriates in Mexico are described by Hoffman, Sanchez, Guerin-Gonzalez, and Balderrama and Rodriguez. Ironically,

but not surprisingly, many repatriates struggled for years to “return” from Mexico to the United States. We can assume that those who succeeded had the effect of reinforcing the views of those who resisted repatriation in the first place.

According to Sanchez, the experience of repatriation and resistance had multiple and lasting effects on the remaining Mexican-origin community in the United States and how it related to both its ancestral and adopted countries. A large segment of the community that was most tied to Mexico, including leaders and activists, was gone. The remaining community’s identification with the ancestral homeland was diminished, the Mexican immigrants who stayed were politically silenced, and the consulate’s activities in the community were scaled back.

In Los Angeles after 1935, Sanchez writes, “the Mexican consulate would never again play as crucial a role in organizing local leadership around goals formulated in Mexico City. Increasingly, the Mexican American community would see its own political future as wrapped in the context of American civil rights and the fulfillment of the promises of U.S. citizenship.”¹⁶ It is in this period that the new “Mexican American generation” rose to take (or reclaim) the leadership of Mexican-origin communities. This experience, in San Antonio exemplified by the social and political rise of LULAC, marked the consolidation of a new leadership network of Mexican American ethnics—rather than Mexican émigrés—that spread quickly across the Southwest.¹⁷

As San Antonio transitioned from being an exile Mexican *colonia* to a primarily U.S.-born Mexican American community, the diasporic institution that most visibly upheld the maintenance of Mexican identity and values, the newspaper *La Prensa*, went into steady decline.¹⁸ The community’s new Mexican American leadership was able to consolidate its position in the wake of the old exile leadership’s virtual self-liquidation through repatriation. According to Garcia, by the eve of World War II, the “Mexican American mind” had prevailed.¹⁹

PHASE II: RENEWED WARTIME MIGRATION AND REPATRIATIONS

World War II—formally joined by Mexico in 1942—led to a reconsideration of bilateral relations and to an abrupt departure for Mexican policy toward migration. Among the items negotiated within the framework of wartime cooperation was the first in a series of executive agreements (and later U.S. legislation) that became known as the Bracero Program. This was an unprecedented bilateral guest worker or “contract-labor” scheme that directly involved the Mexican government in managing the temporary labor migration of its citizens to the United States for over twenty years.

Several fundamental conditions of the negotiation and terms of the agreement underlined the importance Mexico attached to the *temporary* nature of the migration it would support. Among “the basic terms that the United States would have to meet,” wrote Ernesto Galarza, “migrants were not to be encouraged to remain,” and “payment of repatriation costs by the employer must be guaranteed.” Furthermore, “deductions amounting to 10 percent of earnings were authorized for deposit in a savings fund payable to the worker on his return to Mexico.”²⁰

Mexico signed the first agreement in July 1942, which went into effect the following month. The basic arrangement was repeatedly renewed in different forms and ultimately authorized some 4.6 million individual seasonal labor contracts by its end in 1964.²¹ According to the order issued by President Avila Camacho for the initial wartime phase of the program, at least five government ministries were assigned specific duties related to the braceros from their recruitment to their return.²²

The Labor ministry in Mexico City was quickly overwhelmed when it opened an office to register aspiring braceros in August 1942. Long lines, delays, and the rejection of many applicants led to mass protests that were dispersed with fire hoses. During the early years of processing in Mexico City, two trains per week transported approximately 700 braceros each to U.S. contracting centers at the border.²³

Over the first dozen years, migrants increasingly skipped the program to cross over illegally, as reflected in the steadily mounting apprehensions by U.S. authorities of deportable Mexicans. The Mexican government strongly opposed undocumented migration outside of the program; it pressed for sanctions on employers who used undocumented labor and supported the U.S. government's "Operation Wetback" to repatriate the undocumented in 1954. Mexico provided financial support, as well as trains and buses, for the massive campaign to repatriate undocumented migrants to the country's interior. The number of apprehensions of undocumented Mexicans by U.S. authorities soared to over 1,000,000 that year. Neither the experience of these repatriates nor the details of Mexico's handling of them have received attention from scholars in recent years comparable to that of the repatriates of the early 1930s.²⁴

Operation Wetback was widely believed to have ended undocumented migration, yet pressures to end the legal guest worker program built steadily from the late 1950s into the 1960s. Among those advocating abolition were Mexican American leaders who were just beginning to emerge as national political actors with the Kennedy presidential campaign of 1960.²⁵ The Kennedy Administration turned against the Bracero Program, but the Mexican government's insistence succeeded in helping extend it to the end of 1964. For the next decade, Mexico sought a new agreement with the U.S. to revive the program, but to no avail.²⁶

Mexican scholar and diplomat Carlos Rico has written that as a result of the Bracero Program "Migrating temporarily to the United States became part of the expectations of a significant part of Mexico's rural population. Networks, patterns, and routes were established and became familiar to Mexican migrants."²⁷ The official recruitment and importation of a new generation of Mexican workers formed the basis for decades of renewed migration and the eventual revival of the organized elements of the Mexican migrant community in the U.S. that we know today.

PHASE III: MEXICAN AMERICANS *SÍ*, BRACEROS *NO*

During the first two periods examined above, a basic premise of Mexican policy was that migration to the U.S. was and should be temporary—that Mexicans in a sense did not belong in the United States. Acting on this premise in the first phase, Mexico opposed the naturalization of its migrants and the “Americanization” of their children and devised programs to prepare them to return to Mexico. In the second phase, it conditioned its migration agreement with the U.S. on measures to ensure the “circularity” of migration. Mexico also repeatedly collaborated with the U.S. in efforts to repatriate hundreds of thousands of migrants (and their children) to Mexico. The Mexican government’s conviction that the presence of a Mexican-origin population in the U.S. is anomalous eventually came to be reconsidered, however, first in relation to U.S.-born Mexican Americans and ultimately even with regard to migrants.

By the 1970s, the Chicano Movement made the Mexican government aware in a new way of the non-immigrant population of Mexican ancestry in the United States. Although this movement’s outlook was not precisely Mexican nationalist, it was nevertheless anti-assimilationist and critical of the “Americanism” of the previous generation identified with LULAC and the American G.I. Forum, the organization founded by Mexican American veterans of WWII.²⁸

In this period the Luis Echeverría administration opened a new stage in Mexican government policy by developing an unprecedented relationship with Mexican American leaders and activists. Official contacts began in 1971 and produced what Jorge Bustamante called “various programs for Chicanos supported by the government of Mexico.”²⁹ These primarily consisted of university-level scholarship programs for study in Mexico and cultural programs in Mexican American communities in the U.S.

Echeverría’s dialogue with Mexican Americans also had consequences for Mexico’s policy toward migration. According to Bustamante, the activist-scholar Ernesto Galarza in particular persuaded Echeverría to renounce Mexico’s quest for a new guest worker program in 1975.³⁰

This position would have been strongly supported by all of the Mexican American leaders and academics that Echeverría and his advisors reached out to at that time, both within and outside of the Chicano Movement.³¹ Over the next twenty-five years, Mexican American opposition to any new guest worker program appears to have served as an obstacle to the Mexican government's public reconsideration of the issue.³²

Mexico's reversal on guest workers, however, did not mean a return to the pre-1920 policy of trying to impede migration to the United States. Rico argues that, on the contrary, Mexico's most basic and important policy objective in this period remained the preservation of the migratory flows established during the Bracero Program. "Mexican authorities were deeply concerned about the potential consequences of what they saw as the restriction of the 'safety valve' represented by migratory flows," writes Rico. But it was clear by the time of Echeverría's decision in 1975 that the end of the legal program ten years previous had only served to drive the migratory flow underground. According to Rico, Mexico became "basically satisfied" with this situation.³³

Bustamante describes Echeverría's outreach as having been from the outset in appreciation of Chicano leaders' activism in defense of undocumented immigrants. This encouragement and rewarding of activism and ethnic solidarity constituted, however tacitly, an endorsement of an empowerment strategy for the Mexican-origin community in the United States. Contacts between the Mexican government and Mexican American leaders and organizations (who began calling themselves Hispanic or Latino) continued and diversified in subsequent years from this beginning. For a time, these contacts stimulated discussion on both sides of the border of the idea of the formation of a pro-Mexico lobby in U.S. politics by Mexican Americans. Mexican officials, however, publicly disavowed any effort to encourage Mexican Americans in such a direction.

In fact, and contrary to early expectations, a close programmatic or political relationship was never consolidated between Mexico and Mexican Americans.³⁴ From Mexico's viewpoint,

according to Rico, Mexican American advocacy for Mexico's interests *per se* never materialized in the immigration policy debates of the 1970s–80s.³⁵ Mexican government policy would continue to reach out to Mexican Americans in the next period, but as a lesser priority within an entirely changed framework that emphasized the ties between a new generation of migrants with their home country.

PHASE IV: THE NEW *ACERCAMIENTO*

The context for Mexican policy toward migration and its diaspora underwent a profound transformation from 1986 to 1991. The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) was passed and signed in November 1986. This came after nearly a decade of political maneuvering by Mexican American leaders and Latino organizations, but in which the Mexican government played no part.³⁶ By 1991, however, these roles had been reversed, when the Mexican government threw itself into lobbying for the “fast-track negotiating authority” that was needed to reach the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The intervening years saw great changes both in Mexico and in the lives of its migrants in the U.S.³⁷

IRCA, a response to the mounting flow of undocumented migration since the 1970s, led to the legalization of some 2.7 million (mostly Mexican) undocumented immigrants and seasonal farmworkers.³⁸ The process of legalization, which began in 1987, happened to coincide with a split in the ruling party in Mexico that led to the bitterly fought (and allegedly stolen) presidential election of 1988.³⁹ The new left-leaning opposition movement headed by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas mounted an unprecedented challenge to the official party candidate Carlos Salinas that extended across the border.

The experience of this transnational political battle combined with the consequences of IRCA to motivate the subsequent Salinas administration to devise a new approach to the burgeoning Mexican diaspora in the U.S.⁴⁰ The Mexican government sought to encourage the nonpolitical organization of Mexican immigrant communities utilizing its consulates and the new Program for Mexican Communities Abroad (PCME). Together, these developments spurred

the growth of a new network of Mexican immigrant leaders, activists, and organizations in the United States.

Furthermore, the Salinas administration's great goal of achieving free trade with the U.S. also led it to temporarily intensify Mexico's dialogue with and courtship of Mexican American leaders and their Latino organizations. Salinas did not, however, press to include a migration agreement within NAFTA, which would have made the negotiation more difficult and the agreement more controversial, not least of all among Latinos. In sum, IRCA, Cardenismo, and NAFTA combined to recast Mexico's relationship with both wings of its diaspora as part of a fundamental process of transition in its domestic and foreign policies.

THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT AND MIGRANT ORGANIZATION

Mexico has both responded to the development of migrant leadership and organization and acted to encourage it, in ways that are setting an internationally recognized standard. Mexican policy in the post-IRCA era developed from a reform and expansion of its consulate network and the creation of the Foreign Ministry's Program for Mexican Communities Abroad in 1989–90 as well as the addition of a Presidential Office for Mexicans Abroad in 2000 and the creation of the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IME) in 2002. The IME was the successor to the previous two agencies and is again housed in the Foreign Ministry.⁴¹

Through these structural changes the new policy evolved over a dozen years from supporting the organization of hometown clubs and sports leagues to sponsoring the creation of a continental assembly for the integration and strategic direction of Mexican migrant leadership as a whole and its linkage to the Mexican government. Mexico also made its expatriates' nationality "irrevocable" in 1996 but moved more tentatively toward voting from abroad in its presidential elections.

The Mexican government, acting through its consulates, boosted the development of hometown associations (HTAs) and strengthened their bonds to their towns and states of origin,

especially with the creation of the PCME. The consulates had long provided a number of important services to the immigrant population, including the identification card known as the *matricula consular*. The consulates increased their support of Mexican immigrant associations in the 1990s and sponsored the creation of new ones, often utilizing visits by hometown mayors to convene migrants of common origin and encourage them to organize themselves.⁴² In a similar fashion, increasingly frequent visits by Mexican state governors facilitated the organization of individual clubs into federations of clubs from common states. In Los Angeles, this process of organization was crowned in 2002 with the creation of the Consejo de Presidentes de Federaciones Mexicanas.⁴³

Along the way, the Mexican federal government formally joined and expanded state and local efforts in support of the migrants' own social and economic development projects in their communities of origin. Raising money for improvements in their hometowns has long been a key migrant organizing strategy, originally in cooperation with either the hometown church or local authorities. This dynamic took on a new character especially in Zacatecas, where the state government began matching the funds provided by the migrants for a number of projects in the late 1980s.⁴⁴

In 1992 this incipient program became the Programa Dos Por Uno, by which the Zacatecas and federal governments would each match the dollars contributed by migrant organizations for mutually agreed-upon projects.⁴⁵ By 1999, the program had extended to numerous states and expanded to "three for one," with municipal governments also matching funds.⁴⁶ The proliferation of the program was facilitated by the establishment of special offices for migrant affairs in all of the primary states of origin, often at the behest of the federal government's PCME.

Further mention must be made of the consulate network, which was the leading edge of the reform of Mexican policy toward the diaspora in the 1990s known as *acercamiento*, and which carries the load of Mexican state services abroad.⁴⁷ The most fundamental analytical and policy

question in this regard is that, given the mission of the consulates, what need was there for a special program for Mexican communities abroad in the first place, to say nothing of the later special presidential office and then the IME?

Although the consulates, and in particular the Consuls General in major U.S. cities, play varied roles in relation to Mexican migrants, American society and Mexican Americans, their primary responsibility has traditionally been to administer consular services delivered on a mass scale directly to individuals. The IME, on the other hand, which has assigned consular personnel across the U.S. and in Canada in addition to its staff in Mexico City, is designed for and dedicated to developing the network of émigré leaders, activists, and organizations.⁴⁸

The division of labor between the consulate staff, which attends to individuals and families of migrants on one hand, and special programs such as the PCME and the IME, which attend to leaders and activists (i.e., the diaspora leadership network) on the other, has most recently made possible a further critical function. The IME is able to plan and maneuver on a national and binational scale, setting and pursuing strategic goals and responding to challenges that transcend the purview of the dispersed consulates general.

This capability corresponds to a key difference between Mexican policy in the current period and the outreach we saw in phase one in the 1920s. The legalization of nearly two million migrants in the late 1980s, which gave them the option—not sought by Mexico—of permanent, legal settlement in the U.S., altered a basic premise of Mexican policy. Mexico had to finally accept that a very large and constantly growing part of its “migrant” population was now permanently lodged in the United States. In the first of several articles on the subject of Mexican policy toward its diaspora, Carlos González Gutiérrez—the policy’s main designer and executor—notes in his very first sentence that “millions of Mexicans have settled permanently in the United States.” He goes on to explain that, due to the legalization wrought by IRCA, “...at least for this generation of Mexican migrants, the illusion of impermanence is gone.”⁴⁹ Although adaptable, the consular service was not designed with this reality in mind.

The Fox Administration's first structural innovation in 2000 was to create a special Presidential Office for Mexicans Abroad. In 2002 this office was succeeded by the foreign ministry's new IME. This new structure's major innovation was its plan for an advisory council to be made up of representatives of Mexican communities in the United States selected by various means through processes initiated by Mexico's forty-five U.S. consulates. This body is known as the *Consejo Consultivo* of the IME, or the CCIME.⁵⁰ By late 2002, González Gutiérrez was designated as executive director and the process was launched for the formation of the Consejo Consultivo.⁵¹ The PCME was eventually phased out, with its functions and personnel absorbed into the IME.⁵²

IME AND CCIME

The CCIME attempts to play the role of the coordinating assembly of the diaspora leadership as a whole, a formal and institutionalized leadership council that is convened twice yearly and which is divided into functional commissions. This creation, in spite of its unwieldy aspects, allowed the Mexican state to impose a much higher degree of order than ever before on its relations with the rising diaspora meta-network.

The original design for the CCIME called for 100 members to be chosen for three-year terms by Mexican "communities" in selection processes initiated by the consulates. The actual mode of selection varied considerably from one location to another.⁵³ As of 2005 the IME staff considered 105 *consejeros* to be voting members representing Mexican communities in the U.S. and Canada. Another ten regular participants were nonvoting representatives of U.S. Latino organizations invited by the IME staff.

The CCIME is internally divided into six commissions dedicated to different policy areas.⁵⁴ These commissions meet and are in regular contact between the twice-yearly meetings of the CCIME as a whole. Furthermore, the *consejeros* in certain urban areas meet regularly as a local caucus. In Los Angeles, for example, the *consejeros* meet monthly at the Consulate General.

The membership of the CCIME was completely renewed in the summer and fall of 2005, again through a variety of processes determined at the individual consular level within parameters approved by the CCIME. The new CCIME will be in place through the presidential election and at the time of the transition to a new administration in Mexico.

Growth of the network of migrant leadership is built into the CCIME project by a ban on direct reelection of consejeros. As the first generation of consejeros entered the period of selection of the next in mid-2005, the outgoing class began developing plans to continue to work together as a nonprofit advocacy organization of ex-consejeros. Thus the CCIME began to take form as a sort of migrant executive leadership academy, producing a continuous stream of graduates ready to form an alumni association.

The IME, working closely with the deputy foreign minister for North America and the presidential staff, is essentially the nerve center and strategic coordinator of Mexico's official relations with the diaspora and its evolving leadership meta-network. The Consejo Nacional para las Comunidades Mexicanas en el Exterior (CNCME) is the name given to the regular meetings of the various cabinet members who have responsibilities of interest to the diaspora—meetings that are prepared by the IME staff and which are presided over by President Fox. This body is intended to empower the IME in its strategic coordinating role by forcing cabinet secretaries to answer directly to the president on diaspora-related issues.

The CCIME has an irreducibly dual character. On one hand, it is composed of representatives of Mexican immigrant communities, selected through processes primarily controlled by elements of the immigrant leadership network, albeit with some influence by the Mexican consulates that varied from one city to another. On the other hand, the CCIME appears as a semi-autonomous creation of the Mexican government, an instrument for its linkage with migrant leadership and communications with the diaspora as a whole.

The foregoing is only a partial description of Mexico's current diaspora policy and the programs and activities of the IME. Furthermore, it must be noted that a range of leaders and

activist formations has positioned itself as critical or independent of the Mexican government's programs. These include in particular groupings and activists agitating for the right to vote from abroad.⁵⁵ Perhaps the most visible body boycotting the IME, however, is the business-oriented Asociación Mundial de Mexicanos en el Exterior, which tries to represent itself as the nucleus of an alternative network altogether.⁵⁶

DUAL NATIONALITY AND *VOTO POSTAL*

The passage of legislation in 2005 to finally implement voting from abroad for the July 2006 presidential election can be construed as a further development of the Mexican state's diaspora policies as described here. Vicente Fox promised to support the "*voto*" in his 2000 campaign, and the approved legislation mirrored the proposal he submitted to Mexico's Congress in June 2004. Nevertheless, it would be more accurate to attribute the *voto postal* to the sustained effort of a hardy band of émigré activists that dates to the mobilization in favor of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in the 1988 presidential election. Voting from abroad has been a particular issue that has developed with its own dynamic within the overall evolution of Mexico's relations with its migrants in the United States.

Migrant activists again pressed for the right to vote from abroad in the 1994 presidential election, but without success. The events of that year both in Mexico and the U.S. brought new pressures for change in Mexico's policies and politics—change that came to affect the country's relations with its diaspora. That election year was marked by unprecedented violence in Mexico, ensuring that political reform would be high on the next administration's agenda.

At the same time, elections in California provided the means for widespread discontent with continuing undocumented immigration to be organized and channeled into a political backlash. Then-Gov. Pete Wilson married his reelection campaign to the infamous Proposition 187, which would have denied public services to undocumented immigrant residents and driven scores of thousands of children out of the schools.

In the years that followed, the new Zedillo administration responded with a novel step: it sought to encourage legal migrants to acquire U.S. citizenship by making Mexican nationality irrevocable. A constitutional reform to this effect was passed in 1996, legalizing dual nationality at the highest level. Later that year, the ruling party relented to pressure from its left opposition and agreed to remove a constitutional impediment to voting from abroad as part of a broader electoral reform package sought by the administration.

Although the form and conditions of the *voto postal* will severely limit its impact in 2006, it nonetheless marks a major step and opens a new period in the development of the diasporic network and its involvement in Mexican politics. The Mexican state is now enlisting its electoral system, its party system, and the potential political energies of its diaspora as a whole in the further organization and mobilization of its émigré communities.

The extent and depth of the diaspora's interest in voting from abroad has been a matter of some debate. Nonetheless, the effort to achieve it constitutes one of the most important, sustained, and successful undertakings of the migrant leadership network to date.

ENDNOTES

1. George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1993), p. 113.
2. Sanchez, *Ibid.*, 108-109, 114–15, and fn. 3, p. 297.
3. *Ibid.*, ch. 5; Francisco E. Balderrama, *In Defense of La Raza: The Los Angeles Mexican Consulate and the Mexican community, 1929-1936* (Tucson: U of Arizona Press, 1982).
4. Richard A. Garcia, *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941*. Texas A&M University Press, 1991; see especially 99-112
5. See R.A. Garcia, *passim*; Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, "Ignacio E. Lozano: The Mexican Exile Publisher Who Conquered San Antonio and Los Angeles." *American Journalism* 21:1 (Winter 2004) 75–89; Sanchez, ch. 5, "Americanization and the Mexican Immigrant," esp. pp. 97–107.
6. G.J.Sanchez, p. 4; R.A. Garcia, *passim*.
7. See R.A. Garcia, *passim* and especially ch. 9; Benjamin Marquez, *LULAC: The Evolution of a Mexican American Political Organization* (Austin: U of Texas Press, 1993); Mario T. Garcia, "In Search of America: The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), in *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, & Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989), ch. 2. And Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., "Let All of Them Take Heed": *Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910–1981* (Austin: U of Texas Press, 1987).
8. Michael Jones-Correa, *Between Two Nations: The Political Predicament of Latinos in New York City* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1998), ch. 5.
9. Sanchez, p. 113.
10. See Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: U of Arizona Press), 1974; Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: U of New Mexico Press, 1995); Camille Guerin-Gonzalez, *Mexican Workers & American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1994, chs. 4–5).
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 86–94.
12. Sanchez, p. 123
13. *Ibid.*, 219
14. *Ibid.*, 221.
15. Hoffman, 152–57. Guerin-Gonzalez discusses numerous examples of three differing types of colonies for repatriates established in the early 1930s, pp. 102–106. See also Hoffman, 137–46.
16. *Ibid.*, 124
17. This transformation of the Mexican-origin community remarkably parallels the effects of the experience of internment during World War II on the Japanese origin community. See John Higham, *Ethnic Leadership in America* (Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1979). LULAC claimed to have 150 councils from Texas to California by 1940.
18. *La Prensa's* daily circulation fell from 22,587 (32,669 Sunday) in 1930 to 7,118 (15,662 Sunday) in 1940. Rivas-Rodriguez, p. 76.
19. R.A. Garcia, p. 268.
20. Galarza, *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story, 1942-1960* (Santa Barbara: McNally & Loftkin, 1964), p. 47

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21. Manuel García y Griego, "The Importation of Mexican Contract Laborers to the United States, 1942-1964," in *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States*, David G. Gutiérrez, ed. (Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 1996).
22. See John Mraz and Jamie Vélez Storey, *Uprooted: Braceros in the Hermanos Mayo Lens* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1996).
23. *Ibid.*, p. 39; García y Griego, p. 48.
24. García y Griego, *op cit.*, p. 58; Galarza, *op cit.*, p. 70. Juan Ramon Garcia, *Operation Wetback: The Mass Deportation of Mexican Undocumented Workers in 1954* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980) is out of print.
25. David G. Gutiérrez discusses Mexican American opposition to the Bracero Program in two publications: "Sin Fronteras?: Chicanos, Mexican Americans and the Emergence of the Contemporary Mexican Immigration Debate, 1968-1978," in David G. Gutiérrez, ed., *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States* (Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 1996), as well as his book, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1995).
26. García y Griego, *op cit.*, pp. 68–72. See also Carlos Rico, "Migration and U.S.-Mexican Relations, 1966-1986." In *Western Hemisphere Immigration and United States Foreign Policy*. Edited by Christopher Mitchell (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), p. 228
27. Rico, *ibid.*, p. 222.
28. For an overview see chs. 8–14 of F. Arturo Rosales, *Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Arte Publico Press, 1997).
29. Jorge A. Bustamante, "Chicano-Mexican Relations: From Practice to Theory," in Tatcho Mindiola, Jr. and Max Martinez, eds., *Chicano-Mexicano Relations* (Houston: U of Houston Mexican American Studies Program, 1986), p. 16. See in the same volume Armando Gutiérrez, "The Chicano Elite in Chicano-Mexicano Relations."
30. See García y Griego, *op cit.*, pp. 72-73 and Rico, *op cit.*, pp. 230–31.
31. Bustamante, *op cit.*, pp. 15–16. See also Rico, *op cit.* p. 257.
32. On the development of the "Latino lobby" on immigration and its opposition to guest workers, see Christine Marie Sierra, "Latino Organizational Strategies on Immigration Reform: Success and Limits in Public Policymaking," in *Latinos and Political Coalitions: Political Empowerment for the 1990s*, Roberto E. Villareal and Norma G. Hernandez, eds. (New York: Praeger, 1991), and "In Search of National Power: Chicanos Working the System on Immigration Reform: 1976-1986," in *Chicano Politics and Society in the Late Twentieth Century*, David Montejano, ed. (University of Texas Press, 1999)
33. *op cit.*, p. 228–31 and 267
34. Bustamante, *op cit.*, pp. 16–17
35. Rico, *op cit.*, p. 264. As noted below, Mexican American leaders and organizations were heavily involved in the political battles over immigration reform in this period, but they acted on their own agenda, without concern for Mexico's interests. The main Mexican American objective in immigration reform, for example, was an amnesty that would permanently legalize the undocumented population (and allow it to eventually expand the Latino electorate). At that time, such an amnesty was neither sought nor supported by Mexico.
36. IRCA's provisions are summarized at <http://uscis.gov/graphics/shared/aboutus/statistics/legishist/561.htm>. See Sierra, *op cit.*, on the role of Mexican American leaders and Latino organizations. Rico, *op cit.*, emphasizes the Mexican government's non-involvement, p. 265.
37. 1986 was also the year that Mexico joined the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and that the undemocratic nature of its political system drew national attention due to the apparently stolen gubernatorial election in Chihuahua.

38. See Carlos González Gutiérrez, "The Mexican Diaspora in California: Limits and Possibilities for the Mexican Government." in *The California-Mexico Connection*, Abraham F. Lowenthal and Katrina Burgess, eds. (Stanford UP, 1993), p. 224.

39. Then-president Miguel de la Madrid describes in his memoirs *Cambio de rumbo* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004) the decision to fraudulently name Carlos Salinas the election winner. See also Héctor Tobar, "Mexico's Salinas Is Back, Leaving Many to Wonder," *Los Angeles Times* (28 September 2005).

40. See Denise Dresser, "Exporting Conflict: Transborder Consequences of Mexican Politics," and González Gutiérrez, *ibid*, in Lowenthal and Burgess, eds.

41. See www.sre.gob.mx/ime

42. See Gaspar Rivera-Salgado and Luis Escala Rabadán, "Collective Identity and Organizational Strategies of Indigenous and Mestizo Mexican Migrants," in Jonathan Fox and Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, eds., *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States* (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, UCSD, 2004); Carol Zabin and Luis Escala Rabadán, "Mexican Hometown Associations and Mexican Immigrant Political Empowerment in Los Angeles," Working Paper Series (Washington, D.C.: The Aspen Institute, 1998).

43. Now known as *El Consejo de Federaciones Mexicanas en Norte America*. The Consejo has a website under construction at www.elconsejo.net.

44. Guillaume Lanly and Volker Hamann, "Solidaridades transfronterizas y la emergencia de una sociedad civil transnacional: la participación de dos clubes de migrantes en el desarrollo local del Occidente de México," in Guillaume Lanly and M. Basilia Valenzuela V., eds., *Clubes de migrantes oriundos mexicanos en los Estados Unidos: la política transnacional de la nueva sociedad civil migrante* (Guadalajara: U. de Guadalajara, 2004).

45. See http://www.federacionzacatecana.org/index.php?sectionName=home&subSection=news&story_id=102

46. See www.sedesol.gob.mx/mexicanosenelexterior/main.htm

47. On the role of the Consulates, see Carlos González Gutiérrez, "Decentralized Diplomacy: The Role of Consular Offices in Mexico's Relations with its Diaspora," in Rodolfo O. de la Garza and Jesús Velasco, eds., *Bridging the Border: Transforming Mexico-U.S. Relations* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997). On the Program for Mexican Communities Abroad (PCME) see the chapter in the same volume by de la Garza, "Foreign Policy Comes Home: The Domestic Consequences of the Program for Mexican Communities Living in Foreign Countries," as well as Rodolfo Figueroa-Aramoni, "A Nation beyond Its Borders: The Program for Mexican Communities Abroad." *Journal of American History*. 86:2 (September 1999) www.indiana.edu/~jah/mexico; ; on the whole *acercamiento* policy see Robert Leiken, *The Melting Border: Mexico and Mexican Communities in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Equal Opportunity, 2000), www.ceousa.org/pdfs/MELTBORDER.pdf

48. In addition to the previously cited sources, this section is based upon numerous conversations with the IME's Executive Director Carlos González Gutiérrez, his presentations and remarks on the IME in various forums, focus groups conducted with IME advisory council (Consejo Consultivo—CCIME) members in Mexico City in November 2003, subsequent conversations with other CCIME members and observers, and my observation of a CCIME plenary meeting in Atlanta in May 2004.

49. Carlos González Gutiérrez, "The Mexican Diaspora in California: Limits and Possibilities for the Mexican Government." *The California-Mexico Connection*. Abraham F. Lowenthal and Katrina Burgess, eds. (Stanford UP, 1993), pp. 224-225. The phrase "the illusion of impermanence," which he borrows from Myron Weiner, refers to what Jones Correa (op cit) calls the "myth of return."

50. The CCIME subsequently incorporated three consejeros resident in Canada, where Mexico also has consulates. Little has been written about the IME so far outside of the Mexican and U.S. Spanish-language

press. For a diasporic activist critique that details the selection of the IME consejeros in Chicago see Raúl Ross Pineda and Juan Andrés Mora, *Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior: Notas Para Una Discusión* (Chicago: Ediciones MX Sin Fronteras, 2003). For a variety of articles see the supplement *Masiosare* to the newspaper *La Jornada* at: www.jornada.unam.mx/suplementos

51. González Gutiérrez's naming as executive director was preceded by the appointment of a Mexican immigrant to the U.S. as its titular director, which is primarily a ceremonial position.

52. The IME's first biannual report lists a staff of 23 titled positions beneath the director and executive director, with an additional 21 support staff; 98 consular personnel are listed as assigned to the IME at 49 locations in the U.S. and Canada. *Reporte Binacional de Actividades, 2003-2004*. Mexico, D.F.: Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 2004.

53. In Los Angeles, the meetings convened by the Consulate General agreed to reserve the majority of that district's CCIME seats for the presidents of HTA federations. The few remaining seats were filled by a vote taken at a second meeting. In Chicago, an open election with printed ballots was held under the control of immigrant organizations and activists away from the Consulate General.

54. CCIME Commissions: Asuntos Económicos y Negocios, Asuntos Educativos, Asuntos Legales, Asuntos Políticos, Asuntos de Organización Comunitaria, Salud y Cultura, and Asuntos Fronterizos. The main function of these commissions has been to formulate policy recommendations to the Mexican government. As of the publication of the IME's first *Reporte Binacional*, the CCIME had formally approved and submitted 202 policy recommendations, which are catalogued on the IME website: www.sre.gob.mx/ime

55. Such as the Coalición por los Derechos Políticos de los Mexicanos en el Extranjero, and the magazine *MX Sin Fronteras*, which is published in Chicago.

56. The AMME, which is the project of a business consultant, holds an annual convention in Las Vegas, hosts a website, and sends frequent mass emails. See www.mexicanosenelexterior.com

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