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Elizabeth Coonrod Martínez
DePaul University

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The U.S. Story of Immigrants and *Un*-Immigrants

ELIZABETH COONROD MARTÍNEZ
DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

We are pleased to present our Fall 2015 issue featuring a theme conceived and articles selected by a team of Guest Thematic Editors, experts in race/ethnicity, education, communities and migrations, Central American social movements, transgender and sexuality studies: Gilda Ochoa, Sociology and Chicana/o-Latina/o Studies professor at Pomona College; Enrique Ochoa, History and Latin American Studies professor at CSU-Los Angeles; and Suyapa Portillo Villeda, professor in Chicana/o-Latina/o Transnational Studies at Pitzer College. Their careful ongoing research and contact with minority groups (within minorities) has led to their significant expertise and sensitive awareness which greatly influenced the collection of articles presented here.

The contributors represent a variety of regions and scholars at the Universities of Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin-Madison, Kentucky, Nevada, the State University of New Jersey and SUNY-Albany, Emory University in Atlanta, Miami University in Ohio, Seattle Children's Hospital, DePaul, the Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas and the Universidad de Guadalajara in Mexico. There are several California affiliations: UCSB, UCLA, UCI, CSU-Northridge and Long Beach, Claremont Graduate University, Pitzer and Scripps College, and lawyers, activists and poets. We are grateful to each contributor for the long process of careful work and revisions undertaken, and especially to the guest thematic editors for their thoughtful selection.

We have looked to "immigration reform" in the U.S. for several years, to little success. Even the President's recent executive actions for deferred and temporary protected status presently teeter in non-confirmed limbo, while families and other units are torn apart, and deportations exceed those of the post-World War II era.

Providing a process for immigrants should seem logical for a nation built on that concept, and yet that history is one of preferences and delayed inclusion. The first Naturalization Act of 1790 stipulated that foreign-born persons could become citizens of the U.S. only if they were free and white (and of "good" character, letting public officials determine the same). Steady arrivals from northern

European nations during the 17th century blossomed into continuous full ships over the next century, culminating in ongoing invitation to European immigrants to settle "open lands" in a push south and west. Drove of these populations marched out to plant their homesteads, with little regard for various nations of "Indians" or the Spanish colonists already residing there.

These immigrants were invited, welcomed, received citizenship without paying fees, and were often given large chunks of acreage for very basic or no costs. None were ever locked in detention centers (even when the occasional quarantine—ships, not people—occurred).

In 1868, enactment of the 14th Amendment declared that all persons born or naturalized in the U.S. are citizens. But that did not include (1) those native to the continent—it was only in 1924 that Native American Indians were legally declared "citizens" by the U.S. Congress—or (2) the generations born to those brought in imposed slavery, or (3) former Spanish-Mexican colonists residing in what had become part of the U.S. (despite promises signed in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo). Instead, each of these groups continued to experience acts of violence, lynching, and having their properties taken from them, well into the 20th century.

The first Exclusion Act was ratified in 1882, to prevent further arrival of Chinese immigrants, the same year the first-ever tax began to be imposed on each entering immigrant. The turn of century saw the most extensive increase yet of immigrants (primarily from European nations, Eastern Russia and Persia/Iran): the 1910 U.S. Census indicated nearly 15 percent of the population was foreign-born—an interesting comparison to 11 percent foreign-born recorded by the 2000 U.S. Census.

The first piece of legislation instituting general restrictions on immigration was enacted in 1917, limiting entry from Asiatic zones and later Russians (due to the "Red Scare" of the Bolshevik Revolution), and launching "emergency quota" systems, secured by the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 (greatly reducing Southern and Eastern European immigrants, and excluding Asians, Africans, and most Latin Americans). During the Great Depression

many people were coerced to leave or deported, including nearly two million Mexican-Americans, mostly citizens. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 abolished previous quotas, with a preference system based on immigrant skills and family relationships. The Bracero Program and other temporary worker recruitments, as well as sporadic refugee arrangements made since the Second World War and the Refugee Act of 1980, are separate issues. The substantial increases in fees (as well as requirements for protracted government consults and new, high fees) of recent decades are also another separate discussion.

A turn toward harsher policies and penalties began with legislation in 1996, including a 10-year removal penalty on undocumented spouses applying for residency (requiring departure, and ineligibility to return for 10 years, permanently separating many families).

Thus, a nation built on the idea of “immigrants” documents a history of immigrant preferences, with ongoing exclusions and excuses for those branded undesirable by those in power. Contrasting the 19th century—when extensive arrivals of foreign-born persons easily obtained citizenship—with the 20th and 21st centuries brings shock: undocumented immigrants today have their humanity stripped from them, and society turns a blind eye to the alarming new practice of long term detentions in the many private (and lucrative) prisons, which bar immigrants from access to basic care, necessary medicines and other humane needs. The U.S. is no longer a welcoming “home” for newer arrivals or those in the shadows, awaiting their own path.

The articles in this issue offer the opportunity to consider the “reframing” of immigration, not just a topic, but as lived presently in the U.S.: activism, experiences in detention centers, the workplace and schools. The opening article by Gilbert Gonzalez meticulously delineates a timeline of recent initiatives that ended in failed attempts toward legislation, despite the crisis at hand. The ensuing articles bring voice to often invisible experiences: seeking work and growing up in the U.S.; immigrant restaurant owners creating a space for inclusion and education; the deceptive advertising and screen of an immigrant-friendly workplace used by a multinational corporation; oral histories of Brazilian immigrants in a long-term Portuguese immigrant and working-class neighborhood; and the experience of detention and statelessness imposed by a neoliberal system which dehumanizes those detained

for questioning, declared guilty without presumption of innocence, and denies their human rights.

Little attention has been given to the UndocuQueer movement, arising out of and since the now annual May Day marches. Uniquely deconstructed in an article of collaboration by four authors, they assess efforts by activists to create a space despite obstacles imposed both from within and without. Additional articles expand this focus through particular lenses: the theoretical term *nepantla* is applied to trans migrants and activist work by a youth collective, inspired by the work of artist Julio Salgado; two articles assess the often overlooked experience of high school students, through subtle “everyday enforcement,” as coined by Julia Wignall, who cites that of Latino high school graduates only 10-20 percent go on to college. Another article describes the nurturing relationship between high school students and a teacher of recent immigrant roots through art-based instruction.

These challenging issues and difficult encounters are balanced with a testimonials section where feminist theoretical perspectives are applied to a study on queer migration, and the sense of *home* and family (echoed in other articles), migration and separation, is studied through regional song and activism. Shorter articles distinguish the important perspective of community activists, with additional first-person insights in the creative section, and finally, reviews of texts not regularly reviewed in academic journals.

Last year we were fortunate to have been contacted by art critic-professor Tatiana Flores, whose review of recent work by Sandra Fernández led us to the Ecuadorean artist’s scintillating images of Latin American immigrant experience, especially among youth. Also included are Chicano artist Malaquías Montoya’s perspectives on immigrants, coupled with an interview conducted last year when he visited the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago. The subversive and provocative qualities of these artists greatly enhances the subject matter and goals of this special theme. It is our fervent hope that this issue will inspire and motivate.

Next year, *Diálogo* brings focus to the U.S. Bracero Program, marking a 50th anniversary, as well as the new production of Indigenous or First Nation peoples in the Americas, through their millennia-old philosophy. We look forward to your continued readership and participation.

Hasta entonces, saludos desde Chicago.