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Author:

[Fox, Jonathan A](#), UCSC

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Woodrow Wilson
International
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Mexican Migrant Civic Participation
in the United States



Edited by
XÓCHITL BADA, JONATHAN FOX,
and ANDREW SELEE



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2006

MEXICO INSTITUTE
One Woodrow Wilson Plaza
1300 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

T 202.691.4050
F 202.691.4076

www.wilsoncenter.org/mexico

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March In National Day Of
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Preface

In the spring of 2006, more than three million immigrants—most of them originally from Mexico—marched through the streets of Chicago, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Milwaukee, Detroit, Denver, Dallas, and dozens of other U.S. cities, to protest peacefully for a comprehensive immigration reform that would legalize the status of millions of undocumented immigrants in the United States. Though few are voters—and even fewer in swing districts—migrants’ remarkably disciplined, law-abiding collective actions sent a message—“we are workers and neighbors, not criminals” that resonated on Capitol Hill. The protests caught almost all observers by surprise—including many in immigrant communities. Mexican migrants, who formed a majority of participants in many of the cities, moved from being subjects of policy reform to having a voice in the debate on the reform. Never before had Mexican migrants taken such a visible role in a national policy discussion.

The decision by hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers, housewives, students, farmworkers, including both seniors and children, to come together to pursue a right to full membership in U.S. society suggests a major turning point in what has been the slow but steady construction of a shared pan-Latino immigrant collective identity in the United States. “Today we march, tomorrow we vote,” was one of the most popular slogans in these series of protests in a short two-month period. The beginning of this social movement has marked a new era where many Mexicans, Salvadorans, Guatemalans or Dominicans, each closely identified with their nation of origin, are also increasingly accepting the U.S. labels Latino or Hispanic. Yet at the same time, Mexicans clearly constitute the single largest immigrant population. Therefore, in order to understand the social foundations of this broad new upsurge in Latino immigrant participation, it is useful to address the dynamics that are specific to those who came from Mexico. It is critical to understand how and why they choose to engage with public life.

This huge wave of civic engagement reveals a process that has been taking place often silently but consistently: the emergence of Mexican migrants as actors in American civic and political life. Far from the image of Mexican migrants as disengaged and insular, they have long been active in public life. They have done so by creating new migrant-led organizations, such as hometown associations and workers’ organizations, as well as by joining existing U.S. organizations, such as community associations, churches, schools, unions, business associations, civil rights organizations, and media groups. In the process, they are also transforming these U.S. institutions, as so many other immigrant groups have done throughout American history.

Many Mexican migrants not only contribute to civic and political endeavors in U.S. society, but also remain simultaneously engaged as part of Mexican society. Rather than producing a contradiction of divided loyalties, these dual commitments tend to be mutually reinforcing. For many Mexican migrant organizations, efforts to help their hometowns in Mexico often lead to engagement in U.S. society through similar civic and political efforts in their new hometowns in the United States. Many of the most sophisticated migrant organizations maintain an ongoing commitment on both sides of the border that includes both assistance to their communities of origin and programs tied to their new home communities in the United

States. We refer to this dual engagement as “civic binationality,” a process of developing active civic engagement in two countries.

This report explores the various ways that Mexican migrants to the United States are becoming civically and politically active in both countries. This collection of brief essays looks at how recent migrants interact with traditional Latino organizations, the labor movement, religious communities, the media, and both the U.S. and Mexican political systems, transforming each through their engagement.

This publication is the result of a conference held on November 4–5, 2005 at the Woodrow Wilson Center, co-sponsored by the Department of Latin American and Latino Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz. The conference brought together migrant leaders, scholars, and representatives of civic, labor, and religious organizations. Jonathan Fox, Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, and Xóchitl Bada organized this conference, with support from Andrew Selee and Kate Brick at the Wilson Center. An advisory committee that included David R. Ayón, Luis Escala-Rabadán, Rodolfo García Zamora, Luin Goldring, Jesús Martínez Saldaña, Ruben Puentes, Liliana Rivera Sánchez, and Veronica Wilson helped to lay the groundwork for the conference. Monica Lozano, publisher of *La Opinión* newspaper, also provided essential input into envisioning how to structure conference dialogue. A full list of participants in the conference can be found in the appendix.

We are especially grateful to Ruben Puentes at the Rockefeller Foundation, who provided valuable insight, funds, and logistical support for convening the initial planning meeting and the conference itself. We are similarly appreciative of the efforts of Jill Wheeler at the Inter-American Foundation and David Myhre at the Ford Foundation, who made possible travel grants for many of the participants that allowed them to take part in this project.

We would also like to recognize several people who have contributed to the manuscript: Kate Brick, David Brooks, Raúl Caballero, Rebecca Frazier, Ruth Milkman, and Eduardo Stanley. Elvia Zazueta and Ingrid García Ruíz provided excellent research assistance for this project.

We are, above all, grateful to the many participants in this project who offered their views, which we have tried to capture faithfully in this publication.

—*The Editors*

Chapter 1

Introduction

Jonathan Fox

“Civic participation cannot be seen only in a local or in a national context, particularly between two countries that have such a long and rich experience with each other.”

—Jesús García

While the growing *numbers* of Mexicans in the United States are widely recognized, the presence of Mexican *society* in the United States has not been widely acknowledged. Though Mexican migrants are now much more publicly visible than ever before, the full breadth and depth of the ways in which they are organized and represented is still not well understood.

The following essays explore the social foundations of migrants’ mass entrance into the U.S. public sphere in the spring of 2006. Many tens of thousands of *paisanos* had long been working together to promote “philanthropy from below,” funding thousands of community development initiatives in their hometowns. Some signed up to exercise their newly-won right to cast absentee ballots in Mexico’s 2006 presidential election, though the procedural obstacles were serious. Other Mexican migrants are more engaged with their U.S. communities, starting scholarship funds, working to improve community life, organizing to defend workplace rights, and supporting candidates for election for school boards and city councils. In addition, some Mexican migrants are working to become full members of *both* U.S. and Mexican societies at the same time, constructing practices of what we could call “*civic binationality*” that have a great deal to teach us about new forms of immigrant integration into the United States.

We convened the forum, which led to this publication, because the patterns of social, civic and political participation among the Mexican migrant community are just beginning to be seriously documented, and major gaps remain. This project is informed by four major ideas.

First, we need to take a **comparative approach** to analyzing Mexican migrants in the United States, which involves recognizing the diverse and sometimes overlapping patterns of migrant collective action in this country. Keep in mind that in academic migration studies, the term “comparative” usually refers to one specific approach: the comparison of different national origin groups. This approach, often used in survey research, has generated very rich findings. Yet our point of departure is that the Mexican population in the United States is so large and so diverse, that national-origin averages can mask key variables, such as region of origin, region of settlement, and ethnicity. A comparative approach also means looking *both* at how migrants are organizing themselves in relationship to Mexico and other Mexican migrants *and* at how they are organized in the United States in community groups or as workers, parents, naturalized voters, or members of faith-based communities.

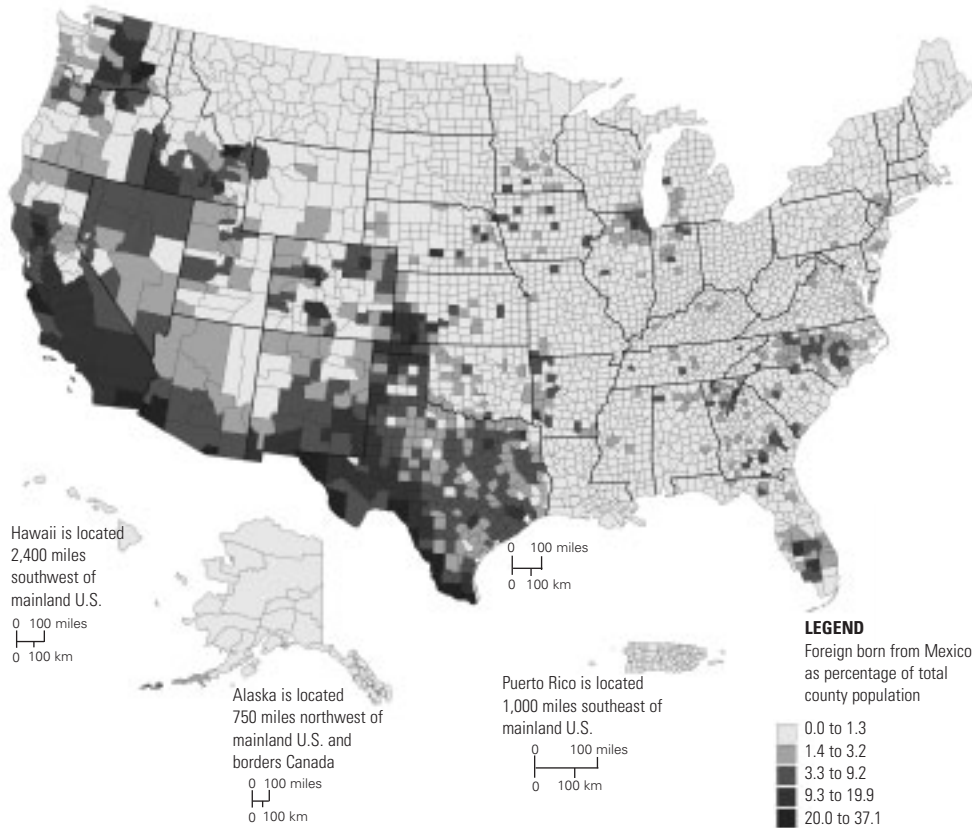
Second, it is useful to look at these different forms of participation through the conceptual lens of “**migrant civil society**.” Civil society doesn’t have to be a fuzzy theoretical term. Simply put, migrant civil society refers to *migrant-led membership organizations and public institutions*. This includes four very tangible arenas of collective action: membership organizations, non-governmental organizations, media, and autonomous public spheres. Researchers are just beginning to generate the findings that allow us to see the uneven contours across this diverse landscape. As we get to know organized migrants as actors, it is not surprising that it is those individuals who can cross cultures that make communication possible across communities and sectors. These contributions involve not only linguistic translation, but also *cultural and conceptual translation* among diverse migrant groups and between migrants and non-migrants.

The third point that grounds the project is that a **binational approach** can help to understand migrants’ distinctive perspectives, priorities and organizing repertoires—in other words, “where they are coming from.” For example, according to the Bureau of Immigration Statistics, in 2003 the number of Mexican permanent residents eligible for U.S. citizenship was *2.4 million*. This huge population has “played by the rules,” by any definition, yet they remain unrepresented in any political system. If we want to understand how and why they are or are not in the process of *becoming* US citizens, we need to get a much better sense of how the immigrants themselves see the decision, and what the obstacles or risks are—from *their* point of view. For example, has Mexico’s support for dual nationality, established a decade ago, made a difference to their decision to apply for U.S. citizenship? They no longer have to “stop being Mexican” in order to become new Americans. Could there be “invisible obstacles” in the administration of the citizenship process that affect Mexican applicants disproportionately?

The fourth and last point that informs the project is that if we want to understand migrant civic, social and political engagement, then leaders who *directly represent migrants* need to have **seats at the table**—to participate in *setting* the agendas as well as in responding to them. This means working in partnership. It is no coincidence that the forum, which is documented in this publication, included both researchers and civic leaders who are deeply immersed in the Mexican migrant community.

The Foreign Born from Mexico in the United States
As Percentage of Total County Population, 2000

FIGURE 1.1



LEGEND
Foreign born from Mexico
as percentage of total
county population

- 0.0 to 1.3
- 1.4 to 3.2
- 3.3 to 9.2
- 9.3 to 19.9
- 20.0 to 37.1

U.S. average: 3.3%

Source: Migration Information Source, Special Issue on Mexico, March 2004, available at http://www.migrationinformation.org/issue_mar04.cfm, based on 2000 Census data.

BOX 1

Profile of Mexican and Mexican-Descent Population
in the United States

Latino population	40.4 million (2004)
Percentage of Latino population of Mexican and Mexican-American origin	64%
Mexican and Mexican-American population (total)	24 million
Mexican-born population living in the United States	11.2 million
Mexican-born population that immigrated to the United States after 1990	54%
Mexican-born who are U.S. citizens	1.6 million (14%)
Mexican-born who are undocumented	5.9 million (53%)
U.S.-born citizens of Mexican parents	8.2 million

Sources: Jeffrey S. Passel, "Naturalization Trends and Opportunities: A Focus on Mexicans", Presentation given during the conference; Office of National Population (August 2003); US Census Bureau (2002 and 2004 Review), cited in Secretariat of Foreign Relations, Embassy of Mexico in the United States of America. "Mexican Communities in the United States", <http://portal.sre.gob.mx/usa>.

TABLE 1.1**Geographic Distribution of Residence of Recent Mexican Immigrants
(Those Arriving in the Previous Five Years) 1970 to 2000 (%)**

	1970	1980	1990	2000
Arizona	4.4%	2.6%	3.7%	6.2%
California	59.0	58.7	62.9	35.4
Illinois	8.2	8.7	4.9	6.1
New Mexico	0.5	0.6	0.9	0.8
Texas	20.7	20.6	14.9	16.4
Colorado	0.3	1.0	1.0	4.3
Florida	1.0	1.0	2.0	5.0
Georgia	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
Iowa	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5
Nevada	0.2	1.0	1.0	3.0
New York	1.0	1.0	1.4	3.0
North Carolina	0.0	0.0	0.3	4.0
Oregon	0.1	0.4	1.0	2.4
Washington	0.1	1.0	0.1	2.0
Other States	4.5	3.4	5.9	8.9

Source: Adapted from Jorge Durand, Douglas S. Massey, and Chiara Capoferro, "The New Geography of Mexican Immigration," in *New Destinations: Mexican Immigration in the United States*, edited by Víctor Zúñiga and Rubén Hernández-León, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2005, p. 14.

Chapter 2

Mexican Migrant Organizations

Gaspar Rivera-Salgado

“We have been those who are neither from here nor there. Now we will be those who are both from here and there—both things at the same time.”

—Guadalupe Gómez

“We should seriously think about what it means to have a big proportion of the national population of our countries—and in some cases a very big portion—living in a different country. And to truly see [these migrants] as subjects with a lot of virtues and also weaknesses...”

—Oscar Chacón

Hometown associations are grassroots organizations formed by Mexican migrants in the United States. These associations are based on the social networks that migrants from the same town or village in Mexico establish in their new U.S. communities. Members of these associations, commonly known as *clubes de oriundos*, seek to promote the well-being of their hometown communities of both origin (in Mexico) and residence (in the U.S.) by raising money to fund public works and social projects. These organizations have proliferated since the early 1980s, especially in the metropolitan areas of Los Angeles and Chicago. More recently, HTAs and other Mexican migrant grassroots organizations have become more visible in less urban, rural areas such as the San Joaquin Valley in California and communities in the Midwest and the South, which are the new destinations of Mexican migration. **Marcia Soto**, current President of the Confederation of Mexican Federations in the Midwest (CONFEMEX), noted that Mexican migrants have been organized for a long time in Chicago and the current *Confederación* brings together more than 160 *clubes* (local clubs) and twelve *Federaciones* (federations of clubs from the same Mexican state). In contrast, **Juencio Rocha Peralta**, President of the Association of Mexicans in North Carolina (AMEXCAN), observed that “Mexican and other Latino immigrants are just beginning to organize in the South, but their [political] potential in the future is enormous.”

A clear sign of the importance achieved by this type of organization among the different Mexican migrant communities is their steady growth during the last few years, as well as their expanding presence throughout the United States. Tables one and two illustrate this growth during the period of 1998–2003, as the total number of HTA’s registered nationwide went from 441 to 623.

Although migrants from different regions in Mexico have forged several kinds of organizations—including committees, fronts, and coalitions—through which they pursue

diverse goals, by the end of the 1990s hometown associations (*Clubes*) and home state federations (*Federaciones*) had become the most prevalent organizational type for Mexican migrant communities, as well as for migrants from Central America (especially from El Salvador and Guatemala). **Guadalupe Gómez**, then Vice-President of the Zacatecas Federation of Hometown Associations of Southern California (FCZSC), argued that the source of success of hometown associations and *Federaciones* is that their leadership truly represents the interest of their membership in their engagement on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. “Otherwise, I am sure, we would hear from our membership loud and clear about their complaints.” Indeed, there is a proliferation of hometown associations (which appear under various names, including civic clubs, social clubs, and committees) and their federations among Mexican groups with a long migratory tradition, such as those from the western central Mexico, as well as from new sending regions from the southern, central, and eastern states.

Oscar Chacón, founder and current treasurer of the National Association of Latin American and Caribbean Communities (NALACC), mentioned that this trend has produced two fundamental changes in the profiles of Mexican migrant organizations overall. On the one hand, in contrast to the relative informality and political isolation that char-

BOX 2

Remittances, Accountability, and Poverty Alleviation

Mexican migrants sent US\$18.3 billion in 2005 to their families and communities in Mexico, according to a study by the Bank of Mexico.¹ Most of these remittances are sent to family members to boost their standard of living, though recently some Mexican demographers have raised questions about whether the official data also includes other kinds of large-scale resource transfers. In the fiscal year of 2005, migrant organizations sent roughly US\$22 million for infrastructure and productive projects in their hometowns through Mexico’s *3 for 1 program* which matches collective remittances sent by Hometown Associations with funds from municipal, state, and federal governments for a total of US\$88 million in total investment. While this amount is minuscule as compared to either the total flow of remittances or the Mexican government’s national social investment budget, these funds provide important resources for community improvement and poverty alleviation in many towns in Mexico. **Rodolfo García Zamora** argues that migrant organizations are developing new forms of social accountability as they negotiate the destination of collective remittances with their government and monitor the implementation of projects that have been agreed on. **Efraín Jiménez** of the Zacatecan Federation of Clubs from Southern California described how the Federation has developed the institutional capacity to monitor investments, including filming the progress of projects, thanks to their partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation. While these funds are providing a critical link in Mexico’s development, especially in some states, **García Zamora** notes that there is a danger that governments will substitute these migrant-led projects for other forms of social policy to address poverty.²

Geographic Distribution of Origins
of Mexican Hometown Associations (1998–2003)

States of origin in Mexico	1998	2003
Aguascalientes	3	1
Baja California	1	1
Chihuahua	6	10
Coahuila	2	2
Colima	1	4
Distrito Federal	3	6
Durango	19	20
México	6	11
Guerrero	23	51
Guanajuato	40	48
Hidalgo	4	11
Jalisco	74	100
Michoacán	19	51
Morelos	0	5
Nayarit	22	27
Nuevo León	2	4
Oaxaca	22	36
Puebla	12	34
Querétaro	1	0
San Luis Potosí	39	23
Sinaloa	12	17
Sonora	2	5
Tamaulipas	2	3
Tlaxcala	7	13
Veracruz	2	12
Yucatán	4	2
Zacatecas	113	126
Total	441	623

Source for Tables 2.1 and 2.2: “Directorio de Oriundos en los Estados Unidos” (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 1999) and the “Programa para las Comunidades Mexicanas en el Exterior” (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 2003). More detailed data on HTAs are available in the paper by Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, Xóchitl Bada, and Luis Escala-Rabadán, “Mexican Migrant Civic and Political Participation in the U.S.: The Case of Hometown Associations in Los Angeles and Chicago,” background paper presented at the conference, available at www.wilsoncenter.org/migrantparticipation.

acterized them in the mid-1990s,³ these associations have now consolidated their organizational structures. Notably, the philanthropic activities they carry out for their communities of origin have changed significantly. While these projects were infrequent and haphazardly organized in the past, cross-border fundraising and investments in home community infrastructure have grown substantially in scale and become much more formalized and systematic. This “scaling up” has increased the federations’ visibility, leading to a growing

recognition of them in both the public and political spheres, which in turn has encouraged extended dialogue between them and all three levels of the Mexican government: federal, state, and municipal. In recent years, Mexican officials from all levels of government have forged important relationships with the associations, relationships that both civil society and state actors consider to be real partnerships, at least in the case of organized migrants in Los Angeles and Chicago.

In this regard, **Monica Lozano**, publisher and CEO of *La Opinión* newspaper, observed that HTAs are increasingly engaged in activities oriented towards U.S. civic life, rather than hometown concerns in Mexico. As a result, she wondered “Is there a perception that Mexico’s interest around these organizations is distinct from the interests that have been put forward today around more integration into U.S. civic society?” Several hometown association leaders described their different strategies that they have been able to utilize in reconciling their practices of engaging with civic life in the United States, such as scholarship funds and political actions, while simultaneously paying attention to key issues in Mexico. **Jonathan Fox**, professor at the University of California Santa Cruz, wondered

whether both the leadership of these organizations and their members share the same binational perspective. He noted that the landscape of migrant grassroots organizations is a complex one and attention to detail is called for when discussing any relevant trends at the national level. Further research is needed in this area.

Geographic Distribution of Mexican Hometown Associations in the United States (1998–2003)

TABLE 2.2

States	1998	2003
Arizona	5	9
California	240	329
Colorado	4	5
Florida	3	1
Georgia	2	2
Illinois	82	170
Indiana	-	2
Michigan	-	1
Nevada	-	1
New Mexico	-	3
New York	15	27
North Carolina	-	1
Oregon	3	4
Pennsylvania	5	11
Texas	73	48
Utah	2	2
Washington	7	7
Total	441	623

Chapter 3

Mexican Migrants and Mexican Americans/Latinos: One Agenda or Two?

David R. Ayón

“...there is a lot of synergy around the issues related to civic engagement in the United States and civic engagement in Mexico by the membership of hometown associations.”

—Ann Marie Tallman

“A changing mentality has taken place in the last few years among many people that leads to a new conceptualization of what a Mexican immigrant is. Instead of seeing the migrant simply as labor, as someone who has no capacity to organize or to do anything else except mow the lawn and do other menial jobs, we now think of the Mexican immigrant community as important new leaders, potential members and leaders in labor unions, people who have political opinions, people who can run for office, people who can become good U.S. citizens as well...”

—Jesús Martínez Saldaña

Many organizations have been formed in the United States to work for the civil rights and well-being of Latinos. Some of these organizations had their origins in the civil rights struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, while others have been formed more recently to address issues of healthcare, education, immigration, and other matters of concern to Latinos in the United States. As the number of foreign-born Mexicans living in the United States has increased dramatically since the mid-1980s, these new immigrants have often formed their own organizations of Mexican migrants, including hometown associations (see chapter 2). While Latino and Mexican migrant organizations often overlap in their issues and sometimes even membership, they often have very different organizational structures, access to resources, and views on whether to pursue a binational or primarily U.S.-based agenda.

Mexican migrant organizations have traditionally been focused more on issues pertaining to their communities of origin and their rights as Mexican citizens. However, migrant-led organizations have increasingly turned their attention to issues that are affecting their new communities of residence in the United States. **Guadalupe Gómez**, vice president and co-founder of the Federation of Zacatecan Clubs of Southern California, noted that the Mexican federations in Los Angeles had provided financial support for the campaign against Proposition 187 in 1994, together with many of the traditional Latino organizations, and they were currently engaged in supporting the drivers' license bill in the California Senate.

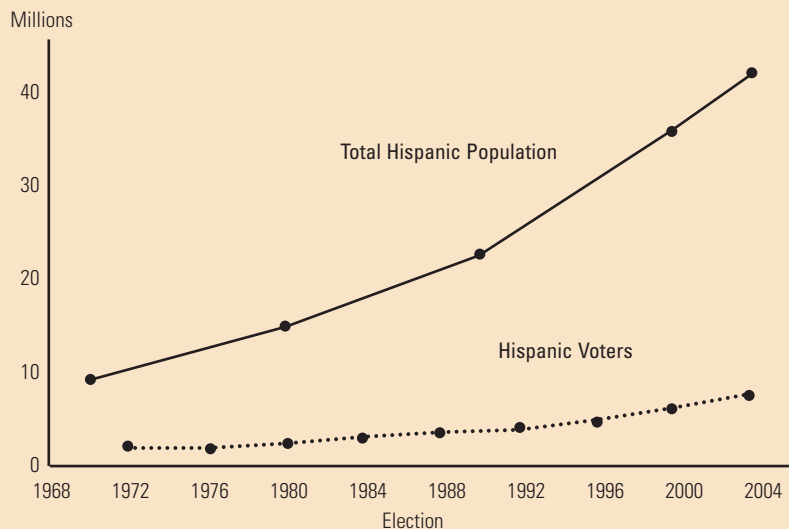
Gómez went on to relate how the Federation has developed a political arm that supports Latino candidates for public office, as well as a scholarship fund for second-generation Mexican youth who want to enter college in the United States. He said that the stereotype of migrant organizations only “doing things in Mexico” may have been true in the past, but it no longer holds. Similarly **José Padilla**, director of California Rural Legal Assistance, related how his organization had been able to develop a partnership with Mixteco migrant organizations in the state to build institutional capacity and autonomy.

BOX 3 Latino Voting

Despite the growing number of Latinos in the United States, the number of Latino voters, including those of Mexican descent, is not growing nearly as quickly. Latinos accounted for 50% of the population growth in the United States in the period 2000–2004, but represented only 24% of new voter registrations. Indeed, only 59% of adult Latinos in the United States were eligible to vote in 2004, compared to 97% of whites and 94% of blacks. Registration and voting rates among Latinos also lag behind those of Americans who are not Latinos. Therefore, while the total population of Latinos rose to 41.3 million in 2004, there were only 7.6 million Latino voters in the 2004 elections.

FIGURE 3.1

The Growing Divergence between the Total Hispanic Population and the Number of Hispanic Voters 1970–2004



All data, including the chart, taken from the presentation at the conference by Roberto Suro, “What Do Surveys Tell Us about Mexican Migrant Social and Civic Participation?” available at www.wilsoncenter.org/migrantparticipation.

Latino organizations have historically been concerned with civil rights and political enfranchisement of native-born and naturalized Latinos. However, in recent years, Latino organizations have become increasingly interested in the concerns of foreign-born Mexican migrants and are gradually developing a closer relationship with migrant-led organizations. *Ann Marie Tallman*, at the time president and legal counsel of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), made the case for synergy between migrants and Latinos in joint efforts to shape policy. She related how MALDEF works with hometown associations and conducts “Know Your Rights” seminars and a leadership development programs for them. She lauded these organizations for having created a social movement. She

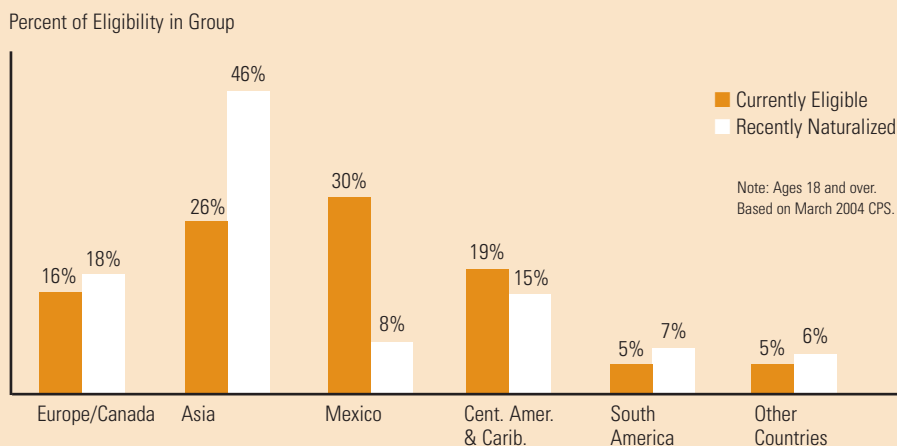
BOX 4

Naturalization Rates for Mexican Immigrants

Mexicans represent both the largest undocumented population in the United States and also the largest legal immigrant group in the United States. Nonetheless, although Mexican green card holders represent 30% of all those permanent residents eligible for naturalization, they have one of the lowest naturalization rates of any national origin group, including most Asians and other Latin Americans. Further research is needed to understand why this is the case. The low naturalization rate in turn contributes to the low voting turnout among Latinos of Mexican descent in U.S. elections. Despite this, *Gonzalo Arroyo*, Director of Family Focus in Aurora, Illinois, pointed out that non-profit organizations are strategically positioned to understand why many Mexican immigrants do not naturalize and can become conduits for efforts at changing this trend.

FIGURE 3.2

Legal Permanent Residents and Recently Naturalized Citizens by Region of Origin



Jeffrey S. Passel, “Naturalization Trends and Opportunities: A Focus on Mexicans”, Presentation given during the conference.

characterized the HTAs as having originally been “primarily social in orientation, in helping benefit the country of origin, the villages of origin, the cities of origin,” but having recently become purveyors of “valuable information about rights in the U.S.” Tallman also issued a ringing defense of the right of Mexican migrants to vote from abroad. However, **Janet Murguía**, president and CEO of National Council of La Raza, while recognizing the growing importance of binational concerns for many Latinos, cautioned that using symbols from countries of origin during protest marches sometimes can be counterproductive. She suggested that immigrant and native-born Latinos should work together to find the best strategies to get across their message to U.S. society and policymakers.

Mexican migrants, even those who are not citizens, have increasingly been engaged in political life in the United States. **María Elena Durazo**, the new chief of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor and Executive Vice President of UNITE/HERE International, described the efforts her union undertook in the 2005 Los Angeles mayoral race, in which approximately one hundred members of her local—many of them not citizens—took a leave of absence from their jobs to work full-time to mobilize the Latino vote. The campaign stressed the obligation of Latino voters to honor the heritage of their parents, who had sacrificed to come to the United States, by voting. She showed the campaign’s poster which bore the word “*Imperdonable*” (“Unforgivable”), symbolizing that it would be unforgivable not to vote in the mayoral election where Antonio Villaraigosa, a Mexican-American, was a candidate for mayor.

Similarly, for many Mexican-Americans who are naturalized U.S. citizens, the opportunity to vote in Mexico has provided an important opportunity to become politically active

Mexican Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs) by Selected States, Fiscal Year Granted LPR Status, from 1985 to 1999 and Naturalization Status by 2004

TABLE 3.1

State	Total LPRs 1985–1999	Total naturalized	Total not naturalized	Percentage of eligible Mexican LPRs naturalized
Arizona	115,118	23,692	91,426	20.6%
California	1,857,717	517,594	1,340,123	27.9%
Colorado	40,220	8,867	31,353	22.0%
Florida	74,356	12,844	61,512	17.3%
Illinois	225,970	70,632	155,338	31.3%
Nevada	33,906	9,226	24,680	27.2%
New Mexico	48,513	7,997	40,516	16.5%
N. Carolina	18,213	2,781	15,432	15.3%
Texas	715,119	146,212	568,907	20.4%
Total in these states	3,129,132	799,845	2,329,287	26%

Source: Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, 2005

Note: The states indicate where the immigrants received their permanent residency.

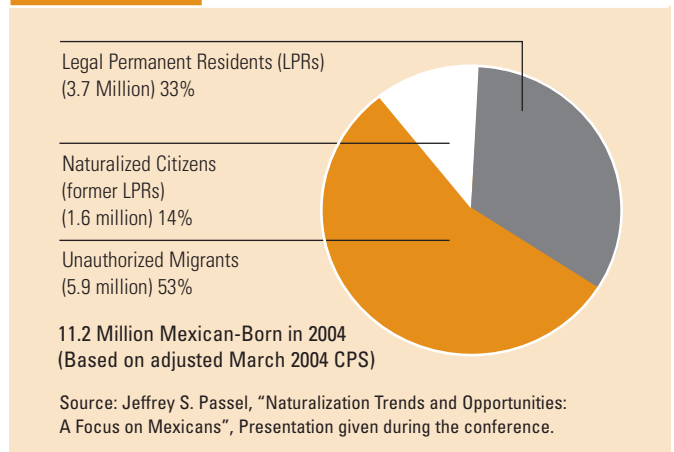
again in their country of origin after years of political engagement in the United States. **Jesús García**, the first Mexican-American to be elected to the Illinois State Senate and now director of the Little Village Community Development Corporation in Chicago, expressed the importance of this new right to vote in Mexico. He said:

“I want to do justice to my parents who had the courage to come to this country. I want to make a statement that the Mexican community and the Mexican American community in the U.S. shares much with people who have lived in Mexico all of their lives, that there is a sense of solidarity and there is also a sense of recognizing the role, the courageous role that immigrants in the U.S. of Mexican origin have played as it relates to Mexico—solidarity with indigenous movements, solidarity with movements for democracy in Mexico. This is a way of vindicating the history and the role of Mexican Americans and *mexicanos* who live in the U.S. I think that the interdependency of the two countries is irreversible. Civic participation cannot be seen only in a local or in a national context, particularly between two countries that have such a long and rich experience with each other.”

However, Latino and Mexican migrant organizations often differ in strategies and outlook. **Michael Jones-Correa**, a professor at Cornell University, explained the differences between migrant and Mexican-American/Latino organizations and leaders primarily in terms of the formation and orientation of these organizations.⁴ He noted that Latino organizations were formed as part of a civil rights struggle, with a national orientation. Migrant organizations are either locally oriented—even when they are ‘transnational’ as in the case of the HTAs—or approach issues in a human rights framework, rather than a civil rights framework. **Jesús García** and **Tallman** noted that although both groups of organizations share a common concern on immigration reform, there is a perceptible “disconnect” between Mexican-Americans and migrants on the issue of immigration. **García** noted that Mexican-Americans sometimes have a sense of discrimination or being passed by more recent arrivals, and as a consequence sympathize with border enforcement. On the other hand, **Tallman** spoke of the educational campaign that was needed in Arizona to mobilize Latinos in opposition to Proposition 200. **Marcia Soto**, the President of the Confederation of Mexican Federations of the Midwest, also noted that Latino and migrant organizations have very unequal access to resources.

Jesús Martínez Saldaña, a migrant legislator who is the president of the Migrant Affairs Commission in the state of Michoacán Congress, noted that organizations change and

FIGURE 3.3 Legal Status of Mexicans



evolve over time. He gave the example of LULAC, which was founded by U.S.-born Mexican-Americans with the express purpose of distinguishing themselves from migrants, in order to assert their rights as citizens. Over time, LULAC changed to become a pro-immigrant organization. **Martínez Saldaña** also noted that the United Farm Workers Union (UFW) had at one time regarded undocumented migrants as enemies of their effort to organize in the fields. Now, he noted, unions see migrant workers as their base, and even as a source of leadership. **Ricardo Ramirez**, a professor at the University of Southern California, mentioned that the geographical context always matters. Where an organization evolves, and the nature of local laws and environment towards new immigrants, helps to shape the agenda and outcomes of migrant organizations. **Louis DeSipio**, professor at the University of California, Irvine, noted how Latino organizations have to make a strategic calculation of how to reach out to migrants without alienating their base of U.S.-born Latinos. This may become an ever more salient consideration as the third generation becomes the fastest growing segment of the Latino population.

Chapter 4

New Trends and Patterns in Mexican Migrant Labor Organization

Xóchitl Bada

“In my country, if you organize a union, you get killed; in this country you lose a job that pays \$4.25 an hour....”

—*Ruth Milkman quoting an anonymous immigrant worker*

INTRODUCTION

Mexican migrant workers are developing innovative ways of workplace organizing, with varying degrees of public visibility. The absolute number of Mexican-born and foreign-born union members grew over the past decade even though the unionized proportion of each group declined (see figures 4.2 and 4.3).⁵ These growing numbers have led to a number of high-profile successes for unions that have primarily involved immigrant workers from Mexico.

One of the factors associated with the relatively low unionization rates of Mexican workers is that unionized workers are still concentrated in Illinois and California, and the share of Mexican-born workforce in those states is declining (see figure 4.3). In the past decade, Mexican workers have been rapidly dispersing towards non-traditional destinations where union density is much lower such as North Carolina, a state with the second lowest unionization rate in the country (2.9%).⁶ A second factor is that Mexican-born workers are disproportionately concentrated in sectors of the economy where union density is relatively low. Moreover, immigrant workers, due to their mixed legal status, tend to be underrepresented in government employment, one of the most unionized sectors. It is difficult for immigrant workers to access government jobs because many positions require citizenship.

FOREIGN BORN WORKERS IN NATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATIONS

All panel members stressed that the situation surrounding union organizing is challenging. Several observed that workers are increasingly treated as economic commodities instead of as human beings and growing anti-immigrant sentiment further compounds this. *Ana Avendaño*, Director of the Immigrant Worker Program at the AFL-CIO, observed that “If you are a white male and you get paid eight dollars an hour at the Wal Mart, it is easy to pick on the migrant as the source of blame.” Likewise, agricultural workers face the same difficult situation despite all the laws that were approved during the César Chávez era. The plight of all immigrant workers is becoming very similar in both rural and urban areas due to subcontracting and outsourcing which alters basic labor contracts, rights, and social benefits across the nation. *Avendaño* argued that the U.S. is returning to a pre-New Deal era in terms of labor conditions.

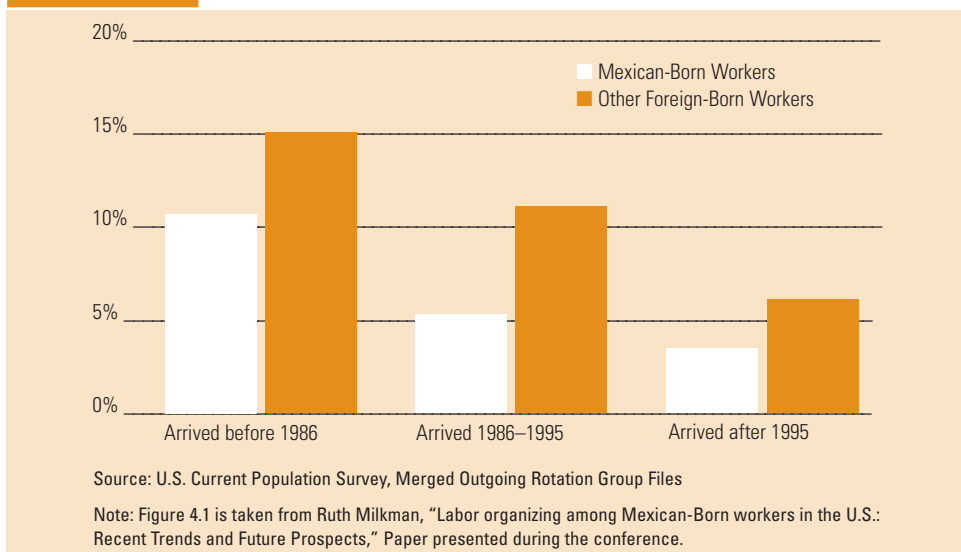
It is a common belief that one of the factors preventing immigrant workers from organizing is their vulnerability and fear associated with their undocumented status in this country.

However, all the labor leaders represented at the table coincided that this is not exactly true. According to them, Mexican workers are willing to defend their rights and react very positively when they are invited to participate in collective movements. As *María Elena Durazo*, the new chief of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor and Executive Vice President of UNITE-HERE International, said, “there is nothing that motivates workers to organize more than the fact that they know that they are discriminated against every single day, more than the fact that they know that they have more poverty, more lack of health insurance, more disrespect on the job, and a greater workload than anybody else. That’s what pushes them.” Some of these workers have even had experiences in labor organizations in Mexico such as agricultural cooperatives and other rural organizations. Therefore, organizing and participating in the workplace to improve their conditions is not something foreign to immigrant workers. In fact, many of them are taking roles as direct actors and making sure that change in the workplace is brought about. For example, retail workers are testifying in front of legislators, and day laborers are negotiating directly with legislators, holding vigils, and using many other strategies in an effort to protest in more sophisticated ways. In other words, they are getting ready to become empowered participants in politics and community affairs.

Panelists stressed that the key to a successful incorporation of these workers into a collective movement is to improve the communication channels among workers, labor representatives, and workplace organizers. They mentioned that it is important to change the perception of what happens when workers organize a public protest. Sometimes workers believe that if they participate, they could be kidnapped, jailed, and killed as is expected in their countries of origin. Despite the fact that some workers tend to have negative images of pro-government unions in Mexico, Mexicans working in the United States are as likely as any other ethnic group to participate in collective bargaining efforts and non-union organizations, such as independent worker centers or day laborer centers. Mexican workers have sometimes had

FIGURE 4.1

Unionization Rates, Mexican-Born and Other Foreign-Born Workers, by Date of Arrival, United States, 2004



negative experiences with labor movements at home; therefore, panelists stressed that it is important for labor organizations to invest in consciousness-raising within labor struggles.

UNIONS

Ana Avendaño argued that it is important that immigrants recover their place in the labor movement. The history of the American labor movement is a history that was written by immigrant struggles to organize unions. The organized labor movement was organically created from workers organizing themselves. She said that currently many unions have lost the ideal that “workers organize unions, unions don’t organize workers.” Therefore, it is important that unions establish special strategies for attracting the active participation of foreign-born workers among their ranks. The following is a summary of some successful experiences shared by union leaders dealing with the challenge of attracting and including more Mexican workers in the organized labor movement.

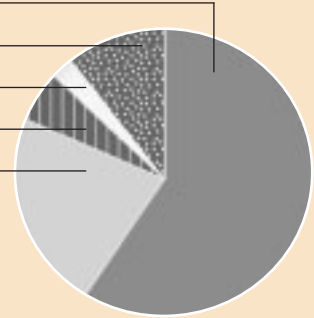
The Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United (PCUN) is an agricultural community union in Oregon. As **Ramón Ramírez**, President of the PCUN, noted, this union started in 1985 as an organizing committee trying to change the state labor laws to have access to union representation. By 1990, the organizing committee became a formal union after some agricultural labor laws were modified to allow the right to organize in that state. They also offered a training program called *Capaces* aimed at linking all the community based organizations that Oregon’s agricultural workers have created around labor issues and better living conditions. They have provided community services that more traditional unions are not used to providing, such as a plan to support dignified housing for agricultural workers. The needs of agricultural workers in Oregon are beyond labor concerns because workers also face housing issues such as sleeping on the fields and inside their cars. **Ramírez** mentioned that a European delegation visiting Oregon in 2004 had commented that the conditions in Oregon were worse than those of Ugandan workers living in Tanzania. He stated that for an indigenous Mexican migrant worker, it is very discouraging to come to the U.S. with the desire of improving their family situation just to find out that living conditions for agricultural workers are identical to those in Latin America.

Mexican-Born Union Members, by Selected States, United States, 1994 and 2004

FIGURE 4.2

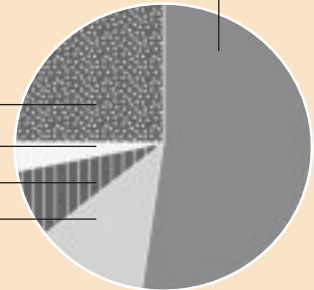
1994

California 59.6%
Other States 10.7%
New York 2.4%
Texas 5.4%
Illinois 21.9%



2004

California 52.3%
Other States 24.9%
New York 3.1%
Texas 7.4%
Illinois 12.2%



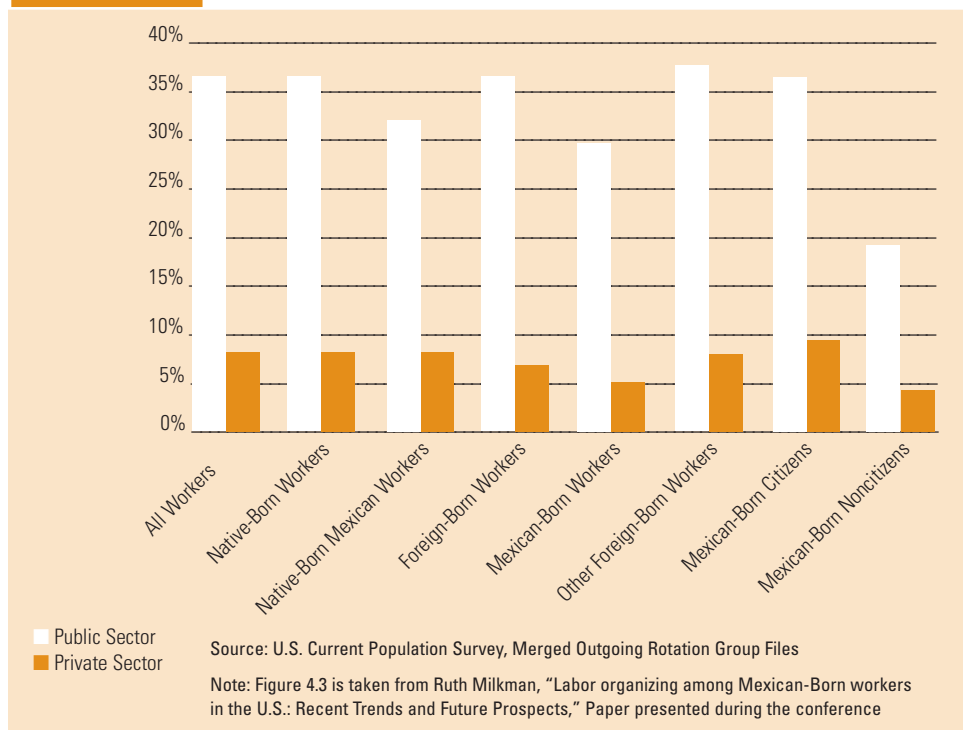
Source: U.S. Current Population Survey, Merged Outgoing Rotation Group Files

Note: Figure 4.2 is taken from Ruth Milkman, “Labor organizing among Mexican-Born workers in the U.S.: Recent Trends and Future Prospects,” Paper presented during the conference.

According to *Durazo*, her union was able to make some changes to fulfill the special needs of immigrant workers. In the past, despite the fact that 75% of the union members were Spanish-speakers, the union administrators did not produce any materials in Spanish; therefore, workers' participation and involvement with the union was very scarce. Producing materials in Spanish and conducting bilingual union meetings has increased worker participation, reduced fear, and improved leadership skills among Spanish speaking union representatives and members at large. UNITE HERE! has also been highly effective in mobilizing immigrants to get into electoral politics in California. For instance, some locals have offered special workshops as part of their political and civic participation programming in which they ask participants to evaluate politicians based on whether their positions are consistent with workers' issues. As a result, workers are becoming aware of the importance of electoral participation in their communities and have started to participate in campaigns to get out the vote regardless of their immigration or citizenship status.

Regarding the strategies followed by the AFL-CIO, *Avendaño* mentioned that the former AFL-CIO also played an important role in transforming its leadership towards a more inclusive environment for all workers regardless of their immigration status. Within the last five years, AFL-CIO negotiated an agreement under which the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (formerly INS) would not interfere in labor disputes. However, the government has not always honored this commitment. Another agreement was reached with the Wage and Hour Division of the DOL in which this office would not disclose the immigration status of

FIGURE 4.3 Unionization Rates, by Sector, Nativity, and Citizenship Status, United States, 2004

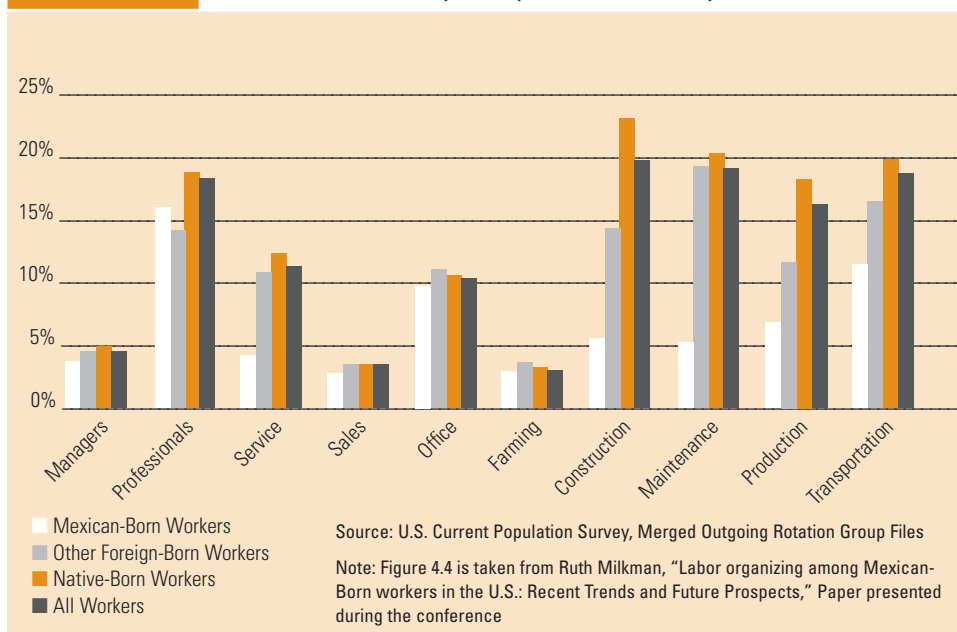


a worker if the USCIS asks them. In 2003, AFL-CIO was a major sponsor of the Immigrant Worker Freedom Ride, which sought to attract national attention for the immigration reform movement, which had lost momentum after the September 11 attacks of 2001.

Avendaño stressed how important it is to understand that organizing campaigns to elect a union is not a good experience for any worker. In this country, over half of the workers who get on organizing campaigns through the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) get fired. Ninety percent of them need to have a one-on-one negotiation with their employer and it is common that the employer will threaten them with cutting all benefits and oblige them to listen to lengthy explanations of why unions hurt the workplace. Despite all these difficulties, undocumented workers are organizing themselves both through NLRB contracts and outside of the NLRB. Wildcat strikes are common at the workplace and unions are learning that workers are going to take collective action if they disagree with the conditions of their union contract. Workers have the power to decertify a union and they have used it when the unions have not complied with their promises.

The difficulty for organizing undocumented workers has more to do with their high mobility than with their lack of papers. Several panelists made clear that undocumented workers have fears because they do not understand labor laws, but once they realize that it is possible to win a contract, they become very motivated and empowered. The best example that was presented in the conference was that of PCUN. This union has very high participation from undocumented farm workers, which have been capable of negotiating their own contract with the farmers through their community committees. Through hard work and leadership training, these workers have conquered the fear of having face-to-face negotiations with their bosses regardless of their immigration status.

FIGURE 4.4 Unionization Rates, by Occupation and Nativity, United States, 2004



WORKER CENTERS AND WORKER COALITIONS

Mexican workers, especially in industries that do not have unions, have often received support from worker centers. During the roundtable, participants discussed the advantages of this community-based approach to labor organizing. **Francisca Cortez**, an organizer with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) in Florida, shared her experience as a member of CIW, a coalition of agricultural workers mainly from Mexico, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, and El Salvador who were able to win a labor dispute involving Taco Bell in 2005. This was not an easy campaign to organize and it took them more than five years to obtain their first industry-wide success. Farm workers in Immokalee speak six or seven different languages; however, this has not prevented them from working together. CIW has been instrumental in giving a voice to 2,500 members and exposing workplace violations in the state of Florida. According to **Cortez**, leadership training and peer-to-peer communication has been very important for educating workers

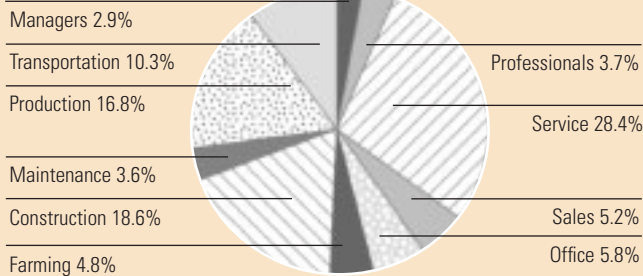
about their rights. Workers tend to distrust and fear authorities so it is important that victims of workplace exploitation have someone that they trust to discuss their problems. She explained that agricultural workers are a highly mobile population, and it is a priority to teach them labor rights so that they can defend themselves and teach others in any state. Being aware of their labor rights is the most important strategy for avoiding labor abuses and overcoming fear. She noted that this is a difficult struggle if we consider that workers in Immokalee need to pick four thousand pounds of tomatoes to make 50 dollars a day and after that journey, they still need to keep enough energy to attend CIW meetings several miles away from the field.

Alongside CIW, there are other approaches to labor organizing. For instance, worker centers have emerged in the past fifteen years advocating for low-wage workers, especially those with little or no

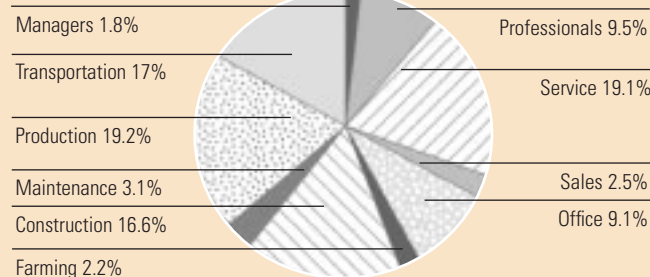
FIGURE 4.5

Mexican-Born Employed Workers and Union Members, by Occupation, United States, 2004

Mexican-Born Employed Workers



Mexican-Born Union Members



Source: U.S. Current Population Survey, Merged Outgoing Rotation Group Files

Note: Figure 4.5 is taken from Ruth Milkman, "Labor organizing among Mexican-Born workers in the U.S.: Recent Trends and Future Prospects," Paper presented during the conference

access to conventional unions such as domestic workers and day laborers. In 1992 there were only five worker centers in the United States. Today there are more than 135 and they are growing in number every day. They function as local mediating institutions that work collectively with workers and employers. In the case of New York, the most important accomplishments of worker centers have been their involvement in obtaining an amendment to the law that tripled the damage for wage and hour violations in the state. They also worked with the police to make sure that the USCIS does not question workers about their immigration status.

Irma Solís shared her experience as a labor organizer for the Farmingville Committee of the Workplace Project, a worker center addressing the needs of immigrant workers and day laborers in Long Island. The Workplace project started in Hempstead, New York in 1992 as a center serving mostly Central American workers. They have expanded their geographic scope and now serve the needs of day laborers in Farmingville, a community with a great demand of immigrant labor and little infrastructure and community resources to address the many challenges faced by newcomers. The situation of Farmingville workers is not very different from the Immokalee workers because both are highly mobile populations. It is a challenge to organize permanent committees to prevent workplace abuses because these workers do not have job security and need to provide for their families still living in Mexico. However, against all odds, Farmingville workers are currently organizing for building projects to improve the lives of their communities back home while simultaneously engaging in labor issues that affect their local situation. Their levels of participation have increased in part as a collective response to the brutal beating of two Mexican workers in the town of Farmingville that occurred on September of 2000.

Chapter 5

Mexican Migrants and Religious Communities

Andrew Selee

“The church is converted into a space for collective action for organization and civic action; the church becomes a social community...where migrants recognize each other as believers and this allows them to reaffirm their belonging to a community outside of their local groups, and it creates an ethnic reaffirmation of identity in the context of the United States.”

—Liliana Rivera Sánchez

Religious communities are one of the most important arenas for civic engagement among Latino immigrants. According to **Roberto Suro**, around a third of Latino immigrants report volunteering in the past year through a church or religious organization, their most common place for civic engagement followed by schools (see Chart 1).⁷ Religious communities often provide a place of refuge and encounter for recent immigrants from similar backgrounds, provide tangible services to help them adapt to their life in a new country, and offer a sense of community to those far from their place of origin. **Liliana Rivera Sánchez** of UNAM noted that “there is a tendency for religious identities, beliefs and practices to take on added meaning in the global context of accelerated migration—not only as a reactive response to the hostility confronted by immigrants in their places of destination, but as an affirmative response based on their particular religious practices.”⁸ Churches—both Catholic and Protestant—become centers for religious worship, education, socialization, and community organizing for Mexican migrants.

Moreover, churches provide a space for collective action that both links migrants back to their communities of origin and provides a bridge for incorporation into the society they have joined. Churches and religious organizations play this role in large part because they are simultaneously rooted in local communities and nested within a larger international community of believers. In many cases, they draw on participants’ national traditions, thus building a symbolic link to the homeland, but also build on universal concepts and traditions of the new country where migrants reside. They serve thus to reaffirm old traditions, practices, and beliefs from migrants’ countries of origin, and simultaneously expose migrants to the culture, institutions, and traditions of their new home in the United States. **Leo Anchondo**, national manager of the Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform of the Conference of Catholic Bishops, for example, noted that Catholic churches recognize post-national identities, that is, that migrants participate in a global space that transcends national boundaries and involves simultaneous engagement in more than one country. According to **Anchondo**, “the principal role of religion goes beyond faith; it is ...a space for organization and for recognition of the existence of the migrant, who is otherwise part of an invisible community.”

TABLE 5.1

Reported Volunteer Activity

Percent of Latinos who say that in the past year they have volunteered their time to...			
	Native Born Latinos	Foreign Born Naturalized Citizens	Foreign Born Non-Naturalized Citizens
Church or religious group	38%	39%	29%
School or tutoring program	31%	23%	23%
Neighborhood, business, or community group	31%	18%	13%
Organization representing their particular nationality, ethnic, or racial group	15%	11%	10%
Percent who say they have done any of the above activities	61%	50%	44%

Source: Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation National Survey of Latinos: Politics and Civic Engagement, July 2004 (conducted April–June 2004)

Some religious organizations, such as Asociación Tepeyac in New York, see themselves as building social and political action out of the migrants' own practices and traditions. According to its director, **Joel Magallán**, "what we have tried to do is to understand religious practices from the experience of the migrants." Tepeyac has thus developed a series of activities that build on migrants' particular practices and worldviews to generate collective action and encourage participants' insertion into the civic and political life of their city. Tepeyac prepares its participants to take leadership in local community boards in New York City, but it also sees their political insertion as spanning two countries. As a result, Tepeyac recently sponsored a binational pilgrimage for migrants' rights that began in the *Basilica de Guadalupe* in Mexico City and ended at Saint Patrick's Cathedral on New York City's 5th Avenue.

Although almost three-quarters of Latino migrants identify themselves as Catholics, Protestant churches are also increasingly important for Mexican migrants. Almost a quarter of Latinos now identify themselves as Protestants, according to **Michael Jones-Correa** of Cornell University, most of whom consider themselves Evangelical Christians (see Figures 5.1–5.2).⁹ While some Mexican migrants were Evangelical Christians in their hometowns, many more have joined Protestant churches after arriving in the United States. Evangelical churches in the United States appear to have increased their outreach to Mexican and other Latin American migrants substantially in recent years. Evangelical churches often play an important role in providing a bridge both back to migrants' communities of origin and to

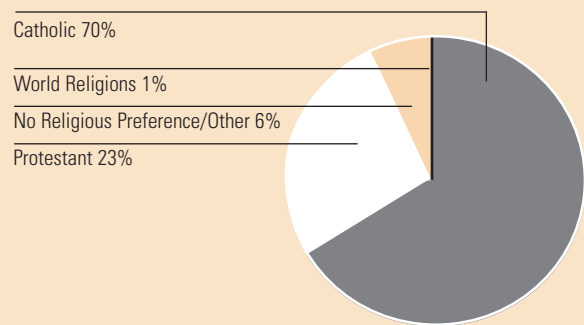
the localities where they have settled; both reaffirming their identity as Mexican migrants and providing a sense of membership in a transnational community of believers.

Many churches and religious organizations have also made a commitment to support migrants' agendas for civic and political engagement. The support provided by numerous religious communities to the boycott organized by the Immokalee workers (see chapter 4) stands out as one example of how religious groups engage with migrant agendas. **Melody González**, an organizer with Interfaith Action of Southwest Florida, noted that churches throughout the United States, led by the Presbyterians, mobilized a grassroots network that made the Taco Bell Boycott successful. **González** observed that “based on their faith, people began to see the connection they had with these migrant workers.” From there, they were able then to reflect on their role as consumers and how their choices affected the livelihoods of migrant workers who they see as brothers and sisters in faith. The Catholic Church has taken a similarly active stance on immigration reform, producing a series of pronouncements by the Conference of Catholic Bishops, some of them jointly with the Mexican Conference of Bishops. Evangelical churches have generally been less engaged on immigration issues, but this may well change as Mexican migrants and their descendants become an increasingly influential voice within Evangelical communities.

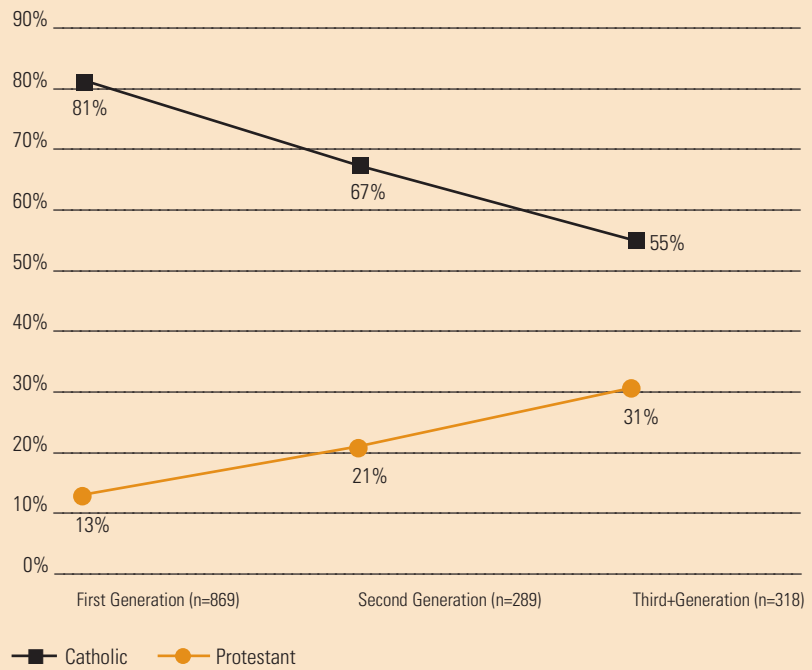
Churches are also playing an important role in engaging migrants in helping their home communities in Mexico. **Marcos Linares**, a parish priest in Atacheo de Regalado in the state of Michoacán, noted that the migrants from the city began by organizing themselves to help improve the city's infrastructure. However, after a few years of doing this with great success, they began to reflect on “why they continued to beautify a town...if all the families are just going to leave for the United States...” They realized that they needed to think of something more and began to develop a series of productive projects to generate employment so that others would not need to leave the town (and some might even be able to return home). While Atacheo stands out as an exception among towns, it points to the role that the Catholic church—as well as Protestant congregations—can play in engaging migrants as co-participants in strategies for development across borders.

Religious communities are a fundamental part of the infrastructure that allows Mexican migrants to reassert their identity as migrants, to develop pathways to incorporation in the United States, and to develop new practices of civic and political engagement that often reach across national boundaries. In the process, migrants are also transforming both Catholic and Protestant churches in the United States, bringing their own practices and worldviews into their religious communities.

FIGURE 5.1 Latino Religious Affiliation in the United States



Source: Gastón Espinosa, Virgilio Elizondo, and Jesse Miranda., *Hispanic Churches in American Public Life: Summary of Findings, Interim Reports*, Vol. 2, Institute for Latino Studies, University of Notre Dame, 2003.

FIGURE 5.2**Mexican-Americans' Religious Affiliation**

Source: This figure is courtesy of Georgian Schiopu using data from the Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation 2004 National Survey of Latinos: Politics and Civic Participation.

Chapter 6

Spanish-language Media and Mexican Migrant Civic Participation

David R. Ayón

“For us, Spanish language is first of all a cause for celebration. We celebrate our language here, and consider it part of the culture and patrimony of this country, period.”

—Samuel Orozco

Independent Spanish-language media has been a part of the experience and struggles of the Mexican-origin population of the United States virtually since the annexation of the Southwest region in the mid-19th century from Mexico. *El Clamor Público*, for example, began publishing weekly in Los Angeles in June, 1855. A century and a half later, this tradition continues with daily and weekly newspapers, magazines, radio and television broadcasting and internet websites.

The presence of Spanish language media has increased in the last decade, becoming a unifying force for many Mexican migrants and a means of socialization in U.S. civic and political life. For instance, during the recent wave of pro-immigrant rallies across the nation protesting federal legislation that would crack down on undocumented immigrants, the Spanish radio networks proved to be a valuable tool in spreading the word for attending these marches. In Chicago, Los Angeles, and other cities, deejays and other popular radio talk show anchors used the power of their airwaves to invite a flock of immigrants to attend these public demonstrations, advising them to behave in an orderly way without falling into any provocation. The response was overwhelmingly positive.¹⁰

Several participants made the case for the continuing need for these immigrant community-based media. *Vanessa Cárdenas*, policy/communications associate at the National Immigration Forum, described the mainstream media’s disinterest in the migrant community, other than to sensationalize and exploit the issue of undocumented immigration, such as in the cable television programs of Bill O’Reilly and Lou Dobbs. Mexico’s major media, although available in various forms in the United States, does not necessarily address issues of most importance to Mexican migrants. In U.S.-based Spanish-language media, however, immigration issues are central.

Correspondent *David Brooks*, of the Mexican newspaper *La Jornada*, explained that migration is the most important phenomenon of the century for Mexico and the United States, in that there is nothing else that is transforming these two countries more rapidly and at so many levels. Nevertheless, while the great migration to the United States is an issue in Mexico, it is not the subject of a great national debate such as it is in the United States. According to *Brooks*, this is due in part because Mexican media does not know how to tell the migrant story. As a consequence, for example, migration and migrants as an issue

go unmentioned by the candidates in the 2006 presidential contest in Mexico—unless a reporter happens to raise the subject.

Mexican reporters, like all reporters, have to ask themselves how to get a migrant-related story onto the front page, and they thus wind up neglecting the complexity of binational experience other than to cover the tragedies and abuses that befall migrants. **Brooks** called on migrant leaders and representatives to be more open and assertive in talking to the media and telling their stories. He said that key actors in this drama lack a strategy for communicating their story to the media.

Samuel Orozco, news and information director of Radio Bilingüe, explained how his station is able to reflect the evolving binational or transnational concerns of a population constantly renewed by migration by utilizing call-in programs and a multitude of community advisory committees. **America Rodríguez**, a professor at the University of Texas, described Spanish-language media themselves as actors in the community, beyond the coverage they provide. She recalled the example of the assistance provided by *La Opinión* and Spanish-language broadcasting to undocumented immigrants in applying for legalization under the IRCA law in the late 1980s. **Orozco** added that while his station must uphold fundamental professional norms of journalism in order to have credibility both with its audience and to have access to leaders, it is nonetheless a partisan actor on behalf of the community.

Vanessa Cárdenas argued that the services provided by the Spanish-language media to migrants is a given, and that the real challenge is to make the breakthrough to the mainstream

BOX 5

Spanish-Language Media in Figures

- There are three major Spanish-language television networks (Univision, Telemundo, and Azteca America); 160 local Spanish-language television stations; and 60 cable stations.
- Over 700 daily and weekly newspapers are published in Spanish, including major papers such as *La Opinión* (Los Angeles), *El Diario/ La Prensa* (New York), *El Nuevo Herald* (Miami), and *La Raza* (Chicago)
- There are over 300 Spanish-language radio stations.
- Circulation of Spanish-language dailies has more than tripled since 1990.
- Advertising revenues of Spanish-language dailies have grown more than sevenfold since 1990.
- Ownership of Spanish-language television and radio has seen serious consolidation over the past decade to the point where there may soon be only two or three real players in the market.
- Advertising for the Hispanic market grew 10% last year in comparison to 3.4% for the general market.

Source: Felix Contreras, "Hispanic Growth Reflected in Media Boom" NPR radio broadcast, July 23, 2005 and "The State of the News Media 2004." An Annual Report on American Journalism published by the Project for Excellence in Journalism. Available at <http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.org>

media. **Monica Lozano**, publisher of *La Opinión*, asked the panel that, beyond the role of the Spanish-language media in informing and enlightening the migrant population in its own language, does doing so to some extent also keep it marginalized from the mainstream?

“The language is what keeps it together,” **Rodríguez** replied, “it’s what strengthens us. It’s what strengthens Spanish-language media and then, we hope, strengthens our communities.” The irony, **Rodríguez** continued, is that the ‘breakthrough’ for Spanish-language media is coming in the form of the investments being made by general market media in Spanish-language products. “They are trying to get money out of the community by putting some in. But I don’t know if that is expanding our voices or not.”

On the question of binationality and continuing ties with Mexico, **Orozco** explained how civic engagement with both countries is an organic part of his radio service’s mission. Radio Bilingüe broadcasts town hall meetings in California, and for about ten years has had a regular feature called ‘*Radio Puentes*’ that links their U.S. stations with Mexican stations for transnational call-in discussions of common problems. A special variation of this that began in early 2005 is their Project OaxaCalifornia, that on weekends links Radio Bilingüe stations and their website with five Oaxacan stations, a program sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation. This is the only service that broadcasts in Mixteco in the United States. **Raúl Caballero**, managing editor of *La Estrella de Dallas*, explained how for his paper, coverage of Mexico is a local story.

On the question of promoting civic education and participation in the U.S., **Ricardo Ramírez**, a professor in the University of Southern California, described how the Univision station in Los Angeles devotes time and resources in this effort, and had personally consulted him for assistance in determining how to measure its impact. He noted that English-language media makes no similar effort.

Lozano offered examples of *La Opinión*’s commitment to act as a “vehicle of incorporation” of migrants into U.S. civic life, through voter registration and promoting voter participation. Her paper is uniquely authorized by the California Secretary of State to insert vote registration cards, which are accompanied with instructions and a pitch linking voting to specific outcomes in education, health, and other areas. **Orozco** added that Radio Bilingüe was sponsoring and broadcasting issue debates and panel discussions leading up to elections in California.

Chapter 7

Mexican Migrants and the Mexican Political System

Gaspar Rivera-Salgado

“...the right to vote for Mexicans abroad is a great fight for Mexican immigrants. This is not something that was handed to them by the Mexican government. This is something that took the Mexican community decades to achieve... It redefines the relation with Mexico, with Mexican origin citizens and citizens abroad because it gives the Mexican American community real political power, a form of political power at a mass level.”

—Jesús Martínez Saldaña

“I think that we have to recognize that countries allow their citizens when they are not living within their borders to vote and this country is a democracy that encourages voting... So I think it's important to be mindful of those principles and to be mindful that often times the debate around allegiances becomes very different when you are talking about a community that is more closely proximate to the U.S. than when you are talking about other communities.”

—Ann Marie Tallman

THE MEXICAN STATE AND MIGRANTS

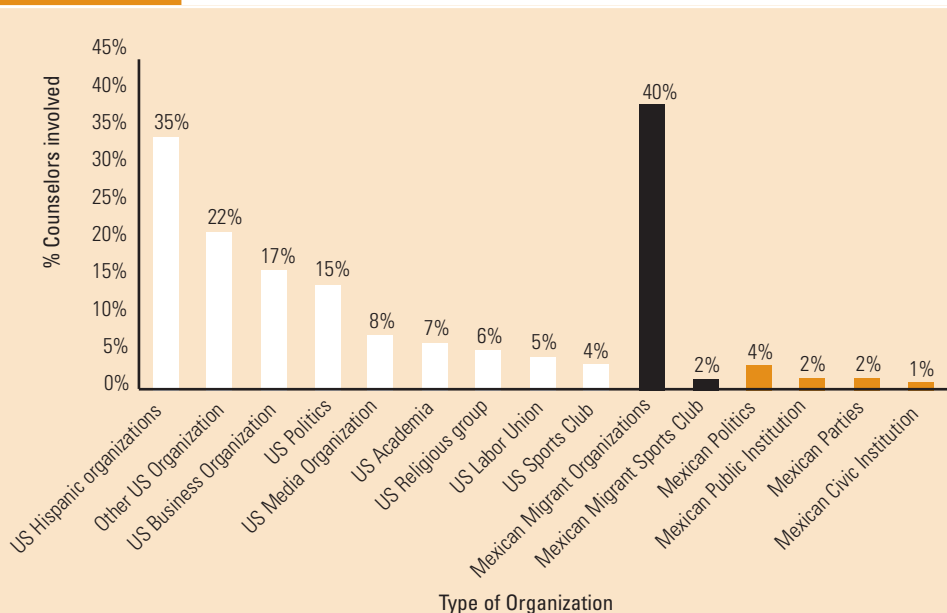
Throughout history, the Mexican government has both responded to the development of migrant leadership and organization, and sometimes acted to encourage it. In recent years, these efforts were carried out first by expanding the government's network of consulates, then creating the Foreign Ministry's Program for Mexican Communities Abroad (1990), and finally forming the Presidential Office for Mexicans Abroad (2000). This policy focused at first on fostering the organization of hometown clubs. Then in 2003 the Foreign Ministry created the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IME), to provide a link between Mexican migrants in the United States and Canada and provide strategic direction to the government's relationships with migrant organizations. The IME, a successor to the previous two agencies, has personnel in Mexican consulates across the United States and Canada in addition to its staff in Mexico City. It is designed to develop a network of émigré leaders, activists and organizations.¹¹

The most important feature of IME is its Advisory Council composed of over one hundred counselors who are elected in community fora throughout the United States and Canada. The number of counselors each region has is determined proportionally by Mexican immigrant population size. This Advisory Council, which meets several times a year and has

several committees, is designed to provide input to the IME on policies to address the needs of Mexicans abroad, drawing from the opinion and experiences of migrants themselves. According to **Laura González**, a counselor in Texas who is also executive director of the Oakcliff Center for Community Studies, the Advisory Council has been effective at bringing together Mexican migrants and the Mexican government around common concerns but there are notable problems with getting follow-up on council resolutions.

Many of these council members participate in civil society in both countries and in a wide range of different civic and political activities. According to recent data provided by the Institute of Mexicans Abroad, the Mexican migrants elected to their Advisory Council for the period 2002–2005 were engaged very actively in U.S. civic and political organizations.¹² Fully 35% percent of the *Consejeros* report leadership roles in U.S.-based Hispanic associations, 22% are active in other types of U.S. civic associations, and 17% percent are affiliated with some type of local business organization in their community. At the same time, a full 40% of the IME *Consejeros* were actively engaged with a U.S.-based Mexican migrant organization. In contrast, the engagement of the *Consejeros* with Mexico-based organizations has been extremely low (see Figure 7.1). The *Consejeros*, who are largely elected by other Mexican migrants in their community to represent them with the Mexican government, are overwhelmingly integrated into U.S. associational life and, to a lesser but significant degree, in migrant organizations as well.

FIGURE 7.1 Principal Civic Affiliations of Institute for Mexicans Abroad Council Members (2002–2005)



Note: Almost all counselors report multiple affiliations in different kinds of organizations and this is reflected in the chart. White organizations are primarily U.S.-based. Black organizations are Mexican migrant organizations. Orange organizations are Mexico-based.

Source: Prepared by Elvia Zazueta based on biographies supplied by the Institute for Mexicans Abroad (IME). N=100.

THE MEXICAN VOTE ABROAD¹³

After decades of political activism without suffrage, Mexican migrants living in the United States were able to vote in the Mexican presidential election on July 2, 2006. In June of last year, the Mexican Congress approved a law that outlined the procedures for the vote abroad. The Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) gave an initial estimate that as many as 4.2 million Mexicans living abroad might be eligible to vote.

At the end of the registration period, the IFE had received a total of 56,749 applications of Mexicans living abroad wanting to be incorporated into the special list of citizens wishing to cast a mail-in absentee ballot for the 2006 presidential elections. The IFE also reported that they had sent a total of 3.6 million applications abroad, to more than 80 countries; most of these were distributed throughout the United States. According to the IFE's figures, the number of ballot applications received from Mexicans abroad is just over one percent of those eligible to participate.

In a survey conducted between January and February of 2006 by the Pew Hispanic Center of Mexicans living in the United States on absentee voting in Mexican elections, the authors found that more than three-quarters of the respondents (78%) said they were aware that Mexicans living in the U.S. will be able to vote in the next Mexican presidential election.¹⁴ However, the study also revealed that 55% of Mexicans in the U.S. sampled for the study were not aware that a presidential election is taking place this year and few were familiar with the regulations and procedures adopted by the Mexican government last June when it approved absentee voting legislation for Mexicans abroad. Many indicated that they did not have a voting card (67%) or felt they did not know enough about the political process in Mexico to take part (61%).

According to *Jesús Martínez Saldaña*, a Mexican migrant elected to the state legislature in Michoacán, the most relevant impact of the debate regarding the Mexican vote abroad is that it has made migrants more visible in Mexico "not only as senders of remittances, but also as political actors." Nonetheless, *Guadalupe Gómez*, vice president of the Zacatecan Federation of Southern California, observed that he had personally witnessed many difficulties with the implementation of the registration campaign carried out by IFE officials. Among these problems he mentioned the lack of awareness of the absentee ballot requirements among eligible voters; the limited presence of the presidential campaigns in the United States; and the limited information available about the elections as a whole.

Chapter 8

Conclusions

Jonathan Fox, Andrew Selee, and Xóchitl Bada

This report reviews the landscape of the growing presence of Mexican migrants as civic actors in U.S. society and, in many cases, their growing influence in Mexican society as well. Over eleven million people in the United States were born in Mexico—roughly three percent of the U.S. population and nine percent of Mexico’s total population. They are increasingly participating in existing U.S. civic organizations, often transforming their issues and practices in the process, and have created hundreds of new migrant-led organizations as well.

There are over 600 registered hometown associations formed by Mexican migrants in cities and towns throughout the United States, with an especially notable presence in Chicago and Los Angeles. Many of these associations have formed federations made up of people from the same state in Mexico, as well as emerging confederations that in turn bring together different federations in U.S. metropolitan areas. These organizations play a significant role in helping hometowns in Mexico through encouraging community investment of collective remittances and pushing for more government support through matching funds. The larger federations have developed an increasing capacity to hold Mexican public officials accountable for the use of funds that are sent to Mexico to assist in infrastructure and productive projects in their towns of origin.

In addition, many of these hometown associations, federations, and confederations are becoming important participants in U.S. civic life. Most of these organizations started out focused exclusively on aid to their home communities in Mexico, but over time many developed programs for families and communities in the United States. They have thus become important arenas for migrants to learn the skills that allow them to engage with U.S. society and in many cases they have become active participants in city and state policy discussions that affect migrant communities. Migrants who participate in these associations often claim membership simultaneously in both Mexican and U.S. societies, what we call “civic binationality,” with their initial engagement with hometowns abroad aiding in their transition to active engagement with U.S. society. Some organizations, such as the Binational Front of Indigenous Organizations (FIOB), actually maintain binational membership structures that allow for simultaneous engagement in both Mexican and U.S. societies.

U.S. Latino civil society, including both public interest groups and community-based organizations, offers a major pathway for immigrant incorporation into US society. Traditional Latino organizations and Mexican migrant organizations often overlap in their issues and sometimes even membership, though they often have very different organizational structures, access to resources, as well as different views on whether to pursue a binational or primarily U.S.-focused agenda. While traditional Latino organizations tend to be focused on civil rights issues in the United States and questions of equal access to healthcare and education, migrant organizations tend to be focused on binational issues and on specific concerns

TABLE 8.1**Selected Immigrant Rights Marches, Spring 2006**

City	State	Date	Estimated turnout (Lower and upper bounds)	Sources
Los Angeles	CA	5/1/06	650,000–700,000	LA Times, La Opinión, ABC News
Chicago	IL	5/1/06	400,000–750,000	Chicago Tribune, Univision
Dallas	TX	4/9/06	350,000–500,000	Dallas Morning News
Los Angeles	CA	3/25/06	200,000–500,000	LA Times, La Opinión
Washington	DC	4/10/06	180,000	New York Times
Chicago	IL	3/10/06	100,000–300,000	Chicago Tribune, CBS2 Chicago
New York	NY	4/10/06	100,000	New York Times
Phoenix	AZ	4/10/06	100,000–250,000	Arizona Republic, Washington Post
San Jose	CA	5/1/06	100,000	San Jose Mercury News
Atlanta	GA	3/24/06	80,000	Atlanta Journal Constitution
Fort Myers	FL	4/10/06	75,000	Orlando Sentinel
Denver	CO	3/25/06	50,000	Denver Post
Denver	CO	5/1/06	50,000–75,000	Denver Post, La Opinión
Detroit	MI	3/27/06	50,000	Detroit Free Press
Houston	TX	4/10/06	50,000	Houston Chronicle, Forbes
San Diego	CA	4/9/06	50,000	San Diego Union Tribune
Atlanta	GA	4/10/06	40,000–50,000	Atlanta Journal Constitution, Houston Chronicle
San Francisco	CA	5/1/06	30,000	San Francisco Chronicle, AP
St. Paul	MN	4/9/06	30,000	Minneapolis Star-Tribune, AP
Washington	DC	3/6/06	30,000	Chicago Tribune
20 largest events totals			2,715,000–3,950,000	
Totals Spring 2006			3,568,566–5,061,716	

Note: Data compiled by Xóchitl Bada, Jonathan Fox, Elvia Zazueta, and Ingrid García Ruíz. A full list of all documented marches is available at www.wilsoncenter.org/migrantparticipation.

of access to education and healthcare that affect recent immigrants to the United States. U.S. Latino leaders are among the U.S. constituencies most strongly committed to promoting immigrant incorporation, though they differ over whether migrants' binational perspectives are win-win or win-lose from the point of view of eventual integration into U.S. society. Nonetheless, the gap between these agendas is narrowing as Mexican migrant organizations become increasingly involved in U.S.-based agendas and Latino organizations increasingly embrace concerns of the growing number of U.S. Latinos who are migrants. Both sets of leaders are "in transition" regarding these issues, creating new opportunities for dialogue and synergy. Indeed, the huge wave of immigrant civic participation in response to the U.S. congressional debate on immigration is likely to provoke widespread rethinking of the prospects and terms of immigrant integration into U.S. society (See table 8.1).

Mexican migrants have become increasingly influential members and leaders of traditional U.S. civic organizations as well, and these have served as important vehicles for migrants to become active members of U.S. society. Religious communities, both Catholic and Protestant, have played a particularly important role in creating channels for migrants to become engaged with issues in their U.S. communities. Indeed a large part of the growth of both the Catholic and evangelical Christian churches has come from migrants from Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America. Some religious communities, such as the *Asociación Tepeyac* in New York, specifically see their role as building the social and political engagement of migrants to give them a voice in U.S. society while they continue to aid those in their country of origin. These communities appropriate symbols and patterns of worship from migrants' hometowns in Mexico but tie worship to the issues that migrants face in the United States and build capacities to address these proactively.

Worker organizations have also become a key arena for migrants' civic engagement in defense of their labor rights. Although Mexican migrants show a lower rate of unionization than the national average in the United States, this appears to be largely a result of the lower participation of migrants in government unions. Mexican migrant workers express a similar level of interest in unions to others in the United States, despite most migrants' lack of prior experience with representative unions in Mexico. Many migrants work in non-unionized industries, especially agriculture, and the emergence of worker centers that support workers' rights in these industries has proved particularly important. For immigrant farmworkers, who are often geographically and socially isolated, outreach to U.S. public opinion has often involved consumer boycotts, usually including alliances with religious communities and university students—as in the case of the *Coalition of Immokalee Workers'* recent campaign.

Spanish-language media play a decisive role both in sharing information among migrants and creating pathways to engagement in U.S. society. There are three major national television networks that broadcast in Spanish along with dozens of local stations and cable channels, over three hundred radio stations, and over seven hundred newspapers. These media help address issues that matter particularly to migrants from Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America in a way that neither English-language nor home country media do (although migrants do use both of these extensively as well). The protests that took place in the Spring of 2006 around immigration reform in cities throughout the United States

showed the capacity of Spanish-language media to help mobilize millions of people. In many cities, radio hosts on Spanish-language stations—many of whom engaged with civic issues for the first time—played a central role at generating mass interest among migrants in participating in these protests. In other cases, these media also provide information on voting, health campaigns, and issues in the educational system, among many other matters of concern to migrants. Some public media, such as Radio Bilingüe, were specifically created to serve as an information source for migrants to share and address their concerns, and even mainstream Spanish-language media leaders tend to see this as part of their mission.

Despite extensive gains among Mexican migrants in civic engagement, their political participation in the U.S. remains very low compared to their overall numbers. The large number of undocumented migrants—perhaps half of all Mexican migrants—is part of the reason for this. Even among those who are permanent residents and are eligible for citizenship, naturalization rates for Mexican migrants remain far below that of other immigrant groups in the United States, including most other immigrant groups from Latin America. We need to understand more about the reasons for this lag, how immigrants make citizenship decisions, and whether Mexican permanent residents may face hidden barriers in the official naturalization. For those who do become citizens, voter turnout rates tend to follow broader U.S. patterns in which lower levels of formal education and income are associated with lower turnout rates. Nevertheless, both citizen and non-citizen Mexican-born immigrants, participate in politics in other ways, especially in local arenas, such as school boards, through unions, and through the work of many migrant-led organizations to shape city and state policies toward migrants. In the future, we need to pay attention to the outcome of the recent wave of mobilization. It will be important to observe to what extent these marches will lead to an increase in the interest of Mexican legal permanent residents in becoming full citizens with voting rights.

So far, Mexican migrants have an even lower degree of formal engagement in Mexican elections. In 2005, the Mexican Congress for the first time allowed Mexicans abroad to register to vote in Mexico by absentee ballot. Only a little over one percent of those eligible appear to have done so for the 2006 presidential elections. This low registration rate undoubtedly reflects, in part, the numerous procedural challenges involved in the complicated registration process; however, it also suggests that Mexican migrants, though in many cases proud to be able to vote in Mexican elections, may be more focused on immediate concerns in the communities where they live in the United States. More research is needed to know the reasons for this low registration rate. Nonetheless, the Mexican government has increased its ties to migrants abroad in other ways since the 1990s. This included the creation of the Council of Mexicans Abroad in 2002, a body elected by Mexican migrants to advise the Mexican government on policy related to migrant communities. Although the results of this process are mixed in terms of the Council's actual influence in policy decisions, it has certainly served to build a bridge between local migrant leaders and the Mexican government. The Council's membership, which is now largely elected, also reflects a high degree of civic binationality, insofar as many of these leaders combine deep roots in U.S. civic and business organizations with strong ties to migrant organizations and to Mexico.

with U.S. society but rather appears to reinforce it. As many immigrant groups have done in the past in this country, Mexican migrants begin their civic participation by helping their communities of origin and gradually translate these skills to participating in their communities of residence in the United States. Those who have the deepest sense of belonging in Mexico and strongest histories of engagement with their communities there are often the same people who develop the strongest claim to belonging in the United States and the most active forms of engagement in this country. Civic organizations, including churches and unions, and Spanish-language media play an important role in providing arenas where migrants' voices are heard and their concerns shared and converted into actions. If the massive protests that brought millions of migrants into the street to push for immigration reform are any sign, the next decade may see a vast growth of Mexican migrant civic participation that further transforms and renews American civic life as other immigrant groups have done in the past.

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2. Rodolfo García Zamora, “Collective Remittances and the 3x1 Program as a Transnational Social Learning Process,” background paper presented at the conference, available at www.wilsoncenter.org/migrantparticipation (a longer summary is in the appendix to this volume).
3. Zabin and Escala Rabadán (2002) found a high level of political isolation among the federations and the more prominent Latino politicians in the Los Angeles area, especially with regard to their very limited participation in the movement against California's Proposition 187 in 1994. See Carol Zabin and Luis Escala Rabadán, “From Civic Association to Political Participation: Mexican Hometown Associations and Mexican Immigrant Political Empowerment in Los Angeles,” *Frontera Norte* 27, Vol. 14, January-June, 2002
4. See Michael Jones-Correa, “Mexican Migrants and their Relation to U.S. Latino Civil Society,” background paper presented at the conference, available at www.wilsoncenter.org/migrantparticipation (a larger summary is available in the appendix to this volume).
5. All the data, unless otherwise noted, is taken from Ruth Milkman, “Labor Organizing among Mexican-Born Workers in the U.S.: Recent Trends and Future Prospects,” background paper presented at the conference, available at www.wilsoncenter.org/migrantparticipation (a longer summary is in the appendix to this volume).
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8. See Liliana Rivera Sánchez, “Religious institutions, actors and practices: the construction of transnational migrant organizations and public spaces between Mexico and the United States,” background paper presented at the conference, available at www.wilsoncenter.org/migrantparticipation (a longer summary is in the appendix to this volume).
9. Gastón Espinosa, Virgilio Elizondo, and Jesse Miranda, *Hispanic Churches in American Public Life: Summary of Findings*, Interim Report No. 2 of the Institute for Latino Studies, University of Notre Dame, January 2003.
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11. For a detailed description of the creation of IME see David R. Ayón, “Mexican Policy & Émigré Communities in the U.S.,” background paper presented at the conference, available at www.wilsoncenter.org/migrantparticipation (a longer summary is in the appendix to this volume).
12. This analysis was conducted by the editors of this volume based on biographical information on one hundred of the councilors supplied by the IME. Some councilors reported multiple affiliations (e.g., both a local business organization and a migrant organization), so totals add to more than 100%.
13. For a historical perspective on the Mexican vote abroad see Jesús Martínez Saldaña “The Political Rights of Mexican Migrants: Opportunities and Challenges” background paper presented at the conference, available at www.wilsoncenter.org/migrantparticipation (a summary is in the appendix to this volume).
14. The survey findings are based on telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of 987 Mexican-born adults living in the United States. To read the complete findings of this report, see Roberto Suro and Gabriel Escobar, *Pew Hispanic Center Survey of Mexicans Living in the U.S. on Absentee Voting in Mexican Elections*, Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2006, available at www.pewhispanic.org.

Appendix

Background Papers

Summaries of background papers available at www.wilsoncenter.org/migrantparticipation

MEXICAN POLICY & ÉMIGRÉ COMMUNITIES IN THE U.S.

David R. Ayón

Center for the Study of Los Angeles
Loyola Marymount University
davidrayon@msn.com

SUMMARY Mexican policy toward emigration and its Diaspora in the U.S. has changed repeatedly since the Revolution. Initially, Mexico resisted emigration and sought to induce mass repatriation. This objective was fulfilled to a substantial degree during the Great Depression. From 1942–64, however, Mexico worked with the U.S. to channel temporary labor migration back north, and pressed to continue this arrangement. For a decade after it was cancelled, Mexico sought to restore this program. In 1975, however, Mexico renounced interest in any new guest worker arrangement and maintained this position publicly for the next 25 years. During this time, Mexico developed its first significant dialogue and relationship with U.S. citizens of Mexican descent. Since 1990, however, Mexican policy has shifted back to a focus on migrants, but now largely accepting their permanent settlement in the U.S. Mexico today seeks to reinforce its migrants' homeland ties and foster their organizational development. Since 2000 the Fox administration has also renewed Mexico's quest for a guest worker agreement, hoping to restore 'circularity' to future migration.

MAPPING MEXICAN MIGRANT CIVIL SOCIETY

Jonathan Fox

Latin American and Latino Studies Department
University of California, Santa Cruz
jafox@ucsc.edu

SUMMARY The more than 10 million Mexicans who live and work in the U.S. represent approximately one in eight adults who were born in Mexico. They also represent 3.6% of the U.S. population. While the growing *numbers* of Mexicans in the US are widely recognized, the presence of Mexican *society* in the U.S. has not been widely acknowledged. Though organized migrants are now more visible than, say, a decade ago, the full breadth and depth of migrant collective action is still not well understood. This paper describes the diverse landscape of Mexican migrant collective action in the U.S. through the conceptual lens of "migrant civil society." This idea refers to *migrant-led membership organizations and public institutions*, which includes four very tangible arenas of collective action:

1. **Migrant-led membership organizations** – Membership organizations composed primarily of migrants can range from hometown associations (HTAs) to worker organizations and religious congregations.
2. **Migrant-led communications media** – They can range from local and binational newspapers to radio programs, independent video and now numerous internet discussions oriented to hometowns or regions. Beyond the nonprofit media is the huge world of commercial Spanish language media.
3. **Migrant-led NGOs** – While many non-governmental organizations, or nonprofits, serve migrant communities, this approach focuses on those that are *migrant-led*, as well as the role of migrants within established U.S. nonprofits.
4. **Autonomous migrant-led public spaces** – This term refers to large public gatherings where migrants can come together to interact and to express themselves with relative freedom and autonomy—including cultural, religious, sports, and recreation events, as well as large-scale collective action for civic engagement.

The paper goes on to explore the concept of “civic binationality” and concludes by outlining five puzzles for future research.

COLLECTIVE REMITTANCES AND THE 3X1 PROGRAM AS A TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL LEARNING PROCESS

Translated by Patricia A. Rosas

Rodolfo García Zamora

Economics Department
Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas
rgarciaz@prodigy.net.mx

SUMMARY In Mexico, during the past fifteen years, family remittances have grown explosively, and they have had a significant positive effect on the nation’s economy and on household well-being for those families that receive remittances. For their part, collective remittances and the 3x1 Program have improved the living conditions for the general population in the communities of origin, where hundreds of basic infrastructure projects have been implemented. Despite the marked limitations of the program’s budget—at the federal level only US\$15 million for 23 states in 2005—its most significant contributions have been the promotion of transnational community organizations and the establishment of negotiating room for those communities vis-à-vis the three levels of government. This has become an arena in which a transnational learning process is unfolding related to collaboration on joint projects and the promotion of an incipient culture of public oversight and accountability, which is beginning to spread to various communities and municipalities. This program faces

challenges for its future development, including substantially increasing its budget; strengthening organization and training for the communities of origin and destination; and transforming the Comités de Obra (Project Committees) into true instruments of public oversight, with full community support from the hometowns and the clubs. The 2006 political transition at the three levels of Mexican government and the civic maturation of the Mexican people will also be factors in the future evolution of the program.

MEXICAN MIGRANTS AND THEIR RELATION TO U.S. LATINO CIVIL SOCIETY

Michael Jones-Correa

Michael Jones-Correa
Government Department
Cornell University
White Hall
Ithaca NY 14850
mj64@cornell.edu

SUMMARY This paper explores the implications of the differences in immigration experiences for the organization of civil society among the Mexican origin population in the United States. First and, to a much lesser extent, second generation Mexican migrants engage primarily in *transnational* forms of organization through hometown associations and the like, while much of the second generation and beyond engage primarily in *ethnic* forms of organization, represented by national organizations like LULAC, NALEO and MALDEF. These two modes of organization exist in largely discrete universes, with little overlap except perhaps around one set of issues: immigrants' rights. But even here, even while these two sets of organizations address similar concerns, immigration issues are addressed in quite different ways and means. In short, differences in immigration experiences lead to differences in forms of organization among the Mexican-origin population, differences that are not easily bridged even where there are common interests.

THE POLITICAL RIGHTS OF MEXICAN MIGRANTS: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Translated by Patricia A. Rosas

Jesús Martínez Saldaña

State Representative
Michoacán State Congress
jesusmarsal@aol.com

SUMMARY Decades-long political activism by Mexican migrants living in the United States has won a victory in the longstanding battle to permit this social group to participate in

elections in the country of origin. Mexican migrants will be eligible to vote in the next presidential election, on July 2, 2006. The Federal Electoral Institute (Instituto Federal Electoral, IFE) recently announced that the amendment passed by the Mexican Congress on June 28, 2005, will immediately benefit Mexicans living abroad who have voter registration cards: 4,163,655 Mexicans, according to a May 2005 estimate.

From our point of view, the amendment to implement the vote by Mexicans outside the country is limited, falling short of recent migrant demands for the full enjoyment of their political rights. Nevertheless, concerning migration, this first step is the most significant decision that the government of Mexico has taken. The amendment has the potential to initiate a series of institutional changes redefining the relationship between migrants and the political system in their birth nation. It grants them genuine political power that they have never had and gives life to a new citizenry, as well as new forms of civic participation that may be more consistent with the historical reality through which we are living. That is why the electoral reform is a reason for celebration for those of us who are migrants. For those of us who are state lawmakers, it is an event that deserves our most careful consideration, because we can learn from it about the strengths and weaknesses of an amendment that is limited, but that opens the way for advancing legislative initiatives in states like Michoacán.

LABOR ORGANIZING AMONG MEXICAN-BORN WORKERS IN THE U.S.: RECENT TRENDS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

Ruth Milkman

Department of Sociology
University of California, Los Angeles
milkman@soc.ucla.edu

SUMMARY This paper surveys unionization patterns and other workplace-oriented organizing among Mexican-born workers. Drawing on U.S. Current Population Survey (CPS) data, it reviews and analyzes the patterns of union membership among Mexican-born workers over the decade from 1994–2004. There is no systematic source of data on the range of organizing efforts that do not involve formal unionization, but the paper includes some discussion of such activity as well.

The absolute number of Mexican-born and foreign-born union members grew over the past decade, yet the unionized proportion of each group declined. This decline was disproportionately large for the Mexican-born, and especially for non-citizens. That the Mexican-born population includes a large proportion of relative newcomers helps explain the decline in their unionization rate, since recently arrived immigrants are less likely to be union members than their more settled compatriots. Another factor is the increased geographic dispersion of immigration in recent years, especially the declining share of Mexican-born workforce in states like Illinois and California, where union density is high, and the growing share located in those where density is low. Even with this dispersion, California accounted for over half of the nation's Mexican-born union members in 2004 (down from 60% in 1994).

Survey data suggest that immigrants and Latinos in general are more positive in their attitude toward unionism than most native-born workers (with the exception of African-Americans). This is reflected in the wave of high-profile immigrant organizing campaigns that emerged in the U.S. during the 1990s. However, these campaigns have yielded relatively small numbers of union members. In the labor market as a whole, pro-union attitudes do not necessarily translate into union membership under the U.S. system of exclusive representation. Instead, the primary determinant of an individual's union (or nonunion) status is the sector or occupation in which she or he is employed. Unionism is extremely unevenly distributed across sectors and occupations, and immigrants tend to be underrepresented in the most unionized sectors (such as government employment).

Alongside union efforts to recruit immigrants, a variety of community-based organizations have emerged during the past fifteen years with a focus on economic justice issues. Some of these organizations have close ties to organized labor, while others are entirely independent. Their advocacy for low-wage workers—a group that typically includes Mexican-born and other foreign-born Latinos—has led many of these organizations to focus explicitly on immigrant workplace rights, especially for domestic workers and day laborers with little or no access to conventional unionism. Meanwhile, Mexican (and other) hometown associations that began as largely apolitical groups have been increasingly drawn into the world of workplace advocacy and political mobilization. And labor unions, especially in California, have been highly effective in mobilizing immigrants into electoral politics in the 1990s.

MEXICAN MIGRANT CIVIC AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE U.S.: THE CASE OF HOMETOWN ASSOCIATIONS IN LOS ANGELES AND CHICAGO.

Gaspar Rivera-Salgado

New Americans Immigration Museum and Learning Center
riverasa@verizon.net

Xóchitl Bada

Department of Sociology
University of Notre Dame
Xochitl.Y.Bada@nd.edu

Luis Escala-Rabadán

El Colegio de la Frontera Norte
luiser@dns.colef.mx

SUMMARY Mexican migration to the United States has become an increasingly debated topic in the public arena, mainly as a result of its sustained high-density flow and vast distribution nationwide. While this growing population has been negatively portrayed through several political and media campaigns, the grassroots organizations forged by these migrants have received less attention. This report examines the increasing civic and politi-

cal participation of Mexican migrants organized through hometown associations (HTAs), the most prevalent form of voluntary-sector activity among first-generation Mexican migrants in the United States. It focuses on two metropolitan areas, Los Angeles and Chicago, the two major cities with the highest concentrations of Mexican migrants and Mexican HTAs in the United States. The report assesses Mexican migrant participation in U.S. politics and civic life through membership in HTAs, and reveals that these organizations have been a powerful force for social support for their members in the United States, as well as an important mechanism for philanthropic work in Mexico.

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS, ACTORS AND PRACTICES: THE CONSTRUCTION OF TRANSNATIONAL MIGRANT ORGANIZATIONS AND PUBLIC SPACES BETWEEN MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES

Liliana Rivera Sánchez

Centro Regional de Investigaciones Multidisciplinarias
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
rivesanl@yahoo.com.mx

SUMMARY This background paper proposes that the ethnic-religious manifestations of Mexican migrants be understood not as segregated subcultures in U.S. society, but as self-assertive cultural options within multiculturalism, and fundamentally, as manifestations of their incorporation into U.S. society through memberships that point to certain modalities of postnational citizenship. These forms of incorporation into U.S. society through practices carried out in the religious sphere permit Mexican migrants not only to develop civic skills, through their associational memberships, and particularly from their experiences in attending neighborhood parishes, but also to develop forms of political participation promoted through churches' central civic associational roles. They also promote a broader incorporation of immigrants into American civic life, which transcends not only the religious sphere, but also political-electoral participation.

From this perspective, I propose conducting a reading of religious institutional spaces, actors and organizations, as well as the ritualized events and religious practices of Mexican Catholic migrants between Mexico and the United States.

MEDIA AND MIGRANT CIVIL SOCIETY

America Rodríguez

Department of Radio-TV-Film
The University of Texas at Austin
arodriguez@mail.utexas.edu

SUMMARY U.S.-Mexican bi-nationality is assumed in the production of much of U.S. Spanish-language media. Mexican migrants are the primary consumers of these media, according to media executives and market research studies. As such, Mexican migrants are

a valued audience, and a commercially viable product of the U.S. media marketplace. Univisión and Telemundo, as well as *La Opinión* and *El Nuevo Herald*, and smaller neighborhood or community based newspapers are also political actors helping shape the civic agendas of their migrant communities. Because many migrants do not speak English, Spanish-language media is a key link to the world outside their personal spheres. The content of these media is essentially different than that of general market, English-language U.S. media, offering coverage of Latin America and immigrant concerns that is not found elsewhere. Additionally, many migrant media are service oriented. These activities include sponsoring voter registration drives and workshops designed to help undocumented migrants regularize their U.S. immigration status.

Appendix

Agenda

MEXICAN MIGRANT CIVIC AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

November 4–5, 2005

Washington D.C.

Mexico Institute, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
Latin American and Latino Studies Department, University of California, Santa Cruz

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 4, 2005: PUBLIC FORUM

Opening remarks

Andrew Selee, Mexico Institute– Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Jonathan Fox, Latin American and Latino Studies Department, University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC)

Roundtable 1: Research update: Key trends in Mexican migrant participation

Facilitator: **Andrew Selee**, Mexico Institute– Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Roberto Suro, Pew Hispanic Center

Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, New Americans Immigration Museum and Learning Center

Xóchitl Bada, Institute for Latino Studies, University of Notre Dame

Roundtable 2: Civic leadership panel discussion: lessons and challenges

Facilitator: **Monica Lozano**, *La Opinión*

Janet Murguía, National Council of La Raza (NCLR)

Guadalupe Gómez, Zacatecas International Benefit Hometown Association (FCZSC)

Ann Marie Tallman, Mexican American Legal Defense Fund (MALDEF)

Jesús García, Little Village Community Development Corporation (LVCCD)

María Elena Durazo, UNITE HERE Local 11– Migrant Workers Freedom Ride

Jesús Martínez-Saldaña, State Representative, Michoacán State Legislature

Roundtable 3: Introductions of participants

Facilitator: **Gaspar Rivera-Salgado**, New Americans Immigration Museum and Learning Center

Welcome and introduction to objectives of conference

Roundtable 4: Mapping Mexican migrant civil society: Urban, rural, indigenous, and cross-border strategies

Facilitator: **Jonathan Fox**, Latin American and Latino Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC)

Marcia Soto, Confederation of Mexican Federations in the Midwest (CONFEMEX)

Juencio Rocha Peralta, Association of Mexicans in North Carolina (AMEXCAN)

Guadalupe Gómez, Zacatecas International Benefit Hometown Association (FCZSC)

Oscar Chacón, National Association of Latin American and Caribbean Communities (NALACC)

Roundtable 5: Mexican migrants and electoral enfranchisement in the U.S. and Mexico

Facilitator: **Louis De Sipio**, Political Science and Chicano-Latino Studies, University of California, Irvine (UCI)

Jeffrey S. Passel, Pew Hispanic Center

Jose Padilla, California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA)

Esther Aguilera, Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI)

Gonzalo Arroyo, Family Focus/Institute for Mexicans Abroad (IME)

Jesús Martínez-Saldaña, State Representative, Michoacán State Legislature

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 5, 2005

Roundtable 6: Patterns of organization of Mexican workers in the U.S.

Facilitator: **Lynn Stephen**, Department of Anthropology, University of Oregon

María Elena Durazo, UNITE HERE, Local 11-Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride

Ana Avendaño Denier, Immigrant Worker Program, AFL-CIO

Ramón Ramírez, Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United (PCUN)

Irma Solís, Workplace Project- United Day Laborers of Long Island-Farmingville Committee

Francisca Cortez, Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW)

Ruth Milkman, Department of Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

Roundtable 7: Faith-based organizing strategies

Facilitator: **Michael Jones-Correa**, Government Department, Cornell University

Leo Anchondo, Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform

Joel Magallán, Tepeyac Association of New York

Marcos Linares, Atacheo de Regalado Parish

Melody González, Interfaith Action of Southwest Florida

Liliana Rivera Sánchez, Regional Center for Multidisciplinary Research (CRIM), National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM)

Roundtable 8: The role of Spanish language media

Facilitator: **Monica Lozano**, *La Opinión*

Samuel Orozco, Radio Bilingüe

Raúl Caballero, La Estrella de Dallas

David Brooks, La Jornada

Vanessa Cárdenas, National Immigration Forum

America Rodríguez, Department of Radio-TV-Film, University of Texas at Austin

Roundtable 9: U.S. Latinos and Mexican migrants: Enchantment or disenchantment?

Facilitator: **David R. Ayón**, Center for the Study of Los Angeles, Loyola Marymount University

Marcia Soto, Confederation of Mexican Federations in the Midwest (CONFEMEX)

Ricardo Ramírez, Political Science Department, University of Southern California (USC)

Michael Jones-Correa, Government Department, Cornell University

Roundtable 10: U.S. and Mexican public policy and Mexican migrant organizations: Opportunities and challenges

Facilitator: **Luin Goldring**, Sociology Department, York University

David R. Ayón, Center for the Study of Los Angeles, Loyola Marymount University

Efraín Jiménez, Zacatecas International Benefit Hometown Association (FCZSC)

Laura González, Oak Cliff Center for Community Studies-Institute for Mexicans Abroad (IME)

Rodolfo García Zamora, Facultad de Economía, Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas (UAZ)

Andrew Selee, Mexico Institute, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

**Imagining futures for Mexican migrant civic engagement:
Ideas for research and action**

Jonathan Fox, Latin American and Latino Studies Department,
University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC)

Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, New Americans Immigration Museum and
Learning Center

Additional participants:

Héctor R. Cordero-Guzmán, Department of Black and Hispanic
Studies, City University of New York (CUNY)

Mike Meuter, California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA)

Ruben Puentes, North American Transnational Communities
Program, The Rockefeller Foundation

Jill L. Wheeler, Inter-American Foundation (IAF)

Veronica Wilson, North American Transnational Communities
Program, The Rockefeller Foundation

Appendix

List of organizations with websites and/or addresses

Asociación Tepeyac de Nueva York
<http://www.tepeyac.org>

Asociación de Mexicanos en Carolina del Norte AMEXCAN
<http://www.duplinonline.com/AMEXCAN.htm>

California Rural Legal Assistance
<http://www.crla.org/>

Center for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean
York University
<http://www.yorku.ca/cerlac/>

Center for the Study of Los Angeles
Loyola Marymount University
<http://www.lmu.edu/csla/>

Centro Regional de Investigaciones Multidisciplinarias
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
<http://www.crim.unam.mx/>

Coalition of Immokalee Workers
<http://www.ciw-online.org/>

Confederación de Federaciones Mexicanas del Medio Oeste (CONFEMEX)
2136 W. Cermak Rd.
Chicago, IL 60608-4006
Ph: (773) 847-0776
Fax: (773) 927-4725

Congreso del Estado de Michoacán
<http://www.congresomich.gob.mx/>

Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute
www.chci.org

Department of Anthropology
University of Oregon
<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~anthro/>

Department of Black and Hispanic Studies
Baruch College - City University of New York
www.baruch.cuny.edu

Department of Chicano and Latino Studies
University of California, Irvine
<http://www.socsci.uci.edu/clstudies/>

Department of Economics
Ph.D. Program in Development Studies
Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas
<http://www.migracionydesarrollo.org/>

Department of Government
Cornell University
<http://falcon.arts.cornell.edu/Govt>

Department of Latin American & Latino Studies
University of California, Santa Cruz
<http://lals.ucsc.edu/>

Department of Political Science and American Studies and Ethnicity
University of Southern California
<http://www.usc.edu/about/research/ramirez.html>

Department of Radio-TV-Film & The Center for Mexican American Studies
The University of Texas at Austin
<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/cmas/>

Department of Sociology
University of California, Los Angeles
<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/>

Diario La Estrella
<http://www.dfw.com/mld/laestrella/>

Diario *La Opinión*
<http://www.laopinion.com/>

El Colegio de la Frontera Norte
www.colef.mx

Enlaces América
<http://www.enlacesamerica.org/>

Family Focus Aurora
<http://www.family-focus.org/centers/aurora/index.htm>

Federación de Clubes Zacatecanos del Sur de California
<http://www.federacionzacatecana.org/>

Ford Foundation
<http://www.fordfound.org/>

Immigrant Worker Program, AFL-CIO
<http://www.aflcio.org/>

**Institute for Latino Studies
University of Notre Dame**
<http://www.nd.edu/~latino/>

Inter-American Foundation
www.iaf.gov

**Little Village Community
Development Corporation**
2756 S. Harding Ave.
Chicago, IL . 60623
Ph: 773 542 92 33

Mexican American Legal Defense Fund
www.maldef.org

**Mexico Institute
Woodrow Wilson International
Center for Scholars**
www.wilsoncenter.org

National Council of La Raza
www.nclr.org

National Immigration Forum
<http://www.immigrationforum.org/>

**New Americans Immigration Museum
and Learning Center**
<http://www.immigrationmuseumofnewamericans.org/mica/>

Newspaper La Jornada
<http://www.jornada.unam.mx>

Oak Cliff Center for Community Studies
<http://www.oakcliffccs.org/>

Pew Hispanic Center
<http://pewhispanic.org/>

**Pineros y Campesinos Unidos
del Noroeste**
<http://www.pcun.org/>

Radio Bilingüe
<http://www.radiobilingue.org/>

The Rockefeller Foundation
<http://www.rockfound.org>

UNITE HERE International Union
<http://www.unitehere.org/>

**United States Conference
of Catholic Bishops**
<http://www.usccb.org>
<http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org>

**The Workplace Project
Farmingville Committee, affiliated to
The United Day Laborers of Long Island**
1266 Waverly Ave.
Farmingville, NY 11738
Ph: (631)732-4713
Fax: (631)732-5349